FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 6, 2015

CONTACT:
Mayor's Press Office
312.744.3334
press@cityofchicago.org

CITY COUNCIL APPROVES ORDINANCE TO EXPAND DENTAL CARE PROGRAM FOR LOW INCOME CHILDREN

Current CPS Dental Care Program to be Expanded at No Additional Cost to Taxpayers

City Council approved an ordinance today, introduced by Mayor Emanuel, to bring dental care to thousands of low-income children at no cost to taxpayers. The measure will allow the city to expand its current dental program in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to all schools within Chicago's borders. The dentists who provide the services would bear all of the costs, ultimately billing Medicaid for the care.

"Thousands of low-income children will now get the dental screenings and treatment they need in school at no cost to taxpayers," said Mayor Emanuel. "Getting an early start on preventive dental care is a key strategy to ensuring a healthy next generation of Chicagoans."

The single most common chronic disease among children is dental cavities. Tooth decay is especially pronounced among children from low-income communities, particularly those of African-American or Latino descent. Today, more than half of Chicago's third-graders have had a cavity and 30 percent have untreated decay. Those numbers are lower than they were just five years ago, thanks in large part to the city's program ensuring dental care for some 115,000 low-income CPS students. This program entails sending mobile clinics to schools to provide services such as exams, cleanings, fluoride treatments, and sealants. Mayor Emanuel's ordinance would allow every school in the city—and tens of thousands of additional low-income students—to participate in the program.

"Mayor Emanuel understands that oral health is crucial to public health, especially for children. It's not a side issue," said Julie Morita, M.D., Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health. "This ordinance gives Chicago the opportunity to improve dental care at no cost to taxpayers. We should seize that opportunity."

###