

# Williams plan is to focus on needs of county D5's residents

**BILL JONES**

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For Kierra Williams, the role of a Cook County commissioner is not about following a clearly defined personal agenda but rather about being flexible in addressing whatever challenges District 5 and its residents face.

"I'm not set on anything; I know that life throws us curveballs," Williams said. "I'm excited to see what the future holds for me in this position, how I can actually help make a difference."

Williams, 25, of Chicago's Roseland neighborhood, expects to graduate Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law in May 2023 and go into in-house counsel or corporate law. She already holds a bachelor's degree in community health from the University of Illinois. While being raised in South Holland, she graduated from Thornton Township High School as valedictorian.

She previously dipped her toes into the political waters in 2015 by running for and winning a two-year vacancy with the Thornton Town-

ship High School District 205 Board of Education. But the June 28 primary election for the District 5 seat is something Williams talked about with her family and prayed on before making the decision to run. Flossmoor is in the district.

"It was perfect timing when (Commissioner) Deborah Sims announced she wanted to step down," Williams said. "I wouldn't have to run against another woman who was already fulfilling her position."

Williams said she thinks Sims has done the job well since District 5 was established in 1994. Williams said taking over means following in Sims' footsteps but also adapting to how the world has changed in 28 years.

Williams thinks it is important that another woman fills those shoes. That she can bring a young perspective to the board is that much better, she said.

"I really want to be part of the women-in-politics movement and also get young people into politics sooner than later," Williams said. "A lot of times, people wait until they get older to understand what's going on in their communities and help and



Kierra Williams

change. I really want to be the face of the youth in showing them we can help do things now."

Williams said that starts with acknowledging that things are not always supposed to stay the same.

"Change is OK," she said. "A lot of times, people get set in their ways and think about

how things have been or should be or would be."

Despite studying out of state in recent years, Williams said she has been back home at least once a month, typically every other week. She remains involved in her neighborhood and has kept up on what is happening in District 5. What she does not know, she is ready to learn.

"I'm willing to get out there and

find out what my district needs and how I can make it happen," Williams said.

While Williams knows there are some things a commissioner just cannot anticipate, she would take office with some clear goals. She said her top priority is bringing a trauma center to District 5 because most trauma patients must be taken to Advocate Christ Medical Center in Oak Lawn.

"It's out of the way; it's not OK," Williams said. "One of the biggest concerns for me is the lack of health care resources. ... These are things that people need as they get up in age. Our grandmothers and grandfathers shouldn't have to go across the city or state to get adequate services."

Williams said she is not anticipating too many rigorous courses during her final semester of law school. If elected commissioner, she said she would utilize virtual communications and plan flights home around the demands of the position until she finishes school next May.

For more information about Williams, visit [kierraforcommissioner.com](http://kierraforcommissioner.com).

# Gordon says D5's unique problems require unique solutions

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When Cook County District 5 Commissioner Deborah Sims decided she would retire after 28 years, she thought Monica M. Gordon would be a good fit for the job.

Sims called Gordon, who said she had to think about it.

"I wanted to make sure I was the right person to run for this position," said Gordon, whom Sims has endorsed in the June 28 primary. Flossmoor is in District 5.

Gordon, 44, originally from the West Side of Chicago, lived in Flossmoor for the past 10 years but recently moved to Chicago Heights. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Northern Illinois University. She holds a master's degree in communications and training from Governors State University.

She works as director of government affairs and community relations at Chicago State University. She is serving on the Prairie State College Board of Trustees. She was previously executive director of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus Foundation, following a career in medical sales.



Monica Gordon

But county government is a different beast. And it can have a direct impact on residents' quality of life.

"Usually it's the last resort for most people — people who really need government services," Gordon said. "This is really an opportunity to help a great deal of people, and people who need the help the most."

Gordon lauded Sims' impact on District 5, citing her advocacy of mammograms, testing and more for breast cancer that has a direct impact on women's health in the district. Gordon said Sims also put in a lot of work on water infrastructure.

"There's a lot more work to do," Gordon said. "That's an area where I want to take the baton and continue that work."

Cook County recently passed an \$8

billion budget, roughly half of which focuses on health care. Gordon said that creates an "awesome" opportunity to help the people who need it. Health care, water issues and economic development are three major focuses of Gordon's campaign.

She also is focusing on public safety, hoping to find funding for juvenile programs, mentoring and more anti-violence initiatives.

"The violence has gotten completely out of control," she said.

Gordon thinks she is the right person to take over in District 5 because of her ability to network and bring resources to the community. She counts her ability to build relationships, her drive and tenacity among her strengths.

"I won't give up; I'll work hard," she said. "I'm passionate about my community as well as other underrepresented communities. I'm passionate about everyone having the opportunity to live the American dream."

Gordon said she has lived in a variety of situations across the district, and she hopes being able to relate to her constituents will make it easier to solve their problems. District 5 is economically diverse, but everyone

needs resources, Gordon said. She is looking forward to partnering with local officials, such as Flossmoor Mayor Michelle Nelson, to address the needs of the district's communities.

"Every area has unique problems, and we need to provide unique solutions for these problems," Gordon said.

A long-time boxing fan, today Gordon boxes for fitness and stress relief. But she said there are also political lessons to be learned in the conditioning and training boxing requires.

"If there's something you believe in, you've got to fight for it," Gordon said.

She hopes the 5th District will elect her to do just that. The goal is to fight not just for votes but for the voters.

"I'm here for them," Gordon said. "I never want to be an elected official that feels like I'm better than them. No, I work for them and I'm here for them. ... We're all in this together as a family."

If elected commissioner, Gordon said she thinks she could retain her elected position with Prairie State but would not.

For more information about Gordon's campaign, visit [monicaforcookcounty.com](http://monicaforcookcounty.com).