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**COMMUNITY COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND ACCOUNTABILITY (CCPSA)
NOMINATES LAKENYA WHITE FOR CIVILIAN OFFICE OF POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY
(COPA) CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR**

CHICAGO- Today, the Community Commission for Public Safety and Accountability (CCPSA) announced the nomination of LaKenya White to serve as the next Chief Administrator of the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA), following a nationwide, community-informed search process launched in February 2025.

COPA is the independent agency responsible for investigating and making disciplinary recommendations in all instances in which a Chicago Police officer discharges a weapon, or when a person dies or is seriously injured while detained or in police custody. COPA also investigates the most serious allegations of misconduct involving CPD members, including excessive force, sexual misconduct, improper searches, bias-based verbal abuse, and unlawful denial of counsel.

By ordinance, when a vacancy occurs in the office of the Chief Administrator, the Commission is charged with leading a national search and selecting a nominee, subject to confirmation by Chicago City Council.

Throughout the search, Commissioners engaged extensively to understand what leadership COPA needs to succeed and what qualities communities expect in the agency's next Chief Administrator. The Commission held citywide listening sessions, met with COPA staff, engaged police unions, consulted with local and national subject-matter experts, and collected feedback from community members, CPD members, young people, and individuals directly impacted by police misconduct. This input directly informed the evaluation criteria, interview questions, and scoring rubrics used throughout the process.

Across this engagement, the Commission consistently heard that COPA's next leader must demonstrate integrity, investigative excellence, commitment to timely and impartial



investigations, the ability to strengthen internal culture, and the capacity to work collaboratively within Chicago’s broader police accountability system.

“COPA’s work requires leadership that understands both the technical demands of complex investigations and the human impact those investigations have on families, officers, and communities. LaKenya has spent her career inside Chicago’s police accountability system, and she understands how this agency operates at every level. That depth of experience is exactly what COPA needs in the next Chief Administrator,” said President Remel Terry.

The Commission received more than 20 applications from candidates across the country. After multiple rounds of evaluation and interviews, and in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, Commissioners voted at their January 29 public meeting to nominate LaKenya White.

White, a Chicago native, brings nearly 25 years of experience in civilian police oversight and has worked at every level of the city’s accountability system. She began her career in 2000 as an Intake Aide with the Office of Professional Standards and became an Investigator following the creation of the Independent Police Review Authority in 2007, later serving as a Shooting Specialist handling numerous officer-involved shooting investigations. When COPA was established in 2017, White joined the agency as a Major Case Specialist responding to critical incidents. She later served as a union representative for AFSCME Local 654.

In 2021, White was promoted to Supervising Investigator, overseeing investigative teams and complex cases. At the end of 2023, she was appointed Director of Investigations for Intake, overseeing all incoming complaints and jurisdictional determinations. She was named Interim Chief Administrator of COPA in March 2025 and currently leads an agency of approximately 140 professionals conducting high-stakes investigations in one of the country’s most complex police oversight environments.

During her tenure as Interim Chief, White has focused on strengthening investigative quality, consistency, and timeliness, while also improving internal operations and staff morale. Her leadership has emphasized fair and thorough investigations, clearer disciplinary recommendations, and building an agency that can stand confidently behind its work. She has also prioritized training that deepens investigators’ understanding of CPD policy and law-enforcement decision-making, helping ensure accountability



decisions are grounded in both rigor and practical context. At the same time, she has worked closely with the Commission to strengthen accountability practices, including new policies related to patterns-and- practice investigations, community-based mediation, and clearer external communications.

“LaKenya knows this work, in this City, in a way that very few people do. She understands what it takes to run complex investigations well, support staff doing difficult work, and keep the agency focused on its mission. The Commission has confidence in her ability to lead COPA and looks forward to presenting our nominee to the Chicago City Council for consideration,” said Commissioner Aaron Gottlieb.

White holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Chicago State University and MBA with a focus on Fraudulent Investigations from St. Xavier University. She also holds multiple professional certifications and serves as a trainer for new COPA investigators.

Following the Commission’s vote, the Mayor has 30 days to submit written input on the nomination. After that period, or upon receipt of the Mayor’s input, the City Council Committee on Police and Fire will hold a public hearing. If advanced by the Committee, the nomination will proceed to a vote of the full City Council.

If the City Council does not approve the Commission’s selection, the Commission will have 30 days to submit a new nominee. The Commission may select another candidate from the existing finalist pool or request that the search continue to identify additional candidates.

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