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CITY COUNCIL PASSES ORDINANCE TO CLARIFY FUNCTIONS, REQUIRE DIVERSITY ON BOARD OF HEALTH

CHICAGO – The Chicago City Council passed an ordinance today to clarify the role of the Board of Health, add diversity requirements to the board and increase the opportunity for public comment. These changes align the Municipal Code with current board practice while helping the Board guide policymaking effectively in an age of COVID-19 and deep health inequity. The ordinance also establishes three-year terms of office (though not term limits), making it more consistent with other City boards and commissions.

"The Board of Health has been an important voice in Chicago for nearly 200 years, providing expert advice to the Mayor and the Department of Public Health," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The new ordinance will bring clarity to the Municipal Code while helping the Board be even more responsive to all Chicagoans for generations to come."

"I commend the City Council for passing this ordinance," said Board of Health President Carolyn Lopez, MD. "It will help ensure the Board has a clear role, looks like Chicago and continually evolves to face the challenges of the day, from the pandemic to racial injustice."

The ordinance contains several measures:

- Updates the Municipal Code to clarify that the Board of Health is an advisory board, consistent with the role it has played for decades. This step will codify existing practice, help ensure clarity to the public about the Board's role and avoid confusing overlap with the Department of Public Health.
- Establishes three-year terms of office for Board of Health members. Today, the Board of Health is one of the only City boards in which all members have indefinite terms. The ordinance does not, however, include term limits.
- Requires that the Board be diverse with respect to demographics such as race and neighborhood, skills such as community engagement and strategic planning, and professional backgrounds such as behavioral and maternal



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- health. In addition, the Board must have representation from both a hospital system and a federally qualified health center. These provisions will help ensure the Board looks like Chicago and gives voice to the needs of the residents most in need of support. At least five of the nine members would also need to have experience or education in public health, which is vital for addressing issues such as COVID-19 and fostering systemic change.
- Requires at least 30 days of public comment on new rules. Prior to this ordinance, there has been no clear public comment requirement for health rulemaking on numerous issues.

“The Board of Health has brought invaluable perspectives to the Chicago Department of Public Health,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. “By adding standards related to diversity, public input and expertise while providing clarity on our respective roles, we will make the Board even more effective.”

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