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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES NEW INITIATIVES TO ENCOURAGE CITYWIDE PARTICIPATION IN THE 2020 CENSUS

Census participation is vital for bringing essential federal funding to Chicago

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced two new initiatives to encourage Chicagoans to take the 2020 Census including a neighbor-to-neighbor texting program and a mobile Census center.

“Now more than ever it is critical for Chicago’s residents to fill out their Census forms and make themselves count,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “These two new initiatives will help us in that effort, and I am tremendously grateful to the individuals behind Chicago Cares for their support. Aside from ensuring fair representation in federal policymaking, the Census will also play a major role in determining the Federal dollars we receive to help us recover from the COVID-19 crisis, supporting everything from our infrastructure and essential services, to our entire economy for years to come.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic rendered in-person canvassing and group events unsafe, the City created a neighbor-to-neighbor initiative with Chicago Cares, a nonprofit committed to mobilizing volunteers in Chicago. The neighbor-to-neighbor initiative is a volunteer effort enabling Chicagoans to text other Chicagoans and encourage census participation. More details and information on volunteer opportunities can be found at chicagocares.org/census.

“Chicago Cares has been thrilled to partner with the City of Chicago to mobilize volunteers to spread the word about the Census,” Jenné Myers, CEO of Chicago Cares said. “So far, our volunteers have sent over 170,000 text messages reminding Chicagoans to complete the once-in-a-decade count. It’s a safe, easy, and fun way for Chicagoans to volunteer right now and make a huge impact on the city we love.”

In addition, the City has dispatched a mobile Census center that travels to food banks, mask distribution sites, and other events to provide residents with Wi-Fi for completing the Census. It is a neon green van marked with, “Make Yourself Count: Take a Second for Your City,” which is visiting locations throughout Chicago reminding residents to respond.

So far, 53% of Chicagoans have responded to the 2020 Census, which is in-line or above other cities with large, hard-to-count populations, but below the national average of 60%. In the last Census, 66% of Chicagoan’s responded, and Mayor Lightfoot set a goal for the



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Chicago of at least 75% participation in this year's Census, which the City is committed to achieving.

"All the decisions we are making right now to help recover from the public health and economic challenges of the pandemic demonstrate the importance of the Census," said Andrea Zopp, President & CEO, World Business Chicago. "The pandemic has ripped the cover off a lot of inequality in our city. Completing the Census ensures that Chicago will receive funding for essential services that benefit everyone in the future."

Census figures set the level of funding Chicago will receive for public health, parks, public safety, transportation and essential infrastructure, as well as other City services. Funding for many programs benefitting Chicagoans is allocated based on the Census, including Medicaid, Head Start, SNAP, Section 8, Title I and Special Education Grants. The City of Chicago stands to lose an estimated \$1,400 each year for every resident missed in 2020, with other adverse implications in redistricting.

"Although times are difficult, we still ask everyone to do their part. This funding is crucial to Chicago," Ric Estrada, CEO, Metropolitan Family Services said. "We will continue to work with our partners to get all Chicago residents counted."

Nearly half of Chicago's 2.7 million residents are considered "hard-to-count" by the U.S. Census Bureau. This includes families of color, children under five, the elderly, veterans, returning residents, individuals with high rates of mobility and housing instability, residents with disabilities, those with limited access to the Internet, and those who may be afraid to participate. Earlier this year, the City provided more than \$700,000 in grant funding for community-based organizations to support the City's efforts in educating and engaging residents about the 2020 Census. Additional information on the program is located [here](#).

"We know that many Chicagoans, especially in our immigrant communities are fearful that completing the Census will report their or their families' citizenship status," said Rebecca Shi, Executive Director, Illinois Business Immigration Coalition. "Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no question about citizenship, and personal information collected in the Census cannot be shared with anyone or any other federal agency, including the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or Immigration or Customs Enforcement (ICE). Data is only released in summary tables; no individual information is released."

Illinois Census Month begins Monday, June 1, and the City of Chicago continues working with its partners on new initiatives to increase engagement and activate Chicago to complete the Census. To learn more about the City's 2020 Census efforts, please visit census2020.chicago.gov to find up-to-date information and City resources aiding to ensure a full count.

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