



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

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**CONTACT:**

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

[press@cityofchicago.org](mailto:press@cityofchicago.org)

**MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES LAUNCHES TASK FORCE ON  
EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

*Task Force Launched on the 27th Anniversary of The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*

Mayor Emanuel and Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Karen Tamley today launched a new task force focused on removing employment barriers for people with disabilities. The Task Force on Employment and Economic Opportunity for People with Disabilities will advise the city on relevant policies and programs in order to increase employment and economic development opportunities to benefit residents with disabilities. The task force launches on the 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush on July 26, 1990.

"Residents across Chicago deserve the necessary access to opportunities across the city," said Mayor Emanuel. "While I am proud of the commitments and progress we have made for individuals with disabilities, there is more to be done. The Task Force on Employment and Economic Opportunity for People with Disabilities will help to ensure that individuals have an equal opportunity to earn a good wage and to live independently."

The Task Force brings together leaders of not-for-profit disability policy organizations, community-based service providers, universities and higher education to discuss the employment gap and economic growth opportunities in the region, and city and state. Leaders will work to advance policies and programs that better prepare students with disabilities for higher education; increase alignment on job training opportunities between employers and service providers; and encourage economic development through entrepreneurship. They will also review new and existing policies to ensure that the interests of people with disabilities are represented.

"I understand the barriers Chicagoans with disabilities face to employment, and I am proud to convene this unparalleled group of leaders to address the very real employment gap," said Commissioner of the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Karen Tamley. "The Task Force on Employment and Economic Opportunity for People with Disabilities is uniquely qualified to address this issue head-on, and to ensure that residents are afforded the same opportunities to live, work and thrive across the city."

The Task Force was created by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Commissioner Tamley and Alderman Roberto Maldonado to increase employment and economic development opportunities for people

121 NORTH LASALLE STREET, ROOM 507, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60602

with disabilities. This is a critical step in being able to live independently, accessing quality education, job training, transportation, and housing.

Creation of the task force delivers on the administration's ongoing commitment to improving access and opportunity for disabled residents in a wide range of city initiatives, with a focus on education and employment. Under the Mayor's leadership, MOPD has launched a number of initiatives focused on improving opportunities for people with disabilities to earn an education and gain employment. The City's first Mayoral Literacy Task Force was launched in 2015 in an effort to close the gap in literacy and improve reading proficiency among students and residents with disabilities.

The Task Force launches on the 27<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the landmark civil rights legislation, The Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA was signed into law, with the purpose of providing a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Since its inception, Chicago has been a long-term leader in disability rights with a robust community of actively engaged disability advocacy leaders and groups. While a series of both local and federal legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), have contributed to significant improvements in quality of life in recent years, people with disabilities, who make up approximately one fifth of the population in Chicago, are still unemployed at higher rates and are more impacted by poverty than those without disabilities.

Since 2011, the City of Chicago has installed over 91,000 ADA compliant curb ramps, provided disability accessibility at close to 70 percent of CTA stations, and has included the needs of people with disabilities into all city emergency plans. The city plans to strengthen access for individuals with disabilities in the areas of transportation, cultural institutions, education and employment. This includes plans to increase accessibility at CTA rail stations from 70 percent to 100 percent, additional access to fitness equipment at city parks, taxicab reforms and incentives to increase the number of accessible vehicles.

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