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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 29, 2022

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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT'S WOMEN'S ADVISORY COUNCIL RELEASES REPORT ON
THE ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN IN CHICAGO**

CHICAGO — Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot's Women's Advisory Council (WAC), in partnership with World Business Chicago, Women Employed, and Civic Consulting Alliance, published *[Creating a More Equitable Recovery: Addressing the Economic Barriers COVID-19 Exacerbated for Women in Chicago](#)*. Findings from the report's local and national data confirmed that women, particularly, women of color experienced disproportionate negative economic impacts over the course of the pandemic. Further, the pandemic was not the cause of the negative impacts. Instead, COVID-19 revealed pain points in the economy and social safety net systems, or lack thereof.

As a result of this work, Mayor Lightfoot made a commitment to work with Chicago City Council Budget Committee Chairwoman Pat Dowell and other members of City Council to expand paid parental leave for City employees as part of the FY23 budget. Adequate parental leave is critical to ensure the recruitment and retention of women and all parents in the City's workforce. She also called for a reoccurring pay equity audit across City government and challenged the private sector to join her.

The landmark study released today revealed that women in Chicago were more likely to be single head-of-household, and yet they were also less likely to be working in 2020. When they were working, women were earning much less than their male counterparts, and they were overrepresented in low-quality, low-wage jobs with fewer benefits. A lack of care infrastructure and persistent occupational segregation — over- or under-representation in specific jobs among a certain population — caused women to bear the brunt of the challenges that the pandemic presented for individuals and families. Many industries negatively impacted by the pandemic — healthcare, food service, hospitality, and educational services — were jobs predominantly held by women. Overall in Chicago, 10,957 fewer men were in the labor force compared to 36,092 fewer women in 2020 compared to 2019.

"Women, and particularly women of color, have borne the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic while being paid less than men simply because of their gender," said Mayor Lightfoot. "This report demonstrates that there is more work to do to address



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inequities in our economy. I look forward to that work with the Women's Advisory Council and our many partners who fight for the resources needed to reach financial security for all."

The report was launched via a virtual panel discussion moderated by Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) Commissioner, Brandie Knazze. Panelists included Ai-jen Poo, President of the National Domestic Workers Alliance; Matthew Bruce, Executive Director of Chicagoland Workforce Funders Alliance; Camille DeCicco, Director of Social Impact at Discover Financial Services; Cherita Ellens, President and CEO, Women Employed; and Lisa Bly-Jones, CEO at Chicago Jobs Council.

"The Mayor's Women's Advisory Council felt it important to better understand the impacts of COVID-19 on working women in Chicago to effectively serve in its capacity as liaisons and advisors. This report provides vital data that will allow us to collaborate with the City on the allocation of resources, and policy initiatives to ensure working women in Chicago are economically secure," said the Women's Advisory Council. "We look forward to working with the City to ensure that, as we work toward recovery from the pandemic and resulting 'she-cession,' Chicago's women and their families and communities can thrive."

"We are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with so many great partners on this important work. The recommendations in this report are a call to action for both the public and private sectors, which have the potential to make a significant impact for women in Chicago, and especially women of color," said Rebekah Scheinfeld, President and CEO of Civic Consulting Alliance. "We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Mayor's Office and others to help advance our shared goals for inclusive economic recovery and growth."

"I wish to acknowledge all the city, state, community, and philanthropic partners who continue to come together and collaborate in support of our vision for an equitable economy," said Michael Fassnacht, President and CEO, World Business Chicago, and Chief Marketing Officer, City of Chicago. "I am confident that the recommendations and solutions presented in the Women's Advisory Council report will provide us with the opportunity to work to ensure workplaces are safe, equitable, and fair for all."

Leading up to the release of the report, the City led a total of nine data presentations with over 60 key stakeholders such as City officials, philanthropic organizations, private sector leadership, and State officials. The data presented was a snapshot of the findings, depicting grave disparities in the labor market in Chicago. Stakeholders were engaged in discussion to inform recommendations and solutions. As such, the



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report concludes with actionable strategies and solutions for workforce development practitioners, policy-makers, and employers and underscores that no single entity will create equity in our economy alone, it requires collective action.

“The findings in this report confirm what we already knew — that working women, and especially Black and Brown women, were already economically vulnerable before COVID-19 and that the pandemic has grown and exacerbated existing economic divides. To ensure women can emerge from the ‘she-cession’ strong and build the financial security they need to prosper, we must pull multiple levers — including advancing legislation and policy, changing employer practices, and creating pathways to better careers that pay living wages. Women Employed is thrilled that the City has made this work a priority, and we look forward to continuing our work with the Mayor’s Women’s Advisory Council to make this a reality,” said Cherita Ellens, President and CEO, Women Employed.

“It is unacceptable that so many women in our workforce are working extremely hard every single day and still struggling to provide for themselves and their families,” said Ai-jen Poo, President of the National Domestic Workers Alliance. “I commend Mayor Lightfoot’s Women’s Advisory Council and the City of Chicago for acknowledging the egregious disparities in our economy and demonstrating leadership in addressing these inequities. We must build a strong care infrastructure in this country because this pandemic has proven that care cannot wait.”

To read the report, visit [Chicago.gov/gbv](https://chicago.gov/gbv).

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