



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

REQUESTING A HEARING OF THE TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS THE FEASIBILITY AND EFFICACY OF VOLUNTARY REMOTE COURT APPEARANCES

WHEREAS, audio and video appearances in courtrooms offer an enormous potential for savings, revenue generation, environmental benefits, improved safety and remote access to justice which promotes the administration of justice and equity in the courtroom; and

WHEREAS, remote court appearances allow attorneys and the public to appear in court for routine matters involving Civil, Criminal, Family, Probate, Mental Health, Traffic, Juvenile, Bankruptcy and other proceedings without leaving their homes or offices; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, In its *Call to Action: Achieving Civil Justice for All*, the Conference of Chief Justices' Civil Justice Improvement Committee set forth a convincing series of findings and recommendations, which among them was the promotion of remote audio and video services for court hearings and management; and

WHEREAS, the Center for Legal and Court Technology, a non-profit research organization that improves the administration of Justice through the use of technology, progressively encourages the utilization of remote and video court appearances throughout the United States to enhance the efficiency of judicial administration and court proceedings for both attorney's and the public; and

WHEREAS, in 1992, the Supreme Court of Illinois adopted rule 185 to allow for telephonic appearances in certain civil proceedings; and in 2017, the Supreme Court of Illinois amended its rules to also allow for remote video conferences; and

WHEREAS, in Los Angeles Superior Court a system with approximately 494 judicial officers and comparable to the Cook County Circuit Court, over 200 of those judicial officers allow for remote court appearances with a volume of over 83,000 appearances in 2018; moreover, approximately \$4.6 million in revenue over a three-year period attributable to remote court appearances in Los Angeles was generated; and

WHEREAS, in Illinois, approximately 20 counties spread over 12 Judicial Circuits utilize some form of audio and video remote appearances with approximately 4,516 remote appearance being completed in 2018; more particularly, the following "Collar" county courts use remote court appearance technology: the 16th Judicial Circuit - Kane County 3,305 appearances since 11/2011, the 18th Judicial Circuit Court - DuPage County 1,379 since 9/2014, the 19th Judicial Circuit - Lake County 1,456 since 6/2016 and the 22nd Judicial Circuit - McHenry County 2,280 since 4/2014; and

WHEREAS, Cook County has been and continues to be a leader in technology through strategic Countywide initiatives and collaboration with elected offices; thus, our existing applications and resources will allow for a seamless integration of our existing technology platforms with audio and video remote appearances; and

WHEREAS, the use of video and audio remote court appearances has the potential to offer key benefits to the public, such as cost savings on attorney fees for lower-income citizens, increasing pro bono assistance, availability of court interpreters, travel costs and work absences associated with attending a court hearing can deter self-represented litigants from effectively pursuing or defending their legal rights, thereby further promoting access to justice in courts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners does hereby request a hearing of the Technology and Innovation Committee be convened to review and discuss the potential feasibility, application, and access to justice that remote court appearances may have in Cook County courtrooms; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a representative from the Chief Judge's Office, Court of Clerk's Office, and Cook County Bureau of Technology appear before the Committee and be prepared to update the committee on the feasibility and efficacy of remote court appearances.