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CITY OF CHICAGO ANNOUNCES FIRST CITYWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

First of its kind two-year strategic plan co-designed with community partners, subject matter experts, survivors, and City officials, to build a whole-of-government approach to address gender-based violence

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today launched the City's first-ever citywide strategic plan to address gender-based violence (GBV) and human trafficking. The work to build this plan began in February 2021 when Mayor Lightfoot launched the GBV Advisory Council. Since then, the City has led a robust and inclusive community engagement process, bringing together community partners, survivors, and City officials to define key problems and solutions-driven strategies. As part of the overall violence reduction strategy, this plan seeks to build the muscle within City government to understand and address GBV and human trafficking; design a citywide ecosystem that adequately prevents, responds, and intervenes in cases of GBV and human trafficking in trauma-informed and culturally specific ways; and invest in critical services to stabilize survivors and increase safety.

"Gender-based violence and human trafficking are pervasive in communities all across our city," said Mayor Lightfoot. "We have an epidemic on our hands and cannot afford to ignore these issues when taking a public health approach to violence reduction. Thanks to the work of the advisory council, we have co-designed a plan that will get us closer to accomplishing our goals of reducing harm, increasing safety and addressing racial, gender and other systemic inequities."

Gender-based violence occurs in homes, on the streets, in workplaces, and intended safe places such as schools, medical facilities, and places of faith. People of color, LGBTQIA+, indigenous populations, people with disabilities, and immigrants are disproportionately impacted by gender-based violence and human trafficking. In 2020, the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline, which receives funding from the Chicago Department of Family & Support Services, received 28,292 calls, a 16% increase from 2019. Of these calls, 39% came from Chicago.



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"Gender-based violence has affected our families and communities for far too long. I'm proud and thankful for the work the Department of Family and Support Services, in collaboration with Mayor Lightfoot, will be doing to assist people and families in need," said DFSS Commissioner Brandie Knazze. "The new gender-based violence strategy will help build off of the work we do at DFSS and help to stabilize and reduce harm across our city."

Overall, this plan seeks to increase capacity within City government, enhance coordination between government and community partners, develop alternate responses to the criminal legal system while also helping to improve law enforcement's response to GBV and human trafficking, and assess and revise policies that create barriers to survivors accessing critical services and supports. This strategy will be guided by data and best practices, utilizing research and evaluation as key tools to drive implementation of the strategies outlined in the plan. Finally, the plan in its entirety, with targeted efforts to raise awareness about these issues, will shift cultural norms on what constitutes GBV, human trafficking, and more importantly, its acceptability. The plan can be found at Chicago.gov/GBV.

"It has been an honor and a privilege to participate on the Mayor's GBV Advisory Council to ensure that youth victims of sexual violence are prioritized in the City's strategic plan and budget. Our voices were heard, and we are pleased to see investments in mental health, prevention, and the enhancement of critical systems and services to all survivors of domestic and sexual violence and trafficking. It's a bold step for Chicago to become a world leader in creating a comprehensive and effective service system for survivors that relies heavily on community input and expertise." -- Char Rivette, Executive Director, Chicago Children's Advocacy Center

"The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence and our 30 diverse member organizations applaud Mayor Lightfoot's leadership in creating the first citywide plan to address gender-based violence. This plan aims to embed gender-based violence services in every community in Chicago, and ensure no survivor is left without resources that feel safe to them," said Amanda Pyron, Executive Director of The Network. "We look forward to partnering with the Mayor and her team on implementing this plan and ensuring Chicago has the strongest safety net in the country."

The Mayor's proposed 2022 budget includes \$25 million in new investments that support survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking and will enhance the citywide strategic plan. The investments would provide emergency financial assistance, legal services, housing, services for young people, and prevention education efforts. To carry out this work, Mayor Lightfoot will create the first-ever Director of Gender-Based Violence Strategy and Policy in the Mayor's office, hire additional staff, and increase DFSS' Division on Domestic Violence team by three staff members. This leadership structure and added



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department capacity will undoubtedly increase coordination and effectiveness across City government to operationalize this plan.

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