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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES ERIN HARKEY TO SERVE AS COMMISSIONER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

CHICAGO—Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced the nomination of Erin Harkey to serve as the next Commissioner of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE). Harkey holds 20 years of experience working in the nonprofit and government sector helping individuals and communities succeed through the arts. This nomination is subject to City Council approval.

“I am excited to announce Erin Harkey as the next commissioner of our beloved DCASE,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “Her years of experience working in creative fields and advocating for them have provided her the skillsets and knowledge needed for the role, and she’s demonstrated proven dedication to Chicago’s arts and cultural landscape. I have the utmost faith in her ability to lead the department.”

As commissioner, Harkey will lead the City’s efforts to enrich Chicago’s artistic vitality and cultural vibrancy. This includes fostering the development of Chicago’s non-profit arts sector, independent working artists and for-profit arts businesses; providing a framework to guide the City’s future cultural and economic growth; marketing the City’s cultural assets to a worldwide audience; and presenting high-quality, free and affordable cultural programs for residents and visitors.

“I am thrilled to receive this nomination by Mayor Lightfoot to lead the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and to continue to serve the residents of Chicago,” said Acting Commissioner Erin Harkey. “Following a tumultuous 19 months battling the pandemic and five years advocating for Chicago’s cultural community, I look forward to continuing the important work that has brought joy and a sense of normalcy to so many Chicagoans.”

Harkey has served the City of Chicago for five years as Projects Administrator, then Deputy Commissioner for Programming and most recently as First Deputy Commissioner at DCASE since March 2021. In her dual role as Senior Policy Advisor for Arts in Culture in the Mayor’s Office, she advises on cultural policy and arts



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strategy across all City departments and agencies. She previously managed public art programs at Los Angeles County Arts Commission and the Arts Council for Long Beach. Harkey holds two master's degrees in Public Art Administration and Urban Planning from the University of Southern California (USC) and a bachelor's degree in Marketing from Howard University.

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