



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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**File #: 22-2734, Version: 1**

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### **PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

#### **MEMORIAL RESOLUTION CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF HELEN MARIE RAMIREZ-ODELL**

**WHEREAS**, Helen Marie Ramirez-Odell, loving wife, mother, sister, grandmother, great-grandmother, aunt, and fierce activist, passed away on March 22, 2022 at 79 years of age; and

**WHEREAS**, Helen was born in Chicago on July 22, 1942 to Irving J. and Jessamine Hershinow, and grew up in the Lincoln Square neighborhood; she attended Loyola University Chicago, where she received her B.S.N and R.N. degrees in nursing in 1964; and

**WHEREAS**, After receiving her degree, she began working as a nurse at Chicago Public Schools where she stayed for over 40 years before retiring in 2001; and

**WHEREAS**, Helen's activism began in the 1960s when she discovered she could not secure credit to make a purchase from Goldblatt's because she was a woman, and she joined Chicago NOW, where she became an activist for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment; and

**WHEREAS**, In the 1970s, Helen joined the Chicago Teachers Union and became a member of its Women's Rights Committee, which she chaired from 1984 to 2009, and worked to end sexual harassment, supported women's advancement at the Washburne trade School, sought to improve conditions and employment for women in sports, promoted women's labor history, supported women political candidates, and fought for women's health, birth control, and reproductive choice; Helen was also active in the Chicago Coalition of Labor Union Women and Cassandra, a Radical Feminist Nurses Network; and

**WHEREAS**, In 1995, Helen helped found the Women in Labor History Project, later called the Working Women's History Project, which is a nonprofit organization focused on preserving and promoting the stories of historical and living Chicago women who contribute to achieving justice and equality in areas of labor, as well as women's human and civil rights; one of the first acts of the Working Women's History Project was to publish Helen's book, *Working Without Uniforms: School Nursing in Chicago 1951-2001*, which is a collection of oral histories of the Chicago Public School nurses; and

**WHEREAS**, Helen worked with a coalition across the City of Chicago on the Mother Jones Heritage project, the Mother Jones statue campaign, to honor the contributions of Mother Jones to the Labor Movement and to women; and

**WHEREAS**, Helen is preceded in death by her parents, Irving and Jessamine; she leaves to cherish her memories, her husband, Paul A. Odell; daughter, Moira (Ramirez) Melendez; step-children, Cyndi (Odell) Christel and Stephen (Merri) Odell; grandchildren, Michael Melendez, Carson (Sarah), Steve, Ryan (Emily), and David; great-grandchildren, Makailyn, Isabelle, and Ryan Junior; brothers, Bob (the late Pat) Hershinow and Paul Hershinow; nephew, Kevin McLinden; cousins, Ellen Nyberg, Larry (Marianne) Nyberg; and a host of other friends and family; and

**WHEREAS**, Helen will be deeply missed by her family, friends, and all who knew and loved her; and

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, That the Cook County Board of Commissioners do hereby extend our most heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Helen Marie Ramirez-Odell; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and presented to the family of Helen Marie Ramirez-Odell as a sign of our honor and respect.