

Cook County Health board votes out CEO Dr. John Jay Shannon

Emily Rappleye ([Twitter](#)) - Friday, November 22nd, 2019 [Print](#) | [Email](#)

The Cook County Health board voted Nov. 22 to remove CEO John Jay Shannon as it seeks to address major challenges, including a ballooning charity care budget.

Dr. Shannon, who has led the Chicago-based safety net since June 2014, will step down Dec. 31, and Debra Carey, deputy CEO of operations, will take over as interim CEO while the board searches for a replacement.

"I respect the board's decision to seek new leadership," Dr. Shannon said in an emailed statement. "It has been an honor to lead this storied organization and critical community asset."

In his five years of leadership, Dr. Shannon is credited with leading the health system through significant financial and quality improvements. "I am immensely proud to have led the transformation of Cook County Health over the past five-plus years," he said. "Working with our board, we have raised the bar on quality, improved patient services and access to care; built the largest Medicaid managed care plan in Cook County; and made significant and long overdue upgrades to our facilities — all while significantly reducing our reliance on local taxpayer support."

Despite these strides, the health system continues to face financial difficulties, namely "unprecedented demand for charity care," according to M. Hill Hammock, chairman of the Cook County Health board. "Fulfilling the broad service responsibilities of a public healthcare system, addressing the increase in charity care and ensuring the staff needed to deliver those services will require changes," Mr. Hammock said in an emailed statement.

Dr. Shannon recently spoke at a public affairs luncheon about growing levels of uncompensated care at the health system, which were projected to hit \$600 million in 2020, according to a report from [WBEZ](#). At the luncheon, he called on leaders of other local health systems to step up and share the burden. "We can no longer continue to bear the disproportionate burden of charity care that we do," Dr. Shannon said, according to [WBEZ](#).

"John Jay Shannon did an incredible job in a very difficult situation," said Scott Becker, publisher of *Becker's Healthcare*.

Ms. Carey, who will step into the role Jan. 1, joined Cook County Health in 2013 as COO of ambulatory services. She has prior experience as a CEO, spending eight years at the helm of SUNY Downstate Medical Center, University Hospital of Brooklyn in New York City.

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