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**MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES CITY HEALTH CARE BENEFITS
TO COVER GENDER REASSIGNMENT SERVICES**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced that the City of Chicago is poised to remove the exclusion of gender reassignment services from city health care benefits; the change will be implemented for all non-union employees, and the city is working with labor partners to also remove the exclusion for union members. The change, which will apply to current city employees and their dependents, would go into effect on October 1, 2015.

“Chicago is known for being a city that is welcoming to all and inclusive of every resident, and this new policy is in line with our efforts to support the rights and well-being of transgender individuals,” said Mayor Emanuel. “With this change, Chicago will ensure that transgender city employees are able to receive the medical care that they need.”

Under the policy change, coverage of male-to-female or female-to-male surgical procedures would be standard for city employees covered by city health care plans and their dependents. The city is in the process of finalizing the specific criteria that must be met in order to receive coverage of these procedures and which specific procedures will be covered. The change is expected to be approved by the Benefits Committee during its August 11 meeting.

The change to city policy comes after the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois brought the denial of health insurance coverage for a transgender city employee to their attention.

“We commend the City of Chicago for recognizing that no one should be denied insurance coverage because of who they are,” said John Knight, LGBT & HIV Project Director for the ACLU of Illinois. “More and more cities, states, private employers and the federal government have gotten rid of these outdated policy exclusions that make no sense, from either a medical or an economic standpoint. It’s wonderful news that Chicago employees will now have access to the gender affirming care they need.”

Chicago will be the largest city to remove the exclusion of these services from their health care plans, joining San Francisco, Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia. Last year, a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services appeals board ruled that Medicare may no longer exclude sex-reassignment surgery from coverage. Additionally, a number of companies based in Chicago or that have a large Chicago presence have already removed such exclusions from their private health

insurance plans, including AbbVie Inc, Aon Corp., Exelon Corp., Groupon Inc., Hyatt Hotels Corp. and United Airlines.

This action taken by Mayor Emanuel is one of many progressive stances he has taken in solidarity with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community throughout his career in public service. While serving in Congress for the state of Illinois, he received an endorsement from the Human Rights Campaign, which gave him a score of 100 percent on issues of LGBTQ equality, and in 2005, he secured \$1.25 million in federal money for the Center on Halsted, the Midwest's most comprehensive community center dedicated to advancing community and securing the health and well-being of the LGBTQ people of Chicagoland. More recently, as President Obama's Chief-of-Staff, he played an important role in the President's executive order on hospital visitation protections for same-sex couples.

Since taking office as Mayor of Chicago, Mayor Emanuel has pursued and supported a wide range of initiatives to ensure that the City of Chicago is inclusive of LGBTQ individuals and communities in Chicago, including marriage equality.

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