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**For immediate release**

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## **Illinois Chiefs Oppose Cook County Changes in Retail Theft Prosecutions**

Recently elected Cook County State's Attorney Kim Foxx has announced new guidelines for the prosecution of felony retail theft cases. This new policy increases the property value threshold from \$300 to \$1,000 or requires the offender to have had *ten* prior felony convictions in order to be charged with felony retail theft. The newly implemented conviction requirement represents a tenfold increase over the previous requirement. The Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police finds this policy shift troubling for several reasons.

First, these guidelines are entirely inconsistent with Illinois state law. Aside from the statutorily set \$300 in the property value provision, State law also provides for the charging of a Class 4 felony, regardless of property value, if the offender has a prior conviction. In cases in which \$300 or more in property is taken, Class 3 felony charges may be filed. For one of the 102 counties in the State of Illinois to set a threshold so dramatically different from State law sets a dangerous precedent. It is our position that Ms. Foxx should pursue legislation in Springfield if she believes change is necessary rather than arbitrarily setting her own guidelines.

We know that retail theft is often linked to other crimes. There is an entire market for products stolen from legitimate business owners and resold for lower prices. Requiring such a high threshold in the number of prior felony convictions required for a felony charge does little to combat this market and address those repeat offenders making up the retail theft rings. As heroin use increases around the state, retail theft is often employed as a means for users to gain money or exchange property for more drugs. We believe it likely that a substantial number of the 101 people at Cook County Jail on felony retail theft charges cited by recent news media articles are likely there for reasons in addition to the retail theft charge itself – either something in the offender's background or additional charges associated with the retail theft offense. In the interest of consistency in protecting the property of business owners throughout the State of Illinois, the ILACP voices its opposition to this policy change in Cook County and reiterates that legislative changes should be pursued as a matter of practice as opposed to the setting of differing prosecution standards at the county level. The ILACP was not formally notified of this policy change, nor were we given a seat at the table during any discussions. As issues such as this one are of high significance to the citizens we serve, the ILACP believes it is incumbent upon us to express our disagreement with this policy change in Cook County.