

WHEREAS, a supermajority of the Chicago City Council passed the Empowering Communities for Public Safety (ECPS) Ordinance in July 2021, after years of community advocacy, that established elected, three-person District Councils to represent each of Chicago's 22 police districts; AND

WHEREAS, the purpose of the District Councils include building connections between the police and the community, collaborating in the development and implementation of community policing initiatives, and ensuring that residents have a forum to raise and address any concerns about policing in their police district; AND

WHEREAS, in May of 2023, more than 60 Chicagoans were elected as public servants by voters for the first time to serve in these community-centered roles and upon taking office realized that the Illinois Open Meetings Act (OMA)'s application to each of their three-member bodies imposed a huge barrier to realizing the mission that the City Council envisioned in creating them; AND

WHEREAS, under the OMA, no two District Councilors may communicate about their work at all except during prescheduled public meetings held after at least 48 hours' notice, making it illegal for one to call or exchange emails with another to perform basic functions including creating agenda for meetings, being in attendance at meetings with police commanders, or responding to emergency public safety situations; AND

WHEREAS, the purpose for the passage of the OMA, namely transparency and accountability of public officials for the decisions they make on behalf of the people, is noble, and must be preserved; AND

WHEREAS, however, those purposes are distorted when applied to the very specific case of these District Councils; and the restrictions the OMA imposes subvert effective government and defeat, rather than enhance, this new form of civic engagement; AND

WHEREAS, the current OMA limitations harm the vision for which District Councils were created and threaten to deter others from running for these positions in future municipal elections; AND

WHEREAS, legislation has been introduced in the Illinois General Assembly (ILGA), SB0105 and HB2582, that would amend the OMA to permit District Councils to do the job they were created to perform; AND

WHEREAS, such legislation would permit two members of the same District Council to communicate about their work so long as no official action are taken; enable closed sessions, under full OMA protections, regarding sensitive public safety issues that implicate specific allegations or investigations; and would allow District Councils to hold special meetings remotely, permitting the full public body to plan their regular meetings and better reach community organizations;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Chicago City Council expresses its support for the 104th ILGA to pass legislation reforming the OMA as specified above to permit District Councils to fulfill their mission as envisioned; AND

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that suitable copies of this resolution be prepared and presented to President of the Illinois Senate Don Harmon, Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives Emmanuel "Chris" Welch, and Illinois Governor JB Pritzker.



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Andre Vasquez  
Alderperson, 40th Ward