



CITY OF CHICAGO
CITY COUNCIL

April 20, 2020

VIA E-MAIL: lori.lightfoot@cityofchicago.org

Honorable Lori Lightfoot
Mayor, City of Chicago
121 N. LaSalle Street, 5th Floor
Chicago, IL 60602

RE: ***Emergency Powers Ordinance Amendments***

Dear Mayor Lightfoot:

We, the undersigned Aldermen, write to propose necessary provisions to the Emergency Powers Ordinance, which you seek passage of at the Wednesday, April 22, 2020. We believe these provisions will ensure that Chicago's response to the COVID-19 pandemic prioritizes the most vulnerable and hardest hit communities, particularly Black and Brown communities on the West Side and South Side, and will ensure that we govern in an inclusive, transparent, and democratic manner that is consistent with our shared values.

Therefore, we seek the inclusion of the following provisions in the Emergency Powers Ordinance:

- **City Council Oversight**: The proposed ordinance, as written, currently appears to grant the Budget Director unilateral authority to rewrite the City's approved budget without the inclusion of oversight of City Council. This language should be amended to ensure proper City Council oversight for any proposed or attempted alterations of the budget. An amendment to Article 1, Section 1 of the ordinance will be required to provide the City Council the proper and deserved oversight authority it requires to fulfill its duties as the City's legislative body. This amendment further includes a prioritization of debt funding from the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) of the Federal Reserve's Municipal Liquidity Facility (MLF) in order to reduce long-term borrowing costs for the City by prioritizing lower cost debt financing via the Federal Reserve. In addition, the proposed amendment provides conditions on any additional private market debt issuance issued by the City under the terms of the Emergency Powers Ordinance in order to prevent the issuance of debt or derivative instruments that would unduly saddle the City with variable, high-risk, or generally predatory debt.



CITY OF CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL

- Aiding Our Communities: Black and Brown communities on the South and West Sides have suffered the greatest impact from COVID-19. As such, any plan that leverages the use of federal emergency dollars or other federally-derived stimulus or relief funding must include and reach Black and Brown communities in a timely and effective manner. Such usage of these dollars could include: additional testing sites, public provision of masks and other needed personal protective equipment, coverage of health costs associated with the pandemic, economic recovery assistance, targeted loans for local small and medium businesses, etc.
- New Markets Opportunities: In the distribution of any and all contracts associated with the Emergency Powers Ordinance, priority should be granted to women and minority business enterprises (W/MBE) in the New Markets program at or below \$500,000 in value awarded. This rapid and large-scale dispersal of money should be leveraged to help invest in and develop W/MBE business here in Chicago where at all possible in responding to this crisis as a way to further support the economic uplift of female and minority Chicagoans.
- Emergency Mortgage Relief Fund: The City of Chicago has been allocated \$1.6 billion as part of the CARES Act, of that, \$470 million is unallocated. Some portion of these funds must be utilized to create an Emergency Mortgage Relief Fund for the purpose of providing relief to landlords in order to allow tenants to remain in their homes in this difficult time without being held liable for rental payments. To be eligible for this fund, the property owners must meet the following conditions:
 - (a) Have tenants who have withheld rent for reasons including, but not limited to, an inability to pay, and
 - (b) Qualify for the home tax exemption, i.e. owner-occupied housing
 - (c) Have agreed, in writing, with the City of Chicago and with the tenants in question to waive, forgive, or otherwise cancel any and all rental payments and other associated fees otherwise owed by their tenants for the duration of time in which they utilize this fund
- Emergency Homelessness Fund: Of CARES ACT funding previously, some fraction of this fund must be dedicated to emergency homelessness relief. The City of Chicago would utilize these funds to immediately acquire emergency housing units for homeless individuals to ensure they can be safely sheltered, especially including vacant hotel rooms, bridge housing, vacant public housing units, and otherwise available housing units. Emergency housing is critical to protecting the homeless population from potential COVID-19 infection by enabling the safety of shelter, the ability to properly social distance, and the prevention of further spread. No less than 75% of the Emergency Solutions Grant funding from the CARES Act should be spent on Rapid Rehousing to address COVID-19 for people experiencing homelessness.



CITY OF CHICAGO CITY COUNCIL

- Reporting & Accountability Provision: As the Mayor's Office is taking on additional responsibility that usually lies with the City Council, this ordinance must require a similar level of public reporting to ensure accountability and transparency of actions taken under the authority granted by this ordinance. This reporting must be provided to the City Council on a timely, regular basis and all reports must simultaneously be made available for public access.
- Sunset Provision: Any extension of additional powers to the Mayor's Office must be paired with a clear end date for the sunseting of this additional authority lest City Council in some way authorizes an extended or unintended expansion of mayoral powers. Any extension of emergency powers beyond the sunset date must be approved by the City Council.

We thank you for your service to our city and your attention to this important matter.

Respectfully,

Alderman Daniel La Spata, 1st Ward
Alderman Brian Hopkins, 2nd Ward
Alderman Sophia King, 4th Ward
Alderman Susan Sadlowski Garza, 10th Ward
Alderman George Cardenas, 12th Ward
Alderman David Moore, 17th Ward
Alderman Jeanette Taylor, 20th Ward
Alderman Michael Rodriguez, 22nd Ward
Alderman Silvana Tabares, 23rd Ward
Alderman Byron Sigcho Lopez, 25th Ward

Alderman Roberto Maldonado, 26th Ward
Alderman Ariel Reboyras, 30th Ward
Alderman Felix Cardona, 31st Ward
Alderman Rossana Rodriguez Sanchez, 33rd Ward
Alderman Carlos Rosa, 35th Ward
Alderman Gilbert Villegas, 36th Ward
Alderman Andres Vasquez, 40th Ward
Alderman Matt Martin, 47th Ward
Alderman Maria Hadden, 49th Ward

Organizations:

United Working Families
ONE Northside
United Neighbors of the 35th Ward
Jane Addams Senior Caucus
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
Parents 4 Teachers