



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2018

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES NEW PLAN TO SUPPORT CHICAGO'S SMALL BUSINESSES

Will Continue Mayor's Drive to Eliminate Red Tape and Support Neighborhood Entrepreneurs

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced a package of new reforms to support small businesses across the city. The plan will reduce costs for businesses, simplify the licensing process, increase transparency, support start-up and innovative businesses, and reduce the burden of inspections for all businesses.

"Small business owners are the foundations of our communities and by supporting them we are creating economic opportunities in every part of Chicago," Mayor Emanuel said. "These reforms will make it even easier to launch, grow and thrive as a business owner in Chicago."

The reform plan is designed to build on the Emanuel administration's efforts over the past seven years to cut red tape, increase support resources for businesses, and encourage innovation and entrepreneurship in every part of the city. The plan will address some of the biggest issues for small businesses:

- **Start-up License Fee** will cut the cost of a two-year Limited Business License in half, from \$250 to \$125, for all new applicants, benefitting an estimated 2,000 entrepreneurs annually.
- **Pop-up Permitting** will allow entrepreneurs to test their concept without incurring the cost of a permanent site, including food vendors operating out of pre-approved spaces.
- **Business License Issuance Clock** will keep the City accountable with an online timer that starts when an applicant pays a licensing fee and doesn't stop until the license is issued.
- **Sidewalk Cafe Reforms** will allow businesses with permitted sidewalk cafes to operate year-round, an increase from the current limit of nine months.
- **Inspection Modernization** will create standard checklists so business owners can know what to expect from different City inspections, institute night and weekend license inspection hours to put the City and businesses on the same schedule, eliminate antiquated regulations, and increase the use of technology so businesses can receive license inspection results immediately.

“Under the leadership of Mayor Emanuel all City departments are working together to establish these reforms and to support business owners across the city,” Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection Commissioner Rosa Escareno said. “We are going to work with stakeholders and business partners to implement these new reforms so we can continue to make Chicago a leader. Chicago is built upon the most innovative, hard-working, determined entrepreneurs in the world, and the City is here to help from day one.”

In addition to the new reforms, the City is launching an outreach campaign to inform businesses about initiatives that are investing tens of millions of dollars directly into neighborhood businesses throughout the city, including the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund and Retail Thrive Zones initiatives.

“As the City’s liaison to the small business community, I spend my days listening to Chicago’s burgeoning entrepreneurs,” Kenya Merritt, Chicago’s Chief Small Business Officer said. “While there is much we should be proud of, launching a business is still a challenge. These proposals are a response to what I am hearing from the community and will do wonders to support small business growth.”

“Supporting small businesses means supporting strong communities,” Alderman Emma Mitts (37th) said. “These reforms along with Mayor Emanuel’s continued commitment to providing resources for local businesses help create jobs for residents and economic opportunities in neighborhoods across the city.”

Since 2011 the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection, in collaboration with city departments, community organizations and small business owners, has spearheaded initiatives that help Chicago’s small businesses grow and create jobs in communities across the city. A new report released today highlighted those efforts and their successes to date:

- The Mayor’s initiatives to encourage innovation through the Emerging Business Permit and by reducing fees has benefitted 10,000 business owners.
- License Reform has cut the total number of business licenses from 117 to 40.
- Inspection Streamlining has reduced the number of inspections for more than 2,000 businesses and helped businesses open an average of 30 days faster.
- The Restaurant Startup Program has more than doubled health inspection passage rates and helped participating restaurants open an average of 45 days earlier.
- Today more than 70 delegate agencies bring indispensable business support to the neighborhoods.
- More than \$11 million has been invested in 108 South and West Side businesses through the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund and Retail Thrive Zones programs.

The report also lays out a roadmap for future reforms. Objectives include ensuring that all business with the City can be conducted online and increasing support for businesses looking to grow. The City is also planning to continue to invest millions of dollars directly into hundreds of businesses on the South and West Sides through the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund and Retail Thrive Zones Initiative

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