



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT, FIRST LADY ESHLEMAN, THE MAYOR'S YOUTH COMMISSION AND A BETTER CHICAGO HOST MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND YOUTH SUMMIT AND VIRTUAL CONCERT**

*The Rise and Recover virtual summit brought together over 200 youth to discuss reopening and post COVID-19 recovery efforts followed by the We Gon' Be Alright Virtual Concert*

**CHICAGO** - Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, First Lady Amy Eshelman, the Mayor's Youth Commission, and A Better Chicago today held a Virtual Youth Summit and Concert to engage with and bring the voice of Chicago's young people into the city's plans for reopening and recovery from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The lessons learned from the *Rise and Recover* Youth Summit will be incorporated into the Chicago Recovery Task Force's final recommendations to Mayor Lightfoot on how to re-open and reimagine Chicago over the coming months and years. Following the Summit, the *We Gon' Be Alright* Youth Concert brought some of today's most popular music artists together to encourage youth to enjoy the Memorial Day weekend at home.

"Chicago's young people have seen their lives turned upside-down by the COVID-19 crisis, with countless events cancelled and classes moved remotely online, on top of being forced to physically distance from their friends and mentors," said Mayor Lightfoot. "As we work towards safely reopening our city, their voices represent a critical and welcome perspective to ensuring we remain responsive to the needs of all our communities and families during this unprecedented moment."

Mayor Lightfoot and First Lady Eshelman launched the Youth Commission last September to advise the Mayor and her team on issues that impact Chicago's young people. The Mayor's Youth Commission is made up of 25 high school and college students who were nominated by Chicago-based community organizations and represent neighborhoods and schools across the city. The inaugural class of Youth Commissioners was charged with developing a vision and youth-focused agenda for the Mayor's administration and will now be a key voice in the city's post-COVID recovery efforts.



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“The *Rise and Recover Youth Summit* means that the youth of Chicago have an outlet now and in their future, which is so important to me when thinking about how we are all experiencing such different and difficult things during this pandemic. Connecting with others has been a new challenge and this outlet sparked new questions, concerns, and comments from youth all over our city. This summit was meaningful because it showed the true value of our experiences,” Marilyn S. 19, Youth Commissioner, DePaul University.

The virtual youth summit allowed participants to help imagine the future of the city as it recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. Through two breakout sessions over 200 youth shared their ideas and concerns about the impact the coronavirus pandemic has had and will continue to have on their lives, their families, and the future of Chicago. The breakout session topics included education, mental health, and the economy and the state of youth in Chicago.

“A Better Chicago is thrilled to support this critical gathering of Chicago youth. Our young people are dealing with an onslaught of challenges as they navigate this new COVID-19 reality—from trauma and isolation to learning loss and food insecurity,” said Beth Swanson, CEO, A Better Chicago. “We hope this is one of many opportunities for our city’s youth to be part of shaping the tremendous work of recovery that lies ahead for us all. We are unwavering in our commitment to building a more equitable city where all children—regardless of race or zip code—can thrive, and that simply cannot happen unless we have the voices of Chicago youth at the table.”

The Mayor also today announced the launch of “My CHI. My Future.,” an interactive digital platform that connects Chicago’s youth to a variety of rich, engaging, safe, and youth-centered out-of-school experiences that empower them to discover and cultivate their talents, passions, skills, and identities; develop as physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy members of society; build relationships and networks with peers and mentors; and explore multiple pathways to college, careers, trades, entrepreneurship, and life-long learning.

The summit was followed by the *We Gon’ Be Alright* virtual youth concert on Instagram and Facebook and featured Mayor Lightfoot, DJ Mike P, singer-songwriter Jeremih, and other special guests.

“Our goal with the *We Gon’ Be Alright* virtual concert was to spread hope and togetherness through music and the knowledge that this uncertainty and pain are not forever,” said Asher M., 17, Youth Commissioner, Chicago Math and Science Academy, Rogers Park.



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“Through the *Rise and Recover Youth Summit* and the *We Gon’ Be Alright* virtual concert we have created a collective and empowering platform for young people like me to voice their concerns. I was excited to hear the unique ideas that other teens have to address our common issues,” said Traolach O., 18, Youth Commissioner, Jones College Preparatory High School.

The *Rise and Recover Youth Summit*, *We Gon’ Be Alright* virtual concert and “My CHI. My Future.” are part of the Mayor’s commitment to engaging and empowering Chicago’s youth through a direct conduit to those making decisions that affect them and their futures. For more information and to participate visit [mychimyfuture.org](http://mychimyfuture.org).

### **About A Better Chicago**

*A Better Chicago is fighting poverty by leveraging the collective power of Chicagoans who want to make our city more equitable for everyone. We raise funds through public donations and direct those resources to support low-income, underserved communities. We find high-potential, high-impact programs and leaders that serve young people from cradle to career. Then, we invest both dollars and strategic support to empower organizations to grow and make an even greater impact. We know that giving our young people the support and tools they need to thrive—a great education, a wage that can sustain a family, the ability to buy a home and live in a safe community—can lead to breaking the cycle of poverty for this generation and generations to come.*

*Since 2010, we have raised nearly \$40 million, invested in dozens of nonprofit organizations and supported over 100 capacity-building projects—ranging from strategic planning to leadership development—to strengthen the organizational capacity of our grantees. In total, our portfolio serves over 32,000 youth annually in the Chicago area. Learn more at [abetterchicago.org](http://abetterchicago.org).*

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