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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND COMCAST ANNOUNCE LARGEST EVER EXPANSION OF INTERNET ESSENTIALS IN CHICAGO

*Investment Will Double the Number of Low-Income Households Eligible for Internet Essentials,
Expand Digital Youth Learning Labs Throughout Chicago*

CHICAGO—Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today joined Comcast Corporation and Chicago Public Library (CPL) at the Austin Library Branch to announce the largest ever expansion of Internet Essentials in the City of Chicago. Comcast will significantly expand eligibility for its program, the nation's largest, most comprehensive, and most successful broadband adoption initiative, to all low-income households in Chicago. The expansion greatly expands the number of low-income households eligible for Internet Essentials, including households with people with disabilities and seniors.

Building on an existing partnership with Chicago Public Library, Comcast is also dedicating \$250,000 to open eight new digital media labs for teens and offering additional digital skills education programming to seniors and other populations by the end of 2019. Both commitments by the City and Comcast are designed to help residents build digital skills and Internet literacy, and increase adoption of Internet services in the areas of the city with the greatest need.

“This type of public-private partnership, where a good corporate citizen helps address community needs, can bring the transformative change we need in our neighborhoods,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “This is one of many initiatives my administration will introduce that works to enhance equity in our city by ensuring that services and resources are available to every resident in every neighborhood.”

To increase the number of Chicagoans able to access broadband, Comcast has introduced new eligibility guidelines, which will make the program available to all families who qualify for government public assistance programs, including low-income people with disabilities and seniors. Previously, only families that reside in public housing qualify for the national school lunch program, as well as Pell-grant



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eligible community college students and low-income veterans were eligible to participate.

“This expansion is the culmination of an audacious goal we set eight years ago, which was to meaningfully and significantly close the digital divide for low-income Americans,” said David L. Cohen, Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer of Comcast NBCUniversal. “The Internet is arguably the most important technological innovation in history, and it is unacceptable that we live in a country where millions of families and individuals are missing out on this life-changing resource. Whether the Internet is used for students to do their homework, adults to look for and apply for new jobs, seniors to keep in touch with friends and family, or veterans to access their well-deserved benefits or medical assistance, it is absolutely essential to be connected in our modern, digital age.”

To apply for the program, low-income applicants need to show they are participating in one of more than a dozen different government assistance programs. A full list can be found at www.internetessentials.com. To date, the program has connected more than 95,000 homes representing approximately 380,000 people in Chicago.

Furthering the City’s investments in digital youth learning programs, Comcast’s \$250,000 grant to Chicago Public Library Foundation will expand broadband education programming to eight new library branch locations including Austin, Avalon, Toman, Sherman Park, Wrightwood-Ashburn, South Chicago, Jefferson Park, and Edgewater. This investment will expand CPL’s groundbreaking YOUmedia teen learning sites and help more youth throughout the city build digital skills. These new “Experience Labs” will allow for expanded access to YOUmedia and digital skills education programming to serve more youth and their families.

“Chicago Public Library serves as a bridge for our communities, connecting residents to essential services and programs that will help them unlock new possibilities for learning,” said CPL Commissioner Andrea Telli. “The Library system’s goal is to provide free and democratic access to information. We thank Comcast for this gift that will allow us to continue expanding our award-winning YOUmedia teen learning sites, and dedicate resources to better serving youth and all our library patrons citywide.”

The YOUmedia program, which started in Chicago and is currently celebrating its 10th anniversary year, has been replicated in 30 cities’ museums, libraries, and after school centers nationally as a proven model for college and career success. The nationally recognized program creates links between students’ academic studies, their personal passions, and opportunities to engage with skilled mentors and peers



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who support and share their interests. Programs and workshops focus on career exploration, science, fashion, using 3D printers and laser cutters, music production, photography, animation, and graphic design. Earlier this summer, Mayor Lightfoot announced investments to expand the programming for a total of 29 free digital media labs located in communities around the city by early next year.

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