



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES RUBY FERGUSON TO SERVE AS CHICAGO'S
FIRST FOOD EQUITY POLICY LEAD**

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced Ruby Ferguson to serve as the City of Chicago's first Food Equity Policy Lead. As an employee of the Greater Chicago Food Depository, Ferguson will report jointly to the Mayor's Policy Office and the Food Depository to drive collaboration among members of the City's Food Equity Council. Ferguson is an innovative leader in nutrition with nearly a decade of experience successfully implementing programming addressing food insecurity.

"Ruby is an exceptional food and health equity champion whose talents and expertise are exactly what our city needs during this time of recovery and opportunity," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The pandemic has laid bare the many inequities that exist within our city, with food insecurity and historic disinvestment being among the most pressing. Equitably enhancing our city's food assets and ecosystem thus provides an important opportunity for us to address socioeconomic issues across our city and Ruby is truly the perfect person to help us accomplish this mission."

The ambition of creating an equitable food system requires innovation, expertise, and leadership from both the public and private sector. For that reason, as the Food Equity Policy Lead, Ferguson will drive collaboration between the City of Chicago, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, and other members of the City's Food Equity Council to advance a strategic plan to realize a city-wide vision to build a more just and equitable food system. Additionally, she will be charged with advancing the 5 food policy priorities in the recently announced [Food Equity Agenda](#).

"For generations – long before the pandemic – systemic inequities have driven disproportionately higher rates of food insecurity in communities of color," said Kate Maehr, executive director and CEO of the Food Depository. "A return to pre-pandemic normal isn't acceptable. The City's Food Equity Council's mission is to foster a new food system that grants all Chicagoans equitable access to nutrition, health, and opportunity. We are so delighted that Ruby is with us to lead this vital work."



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Prior to joining the Food Depository, Ferguson served as Director of Nutrition Services at Near North Health Service Corporation by supporting and expanding the WIC, clinical dietetic, and cooking programs. She believes that nutrition can return power to underserved populations, and thus provide the community with the agency to be an active stakeholder in its own health. Using the lens of cultural humility, she has been awarded grants that address food and health inequities through breastfeeding, nutrition education, hands-on cooking expertise, disease management, and sharing the narratives of the community.

“I am immensely grateful to Mayor Lightfoot for this opportunity to serve as the City’s first ever Food Equity Policy Lead,” said Ruby Ferguson. “At a time where many Chicagoans are coping with food insecurity, lack of access to quality, and affordable food retail, it is crucial to have a concerted effort on alleviating that burden while creating a pathway to innovation. Examples of my commitment to community nutrition are seen in the development of pop-up WIC clinics at Head Starts, collaborations with local farms across the city, and the implementation of virtual cooking classes in a pandemic. Through this new role I plan to build on that work and advance our shared agenda of creating a more resilient food system that benefits all residents.”

Ferguson is a registered dietitian and certified lactation specialist whose work has gained her recognition as a Health Equity Champion by the National WIC Association. She is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Spelman College where she earned her Bachelor’s degrees in Psychology and Chemistry. Additionally, she completed her Master’s in exercise physiology from Auburn University and Master’s in Human Nutrition from The University of Illinois at Chicago.

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