

For over a year, the City of Chicago has worked tirelessly to ensure that our small business community survives the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis. Under Mayor Lightfoot's leadership, the City has delivered a series of emergency measures to provide critical financial relief, remove unnecessary burdens and keep workers safe through a once-in-a-century crisis:

- Provided over \$100 million in emergency financial relief through direct aid to businesses, more than any other city in the United States
- Deferred license renewal for tens of thousands of businesses, saving businesses approximately \$1 million
- Acted quickly to make it easier for restaurants and bars to operate outdoors, with reduced permit fees, larger footprints, and expedited issuance – resulting in Chicago quickly dedicating more streets for outdoor dining during the summer of 2020 than other major cities
- Implemented COVID-19 Anti-Retaliation Ordinances to prohibit employers from retaliating against employees for obeying a health order to quarantine, isolate or take time off to be vaccinated

Now, with the end of the pandemic in sight, our focus must shift from *survival* to *recovery*. We have listened to Chicago's business community and held hundreds of conversations with small business owners, workers, and advocacy organizations – and we know that the strength of our recovery will depend upon the speed with which our local businesses are able to start up, expand, and provide quality jobs. Mayor Lightfoot's Chi Biz Strong Initiative rises to the occasion demanded by an unprecedented crisis with a bold plan to jumpstart growth and **build a recovery that is rapid, equitable, and enduring**.

The Mayor's Chi Biz Strong initiative will reimagine the way we do business in Chicago. This ambitious plan will implement lessons learned from the pandemic to deliver far-reaching and meaningful support to businesses and workers in three ways:

1. **Immediate Financial Relief** to support businesses as we move towards recovery
2. **Overhaul of City Business Policies** to reduce red tape and be more business friendly
3. **Targeted Worker Protections** to ensure that the rights and safety of workers and are central to the recovery

IMMEDIATE FINANCIAL RELIEF

- **Licensee Relief:** To support small businesses as we move towards recovery, the City will provide over \$10M in targeted grants for businesses citywide that have been particularly impacted by the pandemic.
- **Debt Relief:** Businesses are unable to renew licenses if they owe City debt. To get businesses back in operation quickly, the City will enable all businesses to enter into payment plans with affordable down payments.
- **Third Party Delivery Fees:** Restaurants have relied on third party delivery services during the pandemic but have often faced per-order fees of up to 30%. This temporary policy will cap the fees that third-party delivery services can charge restaurants at 15% through the recovery – extending an important lifeline to the City's approximately 8,000 restaurants.

OVERHAUL OF CITY BUSINESS POLICIES

- **Expedited Restaurant Licensing:** With a number of restaurants closing their doors during the pandemic, we will create an expedited food licensing process to help fill our empty restaurant spaces quickly and enable an estimated 1,000+ new restaurants to open up to 14 days sooner.
- **Legalized Sidewalk Signs:** Sidewalk signs (e.g., A-frame signs) help businesses draw in foot traffic from the street, providing an important boost in revenue and source of customers. This initiative will legalize these signs, helping Chicago's street-front retail businesses advertise their services.
- **Faster Signs and Awnings:** As we recover from the pandemic it is critical that businesses open quickly, but they currently have to wait up to 150 days to get a permit for signs, awnings, and other critical business infrastructure. We will shave up to two months off of this process by removing the requirement to pass a unique ordinance for each Public Way Use Permit, building upon temporary Sidewalk Café Permit reforms enacted during the pandemic.
- **Hospitality Reforms:** This initiative will support the struggling hospitality industry with a series of actions to align City and State license terms, allow cocktails-to-go, and refine security requirements on charter and sightseeing buses to maintain safety and make it easier to operate.
- **Consumer Protection:** This initiative will improve quality of life and support public safety and health by limiting the nighttime sale of packaged goods and aligning regulations on flavored tobacco products.
- **Fair Marketplace Reforms:** Innovative business models connecting consumers to services have proliferated during the pandemic. This initiative will ensure these models continue to thrive while ensuring businesses are properly licensed – protecting the public, venues, and vendors.
- **Taxicab Reforms:** The taxicab industry has been hit particularly hard by COVID-19, compounding pre-pandemic challenges. This initiative will provide more flexibility by keeping existing cars on the road longer while maintaining safety standards and streamlining regulations – expanding the pool of eligible taxicabs by 20% and saving the industry up to \$20M in 2021 alone.
- **Expanded Workforce Opportunities:** This initiative will open new opportunities to thousands of returning residents every year in the public vehicles and hospitality industries by lowering employment barriers for non-violent offenders and providing pathways to rehabilitation.

WORKER PROTECTIONS

- **Wage Theft Protection:** Almost \$400 million in wages are stolen from Chicagoland workers by bad-faith employers every year. Chicago's first wage theft ordinance will grant the City greater ability to protect and recoup stolen wages for its workers.
- **Domestic Workers:** Care workers have been hard-hit by the pandemic and face high rates of exploitation. This initiative would support domestic workers with a written contract requirement for employers and place 8,000 domestic workers on the path to a \$15 minimum wage in 2021.
- **Chain Business Workers:** This initiative would ensure that chain business workers are paid the correct minimum wage, by clarifying how employers count their employees.
- **Paid Sick Leave Enhancements:** This initiative will cover and clarify additional uses, such as caring for a family member with a closed school or place of care, compliance with public health orders, and mental and behavioral health.