

**PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE TO FILE 22-4706  
(Finance Committee 9/21/2022)**

**Sponsored by:** KEVIN B. MORRISON, Cook County Board of Commissioners

**PROPOSED RESOLUTION REQUESTING A MEETING OF THE COOK COUNTY FINANCE COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS ACCESS TO CAPITAL CHALLENGES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES IN COOK COUNTY**

**WHEREAS**, the Cook County Policy Roadmap, presented by President Preckwinkle in 2018, emphasizes creating Vital Communities through a goal of pursuing inclusive economic and community growth by supporting residents, growing businesses, attracting investment, and nurturing talent; and

**WHEREAS**, the Cook County Policy Roadmap section on Vital Communities contains the objective to, support expanded opportunities for local businesses, women or Black, Brown, Indigenous Nations, and Asian American-owned businesses and firms owned by people living with disabilities and a goal to expand Cook County’s toolbox of available resources for small- and medium-sized businesses and entrepreneurs; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Commissioners supports that goal and seeks to see greater opportunity for small businesses and entrepreneurs to thrive in their districts; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2020, the Board of Commissioners passed a resolution calling for an outside evaluation of the suburban Cook County small business ecosystem and the needs of those small businesses; and

**WHEREAS**, Cook County retained Next Street to conduct this evaluation and present the findings to the Cook County Economic Development Advisory Committee’s Small Business sub-committee; and

**WHEREAS**, the resulting report and data from Next Street’s evaluation led to recommendation and launch of several programs including small business grant programs, manufacturing grant programs, and the Cook County Small Business Source; and

**WHEREAS**, the Cook County Equity Fund Report released in 2022 includes a policy recommendation to develop the small business and entrepreneurship ecosystem, especially for Black and Latine residents, to reduce the racial wealth gap and further states; and

**WHEREAS**, the Equity Fund Report further states, “Black and Latine business owners and entrepreneurs face significant disparities in access to capital at every stage, from early business development to expansion to emergency needs. This limits the survival and growth rate of these companies and limits wealth building in Black and Latine communities. Cook County should strategically target this support to suburban Cook County communities, which lack the existing private and nonprofit assistance available in the City of Chicago”; and

**WHEREAS**, the most requested service from small businesses to the Cook County Small Business Source is help with access to capital; and

**WHEREAS**, since 2020, Cook County Small Business Source has supported over 2700 small businesses with direct assistance. The businesses that have been served have been 55% women-owned businesses, 67% Black, Brown, Indigenous Nations, and Asian American-owned businesses, and 46% have 0-5 employees; and

**WHEREAS,** Cook County Small Business Source data shows that businesses requesting financing support tend to be smaller and more diverse; and

**WHEREAS,** Cook County's Bureau of Economic Development and the Economic Development Advisory Committee's Small Business Sub- Committee have considered both local and national data documenting the specific challenges for woman and BIPOC owned small business in accessing traditional financing options; and

**WHEREAS,** there are additional tools that Cook County could explore to leverage a spectrum of program models and resources to expand access to small business debt and equity financing and influence local financial institution; and

**WHEREAS,** Cook County Government is committed to supporting inclusive economic development and small businesses for all parts of Cook County and pursuing an Access to Capital initiative will further this work; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** that we request the Cook County Finance Committee to hold a meeting to discuss data surrounding Access to Capital and potential opportunities for Cook County to implement an Access to Capital program including hearing from the Bureau of Economic Development and Cook County's partner Next Street.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that the Bureau of Economic Development report back to the Cook County Finance Committee in nine months on the role of Cook County can be with Access to Capital programs and potential funding options.