



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES HIGH ROAD KITCHENS PROGRAM
LAUNCHING IN CHICAGO**

Administered by One Fair Wage, new program will provide \$1 million in relief to restaurant owners and workers while serving community members in need

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today joined One Fair Wage to announce the creation of the High Road Kitchens Program in Chicago. Funded and administered by One Fair Wage, this \$1 million program will provide grants to participating restaurants that commit to pay their employees a living wage by 2026 and providing free meals to community members in need. This program builds on Mayor Lightfoot's commitment to supporting business and employees affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and fighting for an equitable workplace and protections for all workers.

“Our Chicago communities, workforce, and restaurant industry -- in particular -- are undoubtedly struggling amidst the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Mayor Lori Lightfoot. “The new funds provided by High Road Kitchens will lift up small businesses while empowering their employees that work tirelessly day in and day out to keep them alive. While the City protects workers who aren't making the minimum wage, during the pandemic we see that the lowest wage frontline workers are the ones bearing the brunt of the crisis, and I'm proud to partner with One Fair Wage and High Road Kitchens on this program that will give restaurants a lifeline and workers a chance to earn a living wage.”

The High Road Kitchens program is rolling out in Chicago after successfully launching in California, New York City, Detroit and Boston. To be eligible, businesses must have annual revenue of under \$3 million and have experienced financial loss due to COVID-19 totaling 25% of their annual revenue. Participating restaurants must commit to increasing their worker's non-tipped wages to \$15/hour by 2026. Grants will be distributed to participating restaurants in \$10,000 increments for each 500 free meals they serve for community members in need, with a maximum grant size of \$30,000 per establishment. Restaurants that are interested in participating can email mikey@highroadrestaurants.org.



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“One Fair Wage is thrilled to partner with Chicago Mayor Lightfoot to bring its highly successful High Road Kitchens program to the city,” said Saru Jayaraman, President of One Fair Wage. “One Fair Wage’s High Road Kitchens program will provide grants to restaurants in Chicago that commit to scaling up to paying One Fair Wage to all workers - a full minimum wage with tips on top - and provide free meals to community members in need. We appreciate Mayor Lightfoot for working with us to shape relief for the restaurant industry in a way that reshapes the industry to be more sustainable and equitable for employers and the thousands of workers who are struggling now and are the heart of the industry. We would also like to thank City Council members Sadlowski Garza, Ramirez-Rosa and King for their support of the program.”

In July, Chicago’s minimum wage increased to \$13.50 or \$14 per hour depending on the size of the business. Restaurant workers who depend on tips receive a lower tipped wage – currently either \$8.10 or \$8.40 per hour – with the employer required to make up the difference if wages plus tips do not equal the full minimum wage. However, while the Chicago Office of Labor Standards enforces the Chicago minimum wage, studies show that many restaurant workers, predominantly African American and Latina women, often do not earn enough with tips to reach the minimum wage and the employers fail to make up the difference. The High Road Kitchens program aims to support restaurants while helping them maintain an equitable workplace that prioritizes their employees.

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