



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 19-1371, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION OF THE COOK COUNTY WOMEN'S CAUCUS HONORING THE 1ST AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN MEDICAL DIRECTOR OF COOK COUNTY HOSPITAL, DR. AGNES LATTIMER FOR HER ILLUSTRIOUS AND TRAILBLAZING CAREER

WHEREAS, Dr. Agnes Lattimer was born in Memphis, Tennessee to Arthur O'Neil and Hortense Lewis Lattimer on May 13, 1928, the oldest of six children and even as a young child knew that she wanted to become a doctor; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Lattimer was valedictorian of Booker T. Washington High School and received a full scholarship to Fisk University, where she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Biology and was a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc.; and

WHEREAS, as a young woman planning a career in medicine in the 1940s and 1950s, Agnes D. Lattimer faced the triple obstacles of poverty, sexism, and racism, yet she refused to be discouraged saying, "No obstacles could deter me from my purpose. Not the negative attitudes of others, not lack of money, nor lack of encouragement from outside my family; nothing could dissuade me from my goal."; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from Fisk University she moved to Chicago and worked as a housekeeper for 18 months to save for medical school and applied and was accepted to three medical schools in Chicago; The Chicago Medical School, the Northwestern University School of Medicine, and the University of Chicago School of Medicine; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lattimer enrolled in the Chicago Medical School in 1950 and encountered prejudice from the start, enduring almost daily questions about her place as a woman in medical school, but would go on to graduate as the only African American in her class and one of just two women, in 1954; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Lattimer completed her residency in Pediatrics at Michael Reese Hospital and became Chief Resident in her final year of the program and eventually became director of Ambulatory Pediatrics at Reese Hospital, where she revamped the patient care delivery system, bringing efficiency and greater access to care; and

WHEREAS, in 1958, she began private pediatric practice and later began teaching at the University of Illinois and the Chicago School of Medicine where she became an assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics; In 1968, students at the Chicago Medical School awarded her the Elsie and Phillip Sang Excellence in Teaching Award; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Lattimer would become Chair of the Division of Ambulatory Pediatrics at Cook County Hospital, Director of Fantus Health Center and later would be named Medical Director of Cook County Hospital in March of 1986 and was believed to be the only African American woman to head a major hospital at the time; and

WHEREAS, at Cook County, she oversaw safeguards to protect patients and staffers during the early days of AIDS, testified in Washington, D.C. on the need to fight hunger, and as the Chair of the Chicago Committee Against Lead Poisoning, she urged City Hall to crack down on owners of buildings with flaking lead paint; her efforts lead the City of

Chicago to pass housing ordinances to protect tenants and placed health centers in African-American neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Lattimer was most proud of having changed attitudes at Cook County, saying "I was able to impact all of the medical and surgical services by introducing a 'Philosophy of Caring' for the patients, which emphasized focusing on competence and compassion in the delivery of medical care."; and

WHEREAS, during her career, Dr. Lattimer received many honors and accolades, including being named as Pediatrician of the Year by the Illinois Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the Chicago Medical School and from the Michael Reese Alumni Association; Outstanding Executive Employee in Cook County Government in 1987; and also received Outstanding Community Service Awards from many communities throughout the City; and

WHEREAS, considered a legend by her colleagues, Dr. Lattimer was a leading expert in areas such as lead poisoning and its effects on childhood development; a steadfast advocate for quality healthcare for the underprivileged; and she commanded respect and gave it, treating patients living in poverty with the same empathy she showed wealthy patients; and

WHEREAS, after retiring in 1995, Dr. Lattimer remained active in community health issues; continued to enjoy playing bridge, chess and tennis, and retained a special love for flying airplanes, for which she first earned a license in 1966; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Lattimer passed last year at the age of 89 after a bout with cancer at her South Side home;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners Women's Caucus proudly honors Dr. Agnes Lattimer for her storied trailblazing career and her service to the community, the City of Chicago and Cook County; and

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