



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 18-6145, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

PROPOSED RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORKER COOPERATIVES IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS

WHEREAS, a “worker cooperative” is a business that is cooperatively owned and controlled by its workers; and

WHEREAS, the worker cooperative model has proven to be an effective tool for creating and maintaining sustainable, dignified jobs; generating wealth; improving the quality of life of workers; and promoting community and local economic development, particularly for people who lack access to conventional means of business ownership; and

WHEREAS, many worker cooperatives in the United States today were designed to improve low-wage jobs and build wealth in communities most directly affected by inequality; and

WHEREAS, a 2009 University of Wisconsin study reported that there are an estimated 350 worker cooperatives throughout the country with a combined estimated total revenue of \$365 million, and it is believed these estimates are much larger today; and

WHEREAS, the local economy has lost thousands of well-paying manufacturing jobs that have mostly been replaced by minimum or low-wage service industry work and has expanded barriers to economic mobility for people of color, returning citizens, and immigrants; and

WHEREAS, there is a growing number of worker cooperatives throughout Cook County that currently lack access to capital, public awareness of the worker cooperative model, training and support services, and also face significant legal complexity; and

WHEREAS, the mandate of the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development includes fostering business growth, attraction, and retention; supporting workforce development, job creation, and sustainable employment; and, encouraging sustainable community investment; and

WHEREAS, worker cooperatives employ less common governance and financial structures, and because the County currently lacks programming and resources to help these beneficial enterprises thrive; now, therefore,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners supports the development and growth of worker cooperatives; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners celebrates the tremendous benefits of worker cooperatives in Cook County and supports the movement to create more worker cooperatives throughout the region; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development is encouraged to consider use of community development block grant (CDBG) funding where appropriate and other appropriate sources of funding to support local worker cooperatives and cooperative conversions, strengthen existing organizations that are incubating and training worker cooperatives in Cook County, and help to equip other organizations to provide such services, focusing on services to low income residents or in underserved areas; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Bureau of Economic Development is encouraged to help worker cooperatives access tailored resources created by community organizations and make referrals to technical assistance providers for individuals seeking to launch new worker cooperatives or convert conventional businesses to worker ownership, as well as seek opportunities to partner with worker cooperative initiatives such as the Chicagoland Cooperative Ecosystem Coalition on worker cooperative education initiatives; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, it is recommended that educational materials produced to serve as a resource for worker cooperatives and data on related outreach and funding be made publicly available on an annual basis where appropriate as determined by the partnerships created through this effort; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the federal, state and city of Chicago governments are encouraged to take steps to support worker cooperatives.