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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 13, 2021

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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES EXPANSION OF VACCINE EXEMPTION WHEN CHICAGO ENTERS BRIDGE PHASE ON MAY 14

Businesses can choose to exempt fully vaccinated individuals from capacity limits across all industries as Chicago takes next step in reopening plan

CHICAGO – Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot along with CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D., and BACP Commissioner Rosa Escareño announced a full expansion of the Vaccine Exemption when Chicago enters the Bridge Phase of reopening tomorrow, May 14th, allowing businesses to expand capacity for vaccinated patrons. In addition to the increased capacity that comes with the Chicago Bridge Phase, businesses will have the option of not counting fully vaccinated individuals towards COVID-19 capacity limits for all industries. Restaurants and bars will also be able to seat parties larger than ten people if all patrons are fully vaccinated. This next step is possible due to continued progress in the fight against the pandemic, the widespread availability of the COVID-19 vaccine, and the City's ongoing efforts to reopen safely and cautiously while encouraging all Chicagoans to get vaccinated as soon as possible so we can return to normal.

"It's been nearly five months since vaccines first arrived in our city and since their arrival, we've been able to turn a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel into a full-blown flood of hope," said Mayor Lightfoot. "With more and more of our residents vaccinated, we will be able to reopen more and more of our city in a way that is not only safe, but will allow us to eventually return to a sense of normal. This vaccine exemption expansion announcement, as well as our city's shift into the Bridge Phase, proves that we are continuing to make progress in our mission of overcoming this pandemic once and for all."

Over the last two weeks, since the launch of "Open Chicago," all of Chicago's COVID-19 metrics continue to decline or remain stable, including the average daily case count (now under 400), test positivity (under 4%), and hospitalizations and deaths. Due to this continued progress, Chicago is able to enter our Bridge Phase along with the state tomorrow, May 14th. Chicago's Bridge Phase largely aligns with the state's plan and, following standard protocol, we will update our plan to align fully with the state in two weeks if our metrics continue to remain stable or decline.



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“We are pleased to report continued progress in our fight to end this pandemic and I want to applaud all the Chicagoans who have made this possible by getting vaccinated and following the public health guidance,” said CDPH Commissioner Dr. Arwady. “This further reopening is exciting but we need everyone to continue to follow the health and safety guidance if we want to fully reopen for summer.”

COVID-19 capacity restrictions will increase across industries under the [Chicago Bridge Phase](#) effective tomorrow. This represents a broad loosening of regulations, including allowing bars and restaurants to operate within their regular liquor license hours, opening standing areas for the first time at 25% capacity, increasing to 250 people indoors or 500 people outdoors at social events, and increasing to the lesser of 60% or 1,000 people at meetings, conferences, and conventions. Certain capacity limits will remain in place to keep patrons and employees safe, including the limit on table size to ten people for any place that serves food or alcohol. However, in order to give businesses the opportunity to increase capacity safely while encouraging vaccine uptake, businesses will have the ability to take advantage of the Vaccine Exemption.

There are three components of the Vaccine Exemption:

1. Fully vaccinated individuals do not count towards COVID-19 capacity limits across all industries.
2. Bars, restaurants, and other establishments that allow onsite consumption of food or alcohol can increase table or party size above the limit of ten if all patrons age 16+ at that table or within that party are fully vaccinated.
3. Late Hour Liquor Licensees can operate without hour restrictions for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began if only fully vaccinated patrons are permitted to enter. While all bars and restaurants are allowed to stay open under standard hours in the Chicago Bridge Phase, this will allow Late Hour establishments to stay open until 4:00 am Monday through Saturday morning and 5:00 am on Sunday morning if all patrons are fully vaccinated.

Businesses who choose to take advantage of the Vaccine Exemption will be expected to verify that patrons are fully vaccinated and track which customers are exempt from capacity limits to ensure compliance. A full overview of the Vaccine Exemption can be found [here](#).

“The Chicago Bridge Phase is a huge milestone on our path towards reopening and one that would not be possible without ongoing buy-in from our incredible business community,” said Rosa Escareño, BACP Commissioner. “However, if we want to



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continue moving forward and hopefully get back to normal soon, we need all Chicagoans to get vaccinated as soon as possible.”

While this broad loosening of restrictions and the new Vaccine Exemption reflects our progress in the fight against the pandemic, we are not at the end of this crisis. As such, certain regulations will remain in place across industries, including the requirement to maintain six feet of social distancing between parties and to wear face coverings at all times except in limited circumstances, such as when patrons are actively eating or drinking.

To help businesses understand the new Chicago Bridge Phase and the Vaccine Exemption, BACP will be holding webinars this Friday, May 14, at 2:00 pm and Monday, May 17, at 1:00 pm. Register and learn more at [Chicago.gov/businesseducation](https://www.chicago.gov/businesseducation).

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