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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES FIRST-EVER VIRTUAL COMMENCEMENT CELEBRATION FOR ALL CLASS OF 2020 HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS IN CHICAGO

Oprah Winfrey to Deliver Commencement Address to Graduating Seniors

CHICAGO – In an effort to celebrate the city's high school seniors who will not have a traditional graduation this spring, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, in partnership with Citadel, today announced she will host Chicago's first-ever, virtual citywide high school commencement celebration in mid-June. Long-time Chicagoan and global icon, Oprah Winfrey, will give the commencement address at the virtual event.

"We are thrilled and honored to have the one-and-only Oprah Winfrey joining us for this incredible moment with Chicago's high school seniors," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The times we are living in are historic and stunning, forcing us all to take a deep look at who we are as a people and our place in the world. No one knows this better than Oprah, and I join all of Chicago in looking forward to hearing the wisdom she'll be sharing with our incredible young people as they take this unforgettable next step on their life's journey."

While this pandemic has had a lasting impact on a plethora of groups and institutions across the city, Chicago's graduating high school class of 2020 deserve recognition for their hard work over four years of high school and a proper send off as they move to college or careers.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has touched every Chicagoan over the last few months, from lives lost to livelihoods severely impacted to planned experiences that had to be cancelled and that cannot be replaced," said Mayor Lightfoot. "While we can't recreate these in-person memories, I feel strongly that we need to recognize and celebrate the achievements of our many high school seniors in Chicago."

This commencement is intended to celebrate every high school senior in Chicago, including those from Chicago Public Schools, charter schools, Catholic schools and all other private schools across the city. The ceremony will include speeches,



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performances, and a wide array of elements that will feature student achievements and experiences.

"The meaning of graduation is more profound than a physical stage and nothing can detract from the beaming pride of a Chicago Public Schools parent when their student earns a diploma," said CPS CEO Dr. Janice K. Jackson. "We know we can't fully replace the special milestones lost during this unprecedented crisis, but our seniors deserve to be celebrated for their hard work and we look forward to coming together to honor our seniors during this special occasion."

The details of the virtual graduation will be determined by a working group of representatives from various Chicago schools, and the exact date will be announced in a few weeks. While the virtual commencement will be focused on celebrating Chicago's high school seniors, every Chicagoan is invited to participate and enjoy this first-of-its-kind, citywide celebration.

"We're coming together to celebrate the class of 2020 and all those who have supported these students in this accomplishment," said Ken Griffin, Founder and CEO of Citadel. "It is an honor to have Oprah Winfrey join in this celebration – her words of hope and inspiration to our graduates are a tremendous gift in this moment. To the graduating seniors: as you close this chapter and begin the next, Chicago is with you and we are proud of you."

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