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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT SIGNS EXECUTIVE ORDER TO FORMALIZE FOOD EQUITY COUNCIL

CHICAGO – Today, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot with City and Community food system leaders announced the [signage of an executive order](#) formalizing Chicago's first Food Equity Council. This Council represents a collaboration across City Departments, sister agencies, and community partners to reimagine and transform Chicago's food system into one that is equitable, resilient, and vibrant.



Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot
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The Council is a collaboration across City departments, sister agencies & community partners.

We're working together to transform Chicago's food system into one that's equitable, resilient and vibrant.



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"Our residents must have access to affordable, healthy food that nourishes their families without burdens and obstacles," said Mayor Lightfoot. "The formalization of the first-ever Food Equity Council is a great step into a future where every family has necessary resources to put food on the table. I look forward to our transparent, collaborative work to achieve food justice in our communities."

"We are very excited for the Mayor to recognize the priorities of the Food Equity Council by signing the Executive Order," said Rodger Cooley, Executive Director of



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the Chicago Food Action Policy Council. “The Council is prioritizing getting resources into communities across the south and west sides, food focused community groups, businesses, farms, worker coops, and organizations to be able to equitably meet the opportunities and needs of their own communities.”

Over the Winter of 2020, the Mayor’s office, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, and the Departments of Public Health (CDPH) and Family and Support Services (DFSS) convened a cross-sector ad hoc working group of City and community experts to review past food plans and discuss emerging opportunities. Since then, this inaugural working group identified 5 near-term priorities, published Chicago’s first [Food Equity Agenda](#), announced the first Food Equity Policy Lead, and partnered in the crafting of this executive order.

“The establishment of Chicago’s first Food Equity Council is a tremendous win for our entire city,” said Kate Maehr, executive director, and CEO of the Greater Chicago Food Depository. “For generations, inequitable access to food has negatively impacted the health outcomes and economic opportunities for too many Chicagoans, particularly in BIPOC neighborhoods. The Food Equity Council and its agenda will address and change this injustice. I am excited for the work to begin.”

The city and its department’s food efforts have historically taken a decentralized approach to food system management, preventing a coordinated vision. Formalizing the Council was identified by the working group as an important step to bring greater transparency, accountability, and collaboration by establishing a centralized governing body committed to implementing policies that advance food justice and food sovereignty. This executive order is an important step in ensuring that Chicago makes the structural changes that allow every Chicagoan to have access to affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant food and that food becomes an engine for community wealth building.

“Strong communities require access to healthy, affordable food, and the establishment of the Food Equity Council is an important step toward ensuring that Chicago’s food system meets the needs of residents in all of the City’s communities,” said Victoria Lakes- Battle, Executive Director-Chicago IFF. “This work can’t wait, and I look forward to collaborating with the other members of the Council to create a more equitable, resilient, and just food system that builds community wealth and improves community health across the city.”

Anton Seals Jr., Executive Director of Grow Greater Englewood said, “This is a great first step to ensure that Chicago commits to finding ways to advance health, and economic equity, in particular for Black residents, whom are the most vulnerable in our city.”



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Using the 5-near term priorities highlighted in the Food Equity Agenda, the Food Equity Council hopes to deepen the City's partnership with BIPOC communities and leaders in addressing racial and social inequities in our food system. By collaborating with community leaders, ranging from experts in federal nutrition programs to institutional procurement, Chicago can become an equitable food city—one that leverages vacant land for urban farming and that catalyzes wealth building through the support for food businesses.

"Creating a more just food system requires a commitment to health equity across policies," said Dr. Allison Arwady, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health. "This Food Equity Council brings together cross-sector partners to work on community co-led strategies in the Healthy Chicago 2025 way. The health department is proud to support the Food Equity Council, which will provide the coordinated support that is needed to advance equity in the food system and is another important step forward on Healthy Chicago 2025, the City's plan to reduce our racial life expectancy gap."

This order builds upon the Food Equity investments made for Mayor Lightfoot's recently passed Chicago Recovery Plan, which commits \$10 million to capital investments in urban agriculture, the creation of a food incubator, and the development of a Chicago Good Food Fund. Stronger BIPOC-owned and led food businesses are an important strategy to reduce poverty and build social and economic wealth, and these investments highlight the Food Equity Council's dedication to reducing the barriers that exist for BIPOC entrepreneurs across the food system.

"At the Chicago Food Equity Council, the bottom line is people – not just food. Food equity means being able to access affordable, healthy, sustainable, culturally-appropriate, safe food in all neighborhoods" said Margot Pritzker, Co-Creator of the Community Food Navigator. "It also means working toward justice and economic opportunity from growers to eaters. At the Community Food Navigator, we plan to amplify the work of the Chicago's first Food Equity Council so more and more citizens know their voice will be heard."

This newly created council and its workgroups will convene no later than April 30th of 2022 and will publish annual reports on their progress.

"The Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children has been engaged for 20 years in efforts to reduce the inequities in our food system that contribute to the disproportionate burden of obesity faced by children in communities on the South and West sides of the City," said CLOCC Executive Director, Adam Becker. "While



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those efforts have included city government departments in the past, there has never been as pronounced a focus on food equity from the Mayor's office until now. The Food Equity Council will prioritize the elements of the food system that have the greatest potential to reduce health disparities. At CLOCC we are eager to contribute to the work of this Council and excited to see the changes that result."

"The Illinois Public Health Institute applauds the Mayor's Office for signing the Executive Order for Chicago's Food Equity Council," said the Illinois Public Health Institute. "The Council's effort to make healthy, affordable, and locally procured food accessible to Chicagoans gives us hope for a future where communities most affected by inequity and food insecurity are happier and healthier. We look forward to continuing to build this future together."

"The mission of the Food Equity Council is to ensure everyone is afforded the same access and resources necessary for maintaining nutritional diets. People with disabilities are no exception," said Laurie Dittman, Senior Policy Analyst with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities. "Nearly one-third of all households experiencing food insecurity include a person with a disability. The Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities applauds the Council's commitment to remove the barriers at the core of food inequity in the disability community and throughout Chicago."

"The Food Equity Council formalizes the great urgent work that many stakeholders have been deeply engaged in and sets the conditions for community stakeholders to robustly strategize around food, land, and water access, and to get things done for our city. This is an important, historic, and meaningful opportunity for Chicago," said Robin Cline, Assistant Director of NeighborSpace.

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