



# Office of the City Clerk

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## Legislation Text

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### **RESOLUTION CONCERNING TREATMENT OF HAITIAN REFUGEES**

WHEREAS, since the landing of Christopher Columbus on the westernmost part of the largest Caribbean archipelago in the country known today as Haiti, both its natives and the subsequently transplanted African population have known constant poverty, forced child labor, and hunger struggles; and

WHEREAS, three centuries of Spanish and French colonization spawned 15 years of populist uprisings starting in 1789 and destroying much of Haiti's agricultural resources and infrastructure. On December 4, 1803, French forces surrendered which led to a disastrous civil war that ended in 1820; and

WHEREAS the continuation of such deplorable conditions has been brought about not only by colonization, slavery, and corrupt governance but also natural disasters such as constantly recurring major earthquakes and hurricanes. Beside chronic governmental coups and ruthless and corrupt dictatorships (that created so much civil unrest, the global warming phenomena is exacerbating the size and strength of its weather-related disasters. This has led to a chronic mass exodus of Haitians seeking refuge anywhere they could; and

WHEREAS In July 2021, Haitian President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated at his home, leaving the country in political turmoil. Within the following month, a powerful earthquake struck Haiti, leading to more than 1,400 deaths. However, the current wave of asylum seekers appears to have been on the move since the last calamitous earthquake in 2010. Some had initially migrated to Brazil but conditions, especially after the economic downturn and other crises in that country, were such that they couldn't stay there. Their next stop was Chile where they weren't welcomed either and sometimes faced a harrowing journey through jungles and across borders into countries like Guatemala; and

WHEREAS an immense immigration detention facility in southern Mexico holds people who've crossed the border from Guatemala. From there they made it through dangerous terrain up to the US-Mexico border, traversing many miles and facing multiple police forces, prisons, and natural challenges ... only to face brutality at the hands of the U.S. Border Patrol; and

WHEREAS, the Chicago Aldermanic Black Caucus chairman, Ald. Jason C. Ervin (26<sup>th</sup> Ward) reacted to the images of the US Customs and Border Patrol agents brutalizing Haitian migrants along the United States border, stating, "To see US Border Patrol agents whipping and abusing Haitian migrants seeking asylum is a horrific sight and nearly unbelievable in the year 2021... I implore them to hold the US Customs and Border Patrol accountable... The legacy of slaves being rounded up with whips in this country is too

recent to tolerate the mistreatment of any human being in our country, but especially Black men, women, and children enduring great danger in the pursuit of freedom"; and

WHEREAS caucus member Ald. Maria Hadden, whose 49<sup>th</sup> Ward is home to the largest Haitian community in Chicago, stated, "We are all shocked and horrified to see members of the United States Border Patrol brandishing whips and rounding up Haitian migrants who have faced nothing but despair and doom while trying to seek asylum

in the United States. The criminalization of seeking refuge here in the US is deplorable, and I am deeply troubled by the actions of our government. My heart breaks for the people of Haiti who have continued to face destruction, uncertainty, and now horrific violence as they attempt to recover from tragedy after tragedy. I hope that this administration comes to its senses and puts an end to these appalling acts." now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that we, the mayor and members of the City of Chicago City Council, gathered together this 14<sup>th</sup> day of October 2021 AD, do hereby implore Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas to provide a full accounting of this to US Senate Judiciary Chairman Richard Durbin.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this legislative body memorialize US President Joseph R. Biden to develop and implement a far more humanitarian immigration policy that reflects the values held by our nation of immigrants.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that suitable copies of this resolution be prepared and presented to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, Hon. Richard Durbin, US senator from Illinois, and Hon. Joseph R. Biden, President of the United States.