



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 19-1896, **Version:** 1

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### **PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

#### **HONORING JESSICA LYNN BRYAR FOR A LIFE WELL LIVED**

**WHEREAS**, Jessica Lynn Bryar was a proud and accomplished employee of the Cook County Public Defender's Office for more than twenty years; and

**WHEREAS**, after a valiant fight, Jessica Lynn Bryar succumbed to illness on February 3, 2019. She was 46 years old; and

**WHEREAS**, Jessica earned her J.D. from Loyola University Chicago School of Law and B.A. from Boston College. During law school she supplemented her studies by serving as a Street Law Teacher in three Chicago schools and was a Program Coordinator for a Chicago social service agency that serves teen mothers. She also volunteered at First Defense Legal Aid, an organization that provides legal representation and advice to individuals taken into police custody. There, she interviewed clients, documented circumstances of arrest, negotiated for clients' release and facilitated communication with family; and

**WHEREAS**, as a Williams Fellow throughout law school, she re-developed volunteer teaching program at the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center. She researched Law Related Education (LRE) programs nation-wide, attended national LRE conferences, assessed residents' needs, developed and co-authored LRE curricula, recruited volunteers, developed and conducted training sessions, implemented program each semester for over 60 student and other professional volunteers and evaluated program's effectiveness; and

**WHEREAS**, in the summer of 1996, she worked as an extern for the Honorable George M. Marovich, assisting clerks in the drafting of opinions, in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois; and

**WHEREAS**, Jessica joined the Cook County Public Defender's Office as an assistant public defender in December 1998. Jessica worked in the First Municipal, Juvenile Justice, Felony, and Civil Divisions, becoming an Attorney Supervisor in Civil in 2008. As an Attorney Supervisor, she aided in the development of the new Child Protection Conflict Unit. In March 2013, she was promoted to Chief of Civil where she and her staff represented the needs of indigent individuals in the Child Protection and Mental Health divisions of the Circuit Court of Cook County; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2008, Jessica worked as a consultant to the Juvenile Justice Initiative (JJI) where she aided in the development and presentation of JJI's vision for a model after-care program for Illinois youth exiting the juvenile prison system. She researched and visited nationally recognized after-care programs, coordinated with Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice and the MacArthur Foundation funded Models for Change program and provided support for JJI's legislative advocacy; and

**WHEREAS**, Jessica was a formidable advocate and vocal champion for children and families in need of representation, especially the most vulnerable. Her leadership, compassion, and dedication to ensuring equity and justice for those she served were inspiring to everyone fortunate enough to know her; and

**WHEREAS**, one of Jessica's proudest moments was in June 2017, when she graduated from the University of Chicago's Civic Leadership Academy. In addition to being a proud member of the Civic Leadership Academy ('17), she served on the American Bar Association's National Alliance for Parent Representation Steering Committee, and Illinois Department

of Children and Family Service's Cook County Transformation Team; and

**WHEREAS**, Jessica was the youngest of seven children. Her caring, genuine spirit and outgoing personality were evident from a young age. A friend proudly boasts that Jess was the ONLY female member of the Fairfield Flyers, the toughest street "gang" of 7 and 8 year-olds from California to Western and 103rd to 107th. She shot hoops with the boys in the backyards and soon they were cheering her on, at the courts of Fisher Elementary and St. Ignatius College Prep; and

**WHEREAS**, Jessica had a close relationship with her brothers and sisters and greatly admired both of her parents. She was fortunate to be able to accompany her father, George, on a road trip to Branson, Missouri, where he was honored for his accomplishments as a US Army surgeon in Vietnam. Her mother, Cice, was her dear friend and confidante. They would frequently attend the Goodman, or matinee movies, or just enjoy an afternoon of shopping; and

**WHEREAS**, Jessica's eleven years of Jesuit education, combined with her altruistic morals, naturally led her to a career path as a woman for others. She was committed to giving a voice to people who weren't heard, but deserved to be heard. She believed that everybody had the right to feel valued, and safe, and loved; and

**WHEREAS**, Jessica was loved and respected by a host of family, friends, and colleagues who appreciated her remarkable and steady kindness and grace, her hearty laugh, and her quiet but indomitable inner strength. Her passionate celebration of life, positive spirit, and vibrant outlook left a lasting impression on all; and

**WHEREAS**, she is survived by parents Cicely Bryar and George Bryar; siblings Sharon (Bob) Eichinger, Julie (Tom) Smith, Liz (Terry) Raser, Paul (Jen), Colin (Sarah) and Kevin (Denise) Bryar. She was "Fancy Aunt Jess" to 16 nieces and nephews.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Board of Commissioners of Cook County, on behalf of the 5.2 million residents of Cook County takes great pleasure in honoring and celebrating Jessica Bryar's life and her many contributions bettering the lives of the citizens of Cook County, Illinois;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a suitable copy of this Resolution be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and that an official copy of the same be tendered to the family of Jessica Bryar.