



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 19-1958, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE FOUNDERS AND CO-OWNERS OF VEE-JAY RECORDS, VIVIAN CARTER-BRACKEN, JAMES BRACKEN AND CALVIN CARTER

WHEREAS, Vee-Jay Records was one of the first black-owned American independent record label established in 1953 in Gary, Indiana; and

WHEREAS, its principal office, and longest tenancy, was located at 1449 S. Michigan Avenue, today a historic landmark site for that very reason; and

WHEREAS, Vee-Jay Records label name was derived from the first name initials of the husband and wife team of Vivian Carter-Bracken (Vee) and James Bracken (Jay); and

WHEREAS, The Brackens along with Vivian's brother, Calvin Carter, prospered Vee-Jay Records into a successful black-owned independent record company specializing in blues, jazz, gospel, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll; and

WHEREAS, Vee-Jay Records produced major acts on the label in the 1950s including blues singers Jimmy Reed, Memphis Slim, and John Lee Hooker, and rhythm and blues vocal groups the Spaniels, the Dells, and the El Dorados; and

WHEREAS, in the 1960s, Vee-Jay Records became a major soul label with Jerry Butler and the Impressions, Gene Chandler, Dee Clark, and Betty Everett having hit singles on both the pop and R&B charts; and

WHEREAS, Vee-Jay Records was also the first label to nationally issue a record by The Pips, who eventually became Gladys Knight and the Pips in 1962 when they moved to Fury Records; and

WHEREAS, Vee-Jay Records had significant success with pop/rock and roll acts, such as the Four Seasons (their first non-black act) and the Beatles; and

WHEREAS, Vee-Jay Records acquired the rights to some of the early recordings by the Beatles through a licensing deal with EMI, as the EMI American affiliate Capitol Records was initially uninterested in the group; and

WHEREAS, Vee-Jay Records was the only American label willing to give the Beatles an opportunity in the United States and became the first U.S. record company to release recordings by the Beatles including "Twist and Shout", "Please Please Me", "From Me to You", "Do You Want to Know a Secret", and "Love Me Do"; and

WHEREAS, in the mid-1960s, Vee-Jay Records signed the former successful child singer Jimmy Boyd, known for the hit "I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus", ventured into folk music with Hoyt Axton and New Wine Singers, and also picked up Little Richard who re-recorded his special hits and recorded (1965) "I Don't Know What You've Got (But It's Got Me)", an R&B success with Jimi Hendrix, Don Covay, Bernard Purdie, Ronny Miller, and Billy Preston; and

WHEREAS, Vee-Jay Records' jazz line accounted for a small portion of the company's releases, recording artists such as Wynton Kelly, Lee Morgan, Eddie Harris, and Wayne Shorter; and

WHEREAS, Vee-Jay Records also had a major gospel line, recording such acts as the Staple Singers, the Argo Singers,

Swan Silvertones, the Caravans, Dorothy Love Coates and the Gospel Harmonettes, and Maceo Woods; and

WHEREAS, Vee-Jay Records even released comedy on LPs, with records by Dick Gregory, and Them Poems, Mason Williams' early nightclub act recorded with a live studio audience in 1964; and

WHEREAS, Vee-Jay Records were pioneers who contributed immensely to black art and culture, entrepreneurship, black pride, diversity, and gave opportunities to all the persons it recorded, released and employed including those who received Grammys, American Music Awards and are Inductees in the Rock N Roll and Blues Hall of Fame; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the President and the Cook County Board of Commissioners, on behalf of the residents of Cook County, honor Vivian Carter-Bracken, James Bracken, and Calvin Carter, Founders and Owners of Vee-Jay Records and praise their contributions to the African-American art and culture of Cook County.