



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING HEALTH LITERACY AWARENESS MONTH IN COOK COUNTY

WHEREAS, the month of October is National Health Literacy Awareness Month, a month-long initiative in the United States and worldwide, which aims to raise awareness about the importance of health literacy and promote the integration and expansion of health literacy programs; and

WHEREAS, better health literacy helps overcome barriers and challenges that may result in harm. Working collectively to improve health literacy can create a more equitable world where everyone can attain positive health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, health literacy and health outcomes are interconnected, with an estimated 14 percent, or 1 in 7, adults in the United States having below basic proficiency in health literacy; and

WHEREAS, limited health literacy is a barrier to accessing health information, proper medication use, and following instructions from a health care provider all of which may adversely affect health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2030, which sets data-driven national objectives to improve health and well-being over the next decade, defines personal health literacy as the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others; and

WHEREAS, further, organizational health literacy is defined as the degree to which organizations equitably enable individuals to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others; and

WHEREAS, personal health literacy is a social risk, associated with worse health care and health outcomes because individuals with limited personal health literacy are at higher risk of misunderstanding information that is important to achieving and maintaining health or losing their way in the fragmented health care system; and

WHEREAS, the impetus to divide the definition into 2 parts came from the Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary's Advisory Committee, which observed, "As health literacy research and practice have accumulated, we now more fully understand that responsibility for health literacy extends beyond individuals to include the organizations and professionals who create and deliver health information and services"; and

WHEREAS, health literacy is a foundational principle and overarching goal of Healthy People 2030 and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have long recognized that health literacy is not just the result of individual capacities but also the health-literacy related demands and complexities of the health care system; and

WHEREAS, putting health literacy principles into action advances health equity because health literacy has been identified as a contributor to health disparities, which are preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by populations that have been socially, economically, geographically, and environmentally disadvantaged, and there is significant overlap in demographic characteristics of those who are at risk for health disparities and low health literacy; and

WHEREAS, health literacy advances equity by making health information accessible to all populations. healthcare systems, public health organizations, and the people they employ can all play a role in making their information easy to find, understand, and use; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the connection between health literacy and health equity, this year's National Minority Health Month theme was designated as "Better Health Through Better Understanding". The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, has made it a priority to improve health outcomes for racial and ethnic minority communities by providing them with culturally and linguistically competent healthcare services, information, and resources; and

WHEREAS, when patients are provided with culturally and linguistically appropriate information by health care organizations, they are empowered to create healthier outcomes for themselves and their communities; and

WHEREAS, this Honorable Body wishes to promote and raise awareness of health literacy during the month of October;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the President and the Cook County Board of Commissioners, on behalf of the more than 5.2 million residents of Cook County, do hereby take this opportunity to acknowledge Health Literacy Awareness Month; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in conjunction with National Health Literacy Awareness Month, that the month of October 2023 be hereby declared Health Literacy Awareness Month in the County of Cook; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this text be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body.