



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 16-0546, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING AND APPRECIATING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF JOURNALIST BRANDON SMITH TO THE CAUSES OF TRANSPARENCY AND JUSTICE IN GOVERNMENT

WHEREAS, the Nov. 24 video release of LaQuan McDonald being fatally shot 16 times on Oct. 20, 2014, by a Chicago police officer focused the attention of the City, the State and the country on the need for comprehensive reform in the Chicago Police Department; and,

WHEREAS, Brandon Smith, the journalist who filed the Freedom of Information Act request that led to the court-ordered release of the aforementioned video, fought for the video's release out of a commitment to transparency and justice; and,

WHEREAS, Brandon Smith began his journalism career in 2007 working as an editorial assistant at the Washington Court House Record-Herald in Ohio where he reported and photographed breaking news stories; and,

WHEREAS, in 2009, Brandon Smith moved to Chicago to study journalism at Columbia College, where he worked for The Columbia Chronicle as an assistant sports & health editor; and,

WHEREAS, Brandon Smith is committed to the notion of journalism in the public interest, and a form of investigative journalism that fulfills the role of "watchdog" on the public's behalf; and,

WHEREAS, Brandon Smith was first made aware through activist William Calloway, that a video existed depicting the shooting of 17-year-old LaQuan McDonald 16 times by Chicago Police Officer Jason Van Dyke, and that Officer Van Dyke was unprovoked; and,

WHEREAS, Brandon Smith and William Calloway determined the best course of action in order to bring the incident to the awareness of the public at large was to file a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the City of Chicago to seek the video's release; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Chicago initially rejected Brandon Smith's FOIA request, which gave him standing to sue the City of Chicago in Cook County Circuit Court; and,

WHEREAS, on November 19, 2015 Circuit Court Judge Franklin Valderrama held in favor of Brandon Smith and ordered the video released; and,

WHEREAS, the release of the dashcam video depicting the police shooting death of LaQuan McDonald has resulted in a necessary and long overdue public debate and movement to make the necessary reforms so that justice in Chicago is administered in a manner that is equal and constitutional, without regard to skin color; and,

WHEREAS, if not for the tenacity and commitment of Brandon Smith, this video would not be released, and this difficult but necessary discussion would not be taking place;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the President and the Cook County Board of Commissioners, that Brandon Smith is to be commended for his fierce commitment to justice and transparency, and that the gratitude of the

President and the Cook County Board of Commissioners is to be extended to Brandon Smith for his contributions to the ongoing discussion and process of criminal justice reform.