



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

CITY COUNCIL APPROVES WELCOMING CITY ORDINANCE

The Chicago City Council today approved Mayor Rahm Emanuel's Welcoming City Ordinance. The ordinance builds on efforts to make Chicago the most immigrant-friendly city in the country by incorporating basic protections for undocumented Chicagoans who have not been convicted of a serious crime and are not wanted on a criminal warrant.

"This Welcoming City ordinance will make Chicago a national leader in welcoming those who play by the rules, contribute to our economy and help make Chicago the incredible city that was envisioned by its first immigrant settlers," said Mayor Emanuel. "This ordinance will prevent law abiding Chicagoans from being unfairly detained and deported, and will ensure that Chicago is a welcoming, multicultural global city where people have access to services they need to contribute to our city."

The Welcoming City ordinance builds on an existing ordinance and longtime City policy that prohibits agencies from inquiring about the immigration status of people seeking City services, and provides that the Chicago Police Department (CPD) will not question crime victims, witnesses and other law-abiding residents about their legal status.

The ordinance will be expanded to ensure that undocumented Chicagoans will only be detained if they have an outstanding criminal warrant; have been convicted of a felony; are a defendant in a criminal case where a judgment has not been entered and a felony charge is pending; have been identified as a known gang member; or if they are otherwise a clear threat to public safety or national security.



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Additionally, the ordinance provides that no individual will be detained solely on the belief that the person has committed a civil immigration violation. These measures will ensure that the Chicago Police Department can focus its resources on its number one priority: public safety.

The CPD will institute training in conjunction with immigrant advocacy groups to build trust within immigrant communities; and the development of public marketing materials that outline the services that law abiding immigrants can safely access in the city of Chicago. CPD will continue to cooperate with federal authorities in investigating and apprehending violent criminals who may be undocumented immigrants.

Immigrant rights advocates including the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, the National Immigrant Justice Center, and the United African Organization were crucial partners in the development of the Welcoming City Ordinance.

Since the creation of the Office of New Americans (ONA), the City has strengthened support for immigrant communities, entrepreneurs and businesses. The ONA recently announced the creation of the Chicago New Americans initiative which brings together the State of Illinois, the City of Chicago and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights to offer assistance to 10,000 eligible, law abiding, permanent residents in Chicago become naturalized, U.S. citizens. The ONA has also created an Advisory Council formed by 50 individuals who represent Chicago's business, academia, civic, philanthropic, and community leaders. They will identify immigrant challenges, strategies and potential solutions and will, together with the ONA, present the plan to the Mayor later this summer. The ONA also hosted a New Americans Small Business Series, an innovative series of quarterly events that will foster small business growth in immigrant communities throughout Chicago.

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