



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 26, 2019

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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND BACP LAUNCH CHIBIZPRIDE CAMPAIGN TO  
CELEBRATE LGBTQ+ SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS**

*Campaign highlights diversity of Chicago's business community; Local business owners to be featured on social media, Smart Business Chicago podcast and roundtable discussion*

Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) today launched the first annual ChiBizPride Campaign. Kicking off this week, the new campaign celebrates and highlights the contributions of the many LGBTQ+ owned and LGBTQ+ friendly businesses throughout Chicago. Leading up to the 50th-anniversary celebration of the Chicago Pride Parade on June 30th, BACP has partnered with local chambers of commerce and business service organizations to bring attention to and celebrate the contributions of Chicago LGBTQ+ business community.

"Our LGBTQ+ businesses are a vital part of this city's diverse economic engine, and I'm proud to celebrate the small business owners who call Chicago their home," said Mayor Lightfoot. "My administration will continue to expand opportunities for every entrepreneur — regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender or ethnicity — to strengthen economic equity and grow Chicago's economy."

Around the country, LGBTQ+ businesses are estimated to contribute 1.7 trillion dollars to the US economy. While many states have policies that are hostile to LGBTQ+ businesses, Illinois is one of the friendliest states, attracting the third most LGBTQ+ business owners in the nation.

"Chicago's Pride Week is an opportunity to celebrate the diversity that makes Chicago a thriving global city drawing millions of visitors to our great city," said BACP Commissioner Rosa Escareno. "Importantly, we encourage all Chicagoans to support their local LGBTQ+ friendly businesses as they enhance the vitality of our neighborhoods, create jobs, pay taxes, and provide essential goods and services."



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To celebrate the diversity of Chicago's business community, BACP is planning a series of events for the week-long ChiBizPride campaign. BACP Smart Business Chicago podcast will feature prominent LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs like Christy Webber and Dan Earles. Webber owns Christy Webber Landscapes, a popular landscaping company based out of the East Garfield Park neighborhood and Dan Earles, who was featured on the podcast in early June, operates three businesses: Earles Architects & Associates, SEATS, and Epic Popcorn.

"Our LGBTQ+ small businesses, located in every neighborhood, contribute in countless ways to our City's economy and vitality, and we are thrilled to celebrate their influence this week," said Kenya Merritt, Chief Small Business Officer of Chicago. "We are excited about the inaugural launch of ChiBizPride and the opportunity it gives the City to highlight our diverse business community."

BACP will host a roundtable discussion with LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs and chamber leadership on Friday, June 28, 2019, at City Coffee, owned by AJ Lutz. This conversation will allow business owners an opportunity to share their experiences with operating a business in Chicago. Also, the Small Business Center On The Road Expo will take place on Thursday, June 27 from 5-9am at 1871 at the Merchandise Mart. Featuring keynote speaker Luis Garcia, Co-Founder, CEO and Chief Creative at Bixbee this free expo is a one-stop-shop for all entrepreneurs looking to start or grow their business in Chicago.

ChiBizPride is a call for Chicagoans and visitors to support our local LGBTQ+ business owners and an invitation for future LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs to start their own business in Chicago. BACP licenses over 60,000 businesses, with nearly 70% of licenses issued within one day. The City offers resources to anyone looking to launch or grow their business, with over 3,500 attendees taking advantage of BACP's free workshops in 2018.

"The LGBT Chamber of Commerce of Illinois is honored to be a partner to the City of Chicago in the ChiBizPride campaign and a resource to assist LGBTQ+ business owners in their growth and development," said Jerome' Holston, director of the LGBT Chamber of Commerce of Illinois. "As a statewide member association, our resources, including monthly networking events, professional development workshops, and assistance with the LGBT Business Enterprise certification, support nearly 300 members and a community of 50,000 LGBTQ+ business owners who are also women, people of color, trans and non-binary individuals. Through the ChiBizPride campaign, we hope that city residents will learn about the diverse range of businesses owned by the LGBTQ+ community and the impact we have on the economy from jobs to tax revenue."



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ChiBizPride is made possible through the partnership between BACP and the many neighborhood and citywide business service organizations in Chicago, particularly the LGBT Chamber of Commerce of Illinois. Local partner organizations have nominated business owners in their community to be featured throughout the week. To learn more about the contributions of the LGBTQ+ businesses, check out BACP's Twitter account throughout the week @ChicagoBACP and @ChiSmallBiz.

To learn more about Chicago's LGBTQ+ businesses and the ChiBizPride Campaign, please visit [Chicago.gov/ChiBizPride](http://Chicago.gov/ChiBizPride) and follow @ChicagoBACP and @ChiSmallBiz. To register for an expo or for more information, visit [www.chismallbizexpo.com](http://www.chismallbizexpo.com), call (312) 744-2086 or email [BACPoutreach@cityofchicago.org](mailto:BACPoutreach@cityofchicago.org). For more information about the City of Chicago's Small Business Center visit [www.chicago.gov/sbc](http://www.chicago.gov/sbc).

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