



The Grassroots Alliance for Police Accountability strongly opposes the expansion of the felony review bypass program by the Cook County State's Attorney. This policy fundamentally undermines due process and disproportionately harms already over-policed communities. Rather than increasing safety, it risks deepening mistrust and accelerating injustice.

By design, felony review bypass allows CPD officers to file certain felony gun-possession charges, including unlawful possession of a weapon, unlawful possession by a felon, and aggravated unlawful weapon possession, without prior approval from a prosecutor. Instead, once a CPD lieutenant signs off, charges may be filed directly with the court, without consulting a lawyer. This removes a critical layer of prosecutorial oversight that traditionally serves to ensure that charges are legally and factually justified. Removing this measure is nothing less than a denial of due process.

The consequences of further empowering Chicago's police officers to file legal charges can be devastating. Even if a person eventually beats an erroneous charge, the damage will have already been done. People lose jobs, face financial and emotional hardship, see their lives disrupted, and their communities harmed. For non-citizens, the stakes can be even higher. A wrongful charge can jeopardize immigration status and the very ability to remain in the country they call home. Further, the city of Chicago already spends tens of millions of dollars per year to settle lawsuits against the Chicago police department—this program could lead to an even heftier settlement budget for the police.

When the Chicago Police Department and the office of State's Attorney Eileen Burke first rolled out this program as a pilot in early 2025, it was limited to two South Side districts, neighborhoods long subjected to aggressive over-policing, without meaningful community input or consent. This has raised serious questions among residents of the community about equity, fairness, and the real motivation behind the pilot: which appears to have treated certain neighborhoods as testing grounds for a policy that's intention was always to roll out city wide. To date, there is no publicly shared independent data demonstrating that the pilot improved public safety in any meaningful or measurable way. Expanding a program without transparent outcomes or independent evaluation contradicts best practices for public safety reform.

Expanding this bypass program citywide, without transparency, meaningful evaluation, or community consent is a dangerous abdication of accountability. It cedes prosecutorial judgment to police officers, in a city where policing has long been plagued by misconduct and distrust.

For these reasons, the GAPA coalition urges city and county leadership to halt further expansion of the felony review bypass program, to commission an independent evaluation of the pilot's outcomes, to engage communities directly impacted by it, and to restore the prosecutorial review process that guards against wrongful charges and systemic inequity. We also urge that all data, findings, and evaluation metrics be made publicly accessible to ensure accountability and informed public decision-making.

Sincerely,

The Grassroots Alliance for Police Accountability