

**PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE TO FILE 24-1087
(County Board Agenda 1/25/2024)**

Sponsored by: MONICA GORDON, Cook County Board of Commissioners

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

REQUESTING THAT CONGRESS FUNDS MORE COMPREHENSIVE MENOPAUSE RESEARCH AND ADVANCE WOMEN'S HEALTH THROUGH FUNDING EDUCATION ON SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT OF MENOPAUSE

WHEREAS, menopause is the time that marks the end of women's menstrual cycles. It is diagnosed after 12 months without a menstrual period. Women first experience menopause in their 40s or 50s, the average age is 51 in the United States, and symptoms can last anywhere from 7 to 14 years; and

WHEREAS, menopause, a natural biological process, manifests with physical and emotional symptoms, such as hot flashes, disrupted sleep, mood changes, and lower energy, among many others. There are many effective treatments available, from lifestyle adjustments to hormone therapy; and

WHEREAS, after menopause, the low levels of estrogen and progesterone raise the risk of heart disease, osteoporosis, stroke, lead poisoning, urinary incontinence, and oral issues like cavities; and

WHEREAS, per an article published by the National Institute on Aging (NIA) in May of 2022: "Menopause itself may contribute to structural and functional vascular changes. Within one year of the final menstrual period, arterial stiffness significantly increased — beyond what would be expected from aging and risk factors alone." and

WHEREAS, per the NIA, studies showed that Black women had experienced more, and earlier, arterial stiffness than white women. Cardiovascular disease risk factor status at midlife was higher in Black and Hispanic women compared with white and Chinese women. In late midlife, some racial and ethnic groups were more likely to have changes in blood vessel health, such as thicker arterial walls in Black women, narrower blood vessels in all but Chinese women, and more arterial plaque in white women; and

WHEREAS, the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) is a long-term study launched by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute in 1991 that enrolled more than 161,000 women across the country, average age of 61. The goal was to prevent heart disease, certain cancers, osteoporosis, and other diseases that are common in postmenopausal women; and

WHEREAS, in 2002, the WHI study found that postmenopausal women who received a combination of hormones as part of Menopausal Hormone Treatment (MHT) had a higher risk of breast cancer and heart disease. The news led to the drop in use of MHT for menopausal symptoms; and

WHEREAS, in 1994, NIH launched the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation (SWAN), with a goal to understand physical, biological, physiological, and social changes that happen as women age. SWAN's 3,300 participants were more racially and ethnically diverse and were younger than WHI participants; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, the NIH-funded Menopause Strategies: Finding Lasting Answers for Symptoms and Health (MsFLASH) trials discovered that some antidepressants could reduce hot flashes (a common symptom of menopause); and

WHEREAS, in an August 17, 2023, Medical News Today article, medically reviewed by Stacy A. Henigsmann, DO, Jenna Fletcher writes that “Transgender people can experience menopause or similar symptoms, though the underlying hormonal processes may differ from those a cisgender person experiences”; and

WHEREAS, currently the MAYO clinic is researching menopause related symptoms and treatment in 23 studies, some still open for enrollment; and

WHEREAS, other than the WHI long-term study which started in 1991 and ended in 2005 and from which there is still not enough data available, no other comprehensive long-term study has been funded or initiated; and

WHEREAS, in an article published in the New England Journal of Medicine in March of 2016, JoAnn E. Manson, M.D., and Andrew M. Kaunitz, M.D., proposed a clear course correction of the W.H.I. findings as they pertained to women in their 40s and 50s by recommending Menopausal Hormone Treatment. They wrote that most primary care residency programs in the United States don’t provide adequate education in women’s health in general or in menopause management in particular; and, although more than three quarters of respondents considered care of menopausal women to be a “very important” area that should be addressed as a core component of their training in internal medicine, half reported a low comfort level managing menopausal symptoms, more than three quarters indicated that training opportunities in this area were limited, and more than one third indicated that they had no clinical experience managing menopausal symptoms in the previous 6 months; and

WHEREAS, in an article published in the journal Stroke in November of 2015, Rebecca C. Thurston, Samar R. El Khoudary, Ping Guo Tepper, Elizabeth A. Jackson, Hadine Joffe, Hsiang-Yu Chen and Karen A. Matthews report that women who had more hot flashes — at least four a day — tended to have more signs of cardiovascular disease. The link was even stronger than the association between cardiovascular risk and obesity, or cardiovascular risk and high blood pressure; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Pauline Maki, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Illinois at Chicago, established associations between hot flashes and mild cognitive changes during menopause. Dr. Maki found a clear correlation between the number of a woman’s hot flashes and her memory performance. In a report published in the journal Neurology in October of 2022, Dr. Maki and Dr. Thurston report a strong correlation between the number of hot flashes a woman has during sleep and signs of damage to the tiny vessels of the brain; and

WHEREAS, on January 11, 2024, First Lady Jill Biden made a stop at the University of Illinois Chicago to highlight the importance of more research on menopause and women's health. Dr. Biden was joined by Dr. Maki, who said that the worse hot flashes women have, the harder it is to remember words, and that on average, Black women experience hot flashes for 10 years.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners does hereby urge the United States Congress to fund more comprehensive research on menopause and the long-lasting effects of menopause on women’s health; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners does hereby requests that more funding be allocated for the education on the symptoms and effects of menopause for medical workers, including primary doctors, gynecologists, and specialists to help them identify symptoms leading to, during and after menopause; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the members of this Board do hereby request that the Cook County Health and Hospitals System evaluate their educational materials and disseminate information updated from currently available studies on the symptoms and treatment of menopause to all their medical staff whereas in the form of printed material or by holding workshops to advance women's health; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a suitable copy of this Resolution be tendered to the Illinois' Congressional delegation, the House Speaker and Minority Leader, the Senate Majority Leader and Minority Leader, and the White House.