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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND BACP INTRODUCE LATEST MEASURES TO PROVIDE RELIEF TO BUSINESSES DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Ordinance introduced today would provide relief for businesses impacted by COVID-19 by extending license expiration dates and deferring the collection of public vehicle payments

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) today introduced an ordinance to provide additional regulatory and financial relief measures to Chicago's businesses impacted by the Coronavirus-2019 (COVID-19) outbreak. The proposed ordinance would extend the expiration date for licenses that otherwise would expire during the pandemic and defer the collection of Accessibility Fee payments from taxicabs and Transportation Network Providers (TNPs) while the ordinance is in effect.

The relief legislation was passed by the Committee on License and Consumer Protection today and will be considered by the full City Council on Wednesday, May 20.

“Throughout the entire COVID-19 crisis, we have been focused on providing our local entrepreneurs and neighborhood businesses with critical lifelines that will help them survive this time of unprecedented hardship,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “With this new ordinance, we are taking steps to ease the financial burdens our businesses are facing and provide the relief needed to lay the foundation for a strong and speedy recovery.”

The proposed ordinance would be in effect until it is automatically repealed on June 30, 2020 or until the Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) makes a written determination that the threat to public health of COVID-19 has diminished, whichever is earlier. Under the ordinance, any license issued by BACP with an expiration date on or after March 15, 2020 will be considered active and no late fees will be assessed until 30 days following the repeal of the ordinance on June 30 or until CDPH makes a written determination. This applies to all businesses licensed by the City, such as retail stores, child day cares, hotels,



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restaurant and bars, along with public vehicle licenses, such as those required for public chauffeurs, taxicab medallions, pedicabs, private ambulances and mediacars.

“Businesses are facing unprecedented financial challenges due to the COVID-19 outbreak and it critical for the City not to place extra burdens on our businesses,” said BACP Commissioner Rosa Escareno. “Our local businesses are the heart of our community, and these emergency measures will bring much needed and immediate financial relief to thousands of businesses.”

The proposed ordinance would also give BACP the authority to defer the collection of the Accessibility Fee paid by Chicago taxicabs and Transportation Network Providers (TNPs). Currently, taxicab medallion licensees pay \$22 per month and TNPs pay \$0.10 per ride into the Accessibility Fund, which is used to support accessible transportation options, including those for individuals that use a wheelchair. Under the proposal, this fee will be deferred until June 30 and will apply retroactively to March 18 since these businesses are not able to generate revenue. This delay will not impact accessible transportation needs provided by the Fund.

“COVID-19 has caused incredible disruption across the Chicago business community, from restaurants and bars to hotel to public vehicles,” said Emma Mitts, 37th Ward Alderman and Chairman of the Committee on License and Consumer Protection. “We need to be doing everything we can to provide immediate relief to businesses, and the steps introduced today will have a significant and immediate impact.”

These latest proposed measures build on the City’s ongoing efforts to provide regulatory and financial relief to businesses impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. On April 16, Mayor Lightfoot announced an extension of business tax payments to June 1. This includes restaurant, hotel accommodations, bottled water, checkout bag, ground transportation, parking and amusement taxes. BACP has also created a direct subsidy for wheelchair accessible taxicab drivers by increasing the annual subsidy for vehicle maintenance by \$1,000, increasing the driver leasing subsidy from \$15 to \$25/hour. Finally, the City has extended the deferral of the deadline for debt checks for taxicab and TNP drivers to June 1.

“Businesses in Chicago and across the country are feeling the significant impact of COVID-19,” said Jack Lavin, President and CEO of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce. “We need immediate and impactful relief, and I applaud the Mayor, BACP and City Council for taking this step today.”

To aid in Chicago’s recovery from the COVID-19 outbreak, Mayor Lightfoot has established the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force comprised of industry experts,



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community leaders and regional partners. Co-chaired by Mayor Lightfoot and former White House Chief of Staff Samuel K. Skinner, the new Task Force will advise the City's recovery efforts to rebuild and come back stronger post-COVID-19.

To further ensure a speedy recovery, the City of Chicago has directed an unprecedented \$105 million into two emergency financing programs, the Chicago Small Business Resiliency Loan Fund and Chicago Microbusiness Recovery Grant Program. To date, the Loan Fund has approved nearly 300 low-interest loans for a total of \$10 million to small businesses impacted by COVID-19. Additionally, the City has received over 4,500 applications for \$5,000 grants through the Chicago Microbusiness Recovery Grant Program. The application closed on Monday, May 4 and recipients will be notified next week.

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