



Legislation Text

File #: 18-0330, Version: 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

REQUESTING A SUMMIT BETWEEN COUNTY AND FOREST PRESERVES LEADERS WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUERTO RICAN COMMUNITY

WHEREAS, on June 14, while setting up to celebrate her birthday at the Forest Preserve Caldwell Woods, Ms. Mia Irizarry was harassed for at least 36 minutes by a man who questioned and berated her about her Puerto Rican flag shirt, with all this captured in a video taken by Ms. Irizarry; and

WHEREAS, recent data from the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino shows that hate crimes in the top 10 U.S. cities increased 12.46 percent in 2017 from the previous year with anti-Latino hate crime bias listed as one of the most common types of hate crimes in 2017; and

WHEREAS, in said video, a Forest Preserves Police officer is seen standing by without taking appropriate action despite numerous requests for help and intervention from Ms. Irizarry, who repeatedly expressed her fear for her safety; and

WHEREAS, on July 9, a 5-minute clip of the original video was shared via social media by a national organization and quickly went viral, prompting responses and requests for action from the community and national representatives including the Honorable Ricardo Rosselló, Governor of Puerto Rico; and

WHEREAS, the officer of the Forest Preserves District of Cook County was placed on desk duty on June 26, and resigned on his own accord on July 11, before his scheduled hearing regarding the incident; and

WHEREAS, as of this moment the 5-minute clipped video has been viewed more than 42 million times; and

WHEREAS, the inaction by the officer embarrassed many law enforcement officers and tarnished the whole department with his failure to act in accordance with his oath to serve and protect the community of Cook County; and

WHEREAS, the unfairness that Ms. Irizarry had to endure, multiplied by the attention given to the incident, thanks to the distribution of the video via social media, has created a perceived and real harm to the relationships between the Puerto Rican community, the Forest Preserves Police and representatives of this government; and

WHEREAS, this one incident reflects a situation that, while not exclusive to the Forest Preserves or Cook County, requires a clear and substantial intervention by the leaders of these governmental units in conjunction with leaders of the Puerto Rican community and Ms. Irizarry, to fully understand and address the circumstances which contributed to this incident, in an effort to repair the harm that resulted from this injustice; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserves of Cook County requests that a meeting, or set of meetings, be held by the President of the Forest Preserves of Cook County Board of Commissioners, the General Superintendent of the Forest Preserves of Cook County, the Chief of the Forest Preserves Police, and the Cook County State's Attorney with members and leaders of the Puerto Rican Community of Cook County and Ms. Mia Irizarry or her representative to fully understand and address the circumstances which contributed to this incident, and find common ground for policy and training reforms to ensure that the harm that this injustice created can be repaired and the relationships restored; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the members of the Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserves of Cook County hereby express their deepest regret and most heartfelt apology to Ms. Mia Irizarry for the regrettable situation she had to endure, and vows to work on making sure these incidents are never repeated and reassert our commitment to making the Forest Preserves of Cook County a place where everyone is, and feels, welcome and safe for discovery, renewal and fun.