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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

CITY COUNCIL APPROVES MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND THE CHICAGO COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS ENHANCEMENTS TO CHICAGO'S SEXUAL HARASSMENT LAWS

The enhancements will introduce new training requirements and increase the penalty for violation of the new laws

CHICAGO – The City Council today approved enhancements introduced by Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Commission on Human Relations (CCHR) to Chicago's sexual harassment laws, which will bring new training requirements for all employers and increase the penalty for those who sexually harass their staff or colleagues. According to FUTURES Without Violence, 4 in 5 women and 16% of men experience sexual harassment in the workplace and it remains severely underreported. As part of the City's Human Rights Ordinance, CCHR investigates complaints of sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination.

"With the passage of this ordinance, we have taken a huge step forward in our mission to make sure the voices of survivors of sexual harassment are heard and supported," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Sexual harassment must never be tolerated—especially in the workplace. That's why this ordinance will ensure perpetrators are held accountable for their actions while creating a more trusting environment where people feel protected and believed."

Overall, the enhancements include:

- Adding sexual misconduct to the definition. Sexual misconduct is defined as any behavior of a sexual nature which also involves coercion, abuse of authority, or misuse of an individual's employment position
- Requiring all employers to have a written policy on sexual harassment
- Requiring all employers to post a written notice on sexual harassment
- Increasing the statute of limitations from 300 to 365 days
- Creates flexibility to notify a respondent up to 30 days from the time of complaint (compared to 10 days currently), to mitigate any retaliation such as denial of a reasonable accommodation request
- Requiring additional annual training for all employees including the one hour of prevention training aligned with State requirements and one hour of



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- bystander intervention. Supervisors and managers are required to have an additional one hour of training
- Increasing the penalty for individuals or businesses that participate in discriminatory practices in the workplace including sexual harassment. . The penalty is increasing from \$500 - \$1,000 per violation to \$5,000 to \$10,000

The written policy, written notice, and required training components of the ordinance go into effect July 1, 2022. A model policy, written notice, and training templates will be available on CCHR's website by that date.

These changes align with Mayor Lightfoot's Citywide [Strategic Plan](#) to Address Gender-based Violence and Human Trafficking, specifically the pillar to shift cultural norms on what constitutes gender-based violence (GBV) and human trafficking (HT) and its acceptability by increasing awareness on the pervasiveness on gender-based violence and human trafficking. Further, the enhancements seek to increase collective accountability across communities and within workplaces and dispel the myth that sexual harassment is a personal issue. The plan also seeks to analyze and reform policies that perpetuate or create opportunities for gender-based violence and human trafficking, by strengthening worker protections and educating workers and their allies about their rights so that they can continuously advocate for safe and just workplaces.

"Today's passage of Chicago's Sexual Harassment Laws marks a victory for working men and women across Chicago," said Nancy Andrade, Commissioner of the Chicago Commission on Human Rights. "Our workplaces and even our communities must not be a place of oppression or violence towards anyone, and with today's ordinance we are taking a step towards equity and fairness through reform policies that will strengthen Chicago, creating safe workplaces for all."

With Chicago continuing to recover from the pandemic and women being disproportionately impacted by reduced hours or loss of employment, these changes are imperative to ensure safe, equitable workplaces for all workers.

"Women Employed has been at the forefront of advocating for fair, safe, inclusive, and equitable workplaces since our inception in 1973, and we applaud the new sexual harassment ordinance provisions that align training requirements and reporting time with best practices. Sexual harassment continues to be entrenched in the workplace and has significant detrimental impacts on both employees and employers," said Cherita Ellens, President and CEO of Women Employed. "We all have a stake in creating inclusive, equitable workplaces, and we all benefit from being able to come to work and do our jobs, to the best of our ability, unhampered



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by harassment and retaliation. We look forward to working with the city to implement these changes, and ensure Chicago is a great place to work.”

"As an organization led by and for survivors of gender-based violence, Healing to Action supports the changes in the ordinances that make these hard-fought sexual harassment protections more accessible to survivors," said Karla Altmayer, co-director of Healing to Action. "Adding prevention and intervention training for employers and their workforce is a critical step towards reducing gender-based violence," added Sheerine Alemzadeh, co-director of Healing to Action.

"For far too long, survivors of sexual harassment have struggled silently and felt alone," said Alderman Maria Hadden, 49th Ward. "Today the passage of this ordinance will facilitate accountability for reprehensive action and create an environment where people feel safe and protected in their workplaces. Thanks to Mayor Lightfoot's leadership on this ordinance and to my fellow City Council members for stepping up to support this.

If anyone has experienced sexual harassment, they can file a complaint with CCHR by visiting the CCHR office at 740 N. Sedgwick, Suite 400, by electronic filing, e-mail (cchrfilings@cityofchicago.org), or by fax (312-744-1081). Interpretation services are available.

To learn more, please visit [Chicago.gov/sexualharassment](https://chicago.gov/sexualharassment).

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