



Legislation Text

File #: 21-0284, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

REQUESTING A HEARING INTO THE POLICIES AND PRACTICES OF THE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT TO PROTECT THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANTS AND BIPOC RESIDENTS AND VISITORS WITHIN COOK COUNTY

WHEREAS, Cook County has always been home to people from many racial and ethnic backgrounds, and the Cook County Forest Preserve District has been a public space and place to visit nature for these residents and visitors. With over one million immigrants, Cook County has the largest concentration of foreign-born residents in the State of Illinois. Many of these individuals and families visits our preserves and are among the over 60 million visits that the Forest Preserve District experiences each year over its almost 70,000 acres; and

WHEREAS, the Cook County Forest Preserve District has benefitted and continues to benefit culturally, socially, and economically from the diversity of its residents; and

WHEREAS, the Cook County Forest Preserve District and its partners, the Brookfield Zoo and Chicago Botanic Garden, are committed to being a Fair and Equal place for all immigrants, refugees, and their families, and for people of color; and are committed to energetically advance equity and inclusion, and to oppose any efforts that conflict with those values or reverse critical protections to immigrants, refugees, and their families, and to people of color; and

WHEREAS, the national political climate over the past four years has produced fear and anxiety among many Cook County residents, particularly among people of color, immigrants, Muslims, Jews, and members of the LGBTQ community. Recent events within Cook County and the Forest Preserve District have demonstrated that there is increased violence against diverse communities; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has also perpetrated xenophobia towards the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. Over the course of approximately a year during the pandemic, 3,800 anti-Asian racist incidents such as verbal harassment, shunning, physical assault, and civil rights violations were reported across the country. Out of those incidents, nearly 68% were towards AAPI women; and

WHEREAS, the Forest Preserve District remains committed to protecting the civil rights of all residents and immigrant groups, to work toward equity and inclusion, and to ensure that all residents of Cook County and visitors feel welcome and safe in the Forest Preserves.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative and Intergovernmental Relations Committee hold a hearing for Forest Preserve District officials to report on current policies and practices and for input from our residents concerning both current policies and practices as well as best practices for protecting civil rights and welcoming all immigrant groups and people of color who visit the Cook County Forest Preserves into the future.