



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES FIRST-EVER CITYWIDE VIRTUAL
GRADUATION FOR CHICAGO'S HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS TO TAKE PLACE ON
JUNE 14**

Created in partnership with Citadel, the graduation's commencement address to be delivered by Oprah Winfrey and ceremony to be emceed by Chicago "Hamilton" star, Miguel Cervantes; Local broadcast channels to air City's "Graduation 2020: For Chicago. By Chicago." live on TV and online

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced that the City's first-ever virtual graduation for Chicago's high school seniors will take place on Sunday, June 14 at 1 p.m. The City's "Graduation 2020: For Chicago. By Chicago." – hosted and co-created by the City of Chicago and Citadel – is a first-of-its-kind effort to recognize the hard work of Chicago's high school seniors and to celebrate their achievements as they move on to college or new careers.

"The times we are living in are truly unprecedented and now, more than ever, our future rests on the talent, ideas, and ambition of our next generation of leaders. That's why we've partnered with Citadel and local and national leaders like the one-and-only Oprah Winfrey and the immensely talented Miguel Cervantes to host this special graduation ceremony for Chicago's high school seniors," said Mayor Lightfoot. "While Chicago's 2020 graduating class cannot walk across their school's stage to get their diplomas, we are asking them to don their caps and gowns on June 14 as the entire city celebrates this unforgettable milestone together."

As the host of the citywide high school commencement celebration, Mayor Lightfoot has convened celebrities, public leaders and educators from across the nation to celebrate the accomplishments of Chicago's high school seniors. Among those participating in next month's graduation ceremony is Chicago's "Hamilton" star, Miguel Cervantes, who will emcee the ceremony and "The Voice's" Katie Kadan, who will perform the national anthem. Last month, Mayor Lightfoot announced that long-time Chicagoan and global icon, Oprah Winfrey, will give the commencement address at the virtual event. In addition to these guests, the ceremony will also include a comedy skit from Chicago's own Second City as well as a number of



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graduate shout outs from surprise celebrities and sports figures from across the city.

“Our graduating seniors have displayed incredible persistence over the past few months and deserve this one-of-a-kind celebration to honor their accomplishments,” said CPS CEO Dr. Janice K. Jackson. “Though many of them have postsecondary plans that will take them all over the country and the world, this virtual graduation truly exemplifies how special it is to grow up in Chicago and graduate from Chicago Public Schools.”

In addition to speeches from Mayor Lightfoot, Winfrey, Cervantes and others, students from across the city’s high schools will write and perform a single Valedictorian speech to celebrate Chicago’s class of 2020. The ceremony will also include a diverse array of student performances, including the Dunbar Vocational Career Academy drumline, a Class of 2020 poem written and performed by ChiArts students and a spoken word performance by Kenwood High School students.

Mayor Lightfoot is also encouraging all graduating seniors from across Chicago to participate in next month’s graduation ceremony by submitting a “Grad Walk” video of their own graduation walk for a chance to appear in the virtual celebration. All high school seniors can submit their graduation walk videos at: www.chicagograd2020.com

Produced in partnership with ABC7 and ABC’s Localish digital network, next month’s virtual graduation will celebrate every high school senior in Chicago, including those from Chicago Public Schools, charter schools, Catholic schools and all other private schools across the city. To ensure all high school seniors and those who have supported them along the way have a chance to celebrate this milestone from wherever they are, the virtual graduation ceremony will be broadcast on June 14, at 1 p.m. on major local TV and radio newscasts, including: ABC7, WGN-TV, WTTW, FOX32, Univision Chicago (WGBO-TV), and streaming live on the ABC Localish Network in 14 million homes across the country. WBEZ will air portions of the graduation celebration on 91.5 and stream it live on WBEZ.org. CBS2 will be running a delayed broadcast later that evening.

Additionally, the City of Chicago will be providing a live-stream feed from its website and its social media channels. The ceremony will be provided in live closed captioning as well as in Spanish on Univision Chicago (WGBO-TV).

While the Coronavirus-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had a lasting impact on a plethora of groups and institutions across the city, this latest effort by Mayor Lightfoot is designed to ensure that each of Chicago’s high school students are



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widely recognized for their dedicated work over the last four years. In addition to next month's graduation ceremony for Chicago's seniors, Mayor Lightfoot last week launched "My CHI. My Future." (MCMF), a youth-focused initiative designed to connect youth across Chicago to meaningful out-of-school experiences, and ensure all Chicago youth have a meaningful plan for the summer.

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