



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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**File #: 23-1867, Version: 1**

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### PROPOSED RESOLUTION

#### HONORING J. IVY

**WHEREAS**, J. Ivy is an award-winning poet, author, actor, and philanthropist who exemplifies the spirit of excellence, perseverance, and creativity in Cook County; and

**WHEREAS**, J. Ivy was born on the South Side of Chicago on March 3, 1976, to WVON radio personality James Ivy Richardson and Pamela Richardson, a registered nurse who served at Cook County Hospital; and, as a child the family, along with two brothers, Virgil, and Sergio, relocated to the south suburbs; and

**WHEREAS**, he lost a third brother, Demond, to gun violence in 1988, sparking his commitment to eradicating the apathy, despair and hopelessness that ensnared far too many of his peers; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1994 J. Ivy, graduated from Rich Central High School in Olympia Fields, and attended Illinois State University where he majored in marketing and worked various jobs while daring to dream big; and

**WHEREAS**, J. Ivy's poetry and storytelling styles were influenced by Gil Scott-Heron, The Last Poets, Hip Hop musician Slick Rick, Illinois Poet Laureate Gwendolyn Brooks, as well as civil rights champion Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who inspired him to demonstrated speaking truth to power; and, in 2001 he received his big break when he performed, "I Need to Write" on HBO's Def Poetry Jam, which earned him a Peabody Award; and

**WHEREAS**, J. Ivy's career attracted more recognition when he wrote and was featured on the single, "Never Let Me Down," on Kanye West's four times platinum, Grammy Award-winning album College Dropout, featuring Jay Z; and, he was credited with giving EGOT winner singer/songwriter John Stephens his moniker, "John Legend;" and

**WHEREAS**, J. Ivy married Chicago, native singer/songwriter Tarrey Torae in 2005, and together they wrote and produced the album "For Better or Worse," and, he also recorded solo albums, "Down at Loose Skillet" (2001), "Here I Am" (2010), "My Daddy's Records" (2017) and, "Digging in Papes: The Mixtape" (2014); and

**WHEREAS**, he has written three best-selling books "Poetically Black: Ivy in the Making" (1995), "Here I Am" (2012) and "Dear Father: Breaking the Cycle of Pain" (2015, Simon & Schuster); and, after being commissioned by NBA champion Michael Jordan and Dr. Deepak Chopra, in 2020 he wrote and narrated Beyoncé's "Black Is King" promo for "Return of the NBA" which won a Clio award-winning for innovation and creative excellence; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2022 J. Ivy received a Grammy nomination for his fifth studio album "Catching Dreams: Live at Fort Knox Chicago," which was nominated in the category of "Best Spoken Word Album," alongside actors Levar Burton, Don Cheadle, comedian Dave Chappelle, poet Amir Suliman, and former President Barack Obama; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2023 the U.S. Recording Academy created a new Grammy category for poets-Best Spoken Word Poetry Album, which recognizes excellence in spoken word albums specific to the performance of poetry with or without music, thanks to J. Ivy a national trustee for the Recording Academy who pushed for the Grammys to honor the form for years; and

**WHEREAS**, on February 5, 2023, J. Ivy won the 1<sup>st</sup> ever Grammy for Best Spoken Word Poetry Album, the category he

helped create, for his 6th album ‘The Poet Who Sat by the Door’ becoming the 1<sup>st</sup> poet to win a Grammy since Maya Angelou, who won 3 times the last in 2002; and

**WHEREAS**, J. Ivy has also been awarded by national and local organizations, including receiving two NAACP Image recognitions (for documentaries “Muhammad Ali People’s Champ;” and “Martin: The Legacy of a King,”) both of which aired on Black Entertainment Television; and

**WHEREAS**, J. Ivy was the lead writer, voice director, and cast member of the record-breaking Netflix documentary “jeen-yuhs: A Kanye West Trilog” directed by Coodie and; Chike; and, after serving as the Recording Academy’s Chicago chapter president for two years, in 2021 he became the youngest person to serve as a national trustee thus becoming the first poet in the history of the Academy to hold those positions; and

**WHEREAS**, he also serves as resident poet Ernie Barnes Foundation; and he is a member of the Screen Actors Guild, the Writers’ Guild; and

**WHEREAS**, J. Ivy devotes considerable time to speaking to students, aspiring artists and disadvantaged youth, and other marginalized communities throughout Cook County, the State of Illinois, and the nation; and he also mentors; and

**WHEREAS**, J. Ivy is a recognized advocate for mental health and suicide prevention nothing that both his works, “Never Let Me Down” and “Dear Father” have been credited by scores of people as the reason they resisted self-harm or suicide; and his work with the fatherless to reduce depression and tap into the power of forgiveness, leading many to reconnect with their dads and to change their lives; and

**WHEREAS**, J. Ivy continues his commitment to education, excellence, and community service as a resident of Richton Park, IL;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, the President and the Cook County Board of Commissioners hereby acknowledge and recognize the contributions of Cook County resident, son, husband, poet, author, songwriter, actor J. Ivy and congratulate him for his recent Grammy award and his numerous accomplishments; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT**, that this text be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and that a suitable copy be presented to J. Ivy as a symbol of our respect and esteem.