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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT OF BUSINESS AFFAIRS AND
CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMISSIONER ROSA ESCAREÑO AND
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPECIAL EVENTS COMMISSIONER
MARK KELLY**

*BACP will introduce an acting commissioner and DCASE will conduct a national search
before Commissioner Kelly retires in the fall*

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot today announced that Business Affairs and Consumer Protection (BACP) Commissioner Rosa Escareño and Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) Commissioner Mark Kelly will retire from their positions as commissioners at the end of the month and in the fall, respectively.

"Time and time again, our city has been challenged in unimaginable ways, with the COVID-19 pandemic being the most recent iteration. But at every step of the way, both Commissioner Kelly and Commissioner Escareño have gone beyond the call of duty to ensure their respective departments were ready to respond to the needs of our residents," said Mayor Lightfoot. "Through a collective of nearly four decades worth of hard work and leadership, Commissioner Kelly and Commissioner Escareño have truly made our city a better place and words cannot encapsulate how grateful I am for their personal sacrifice over the past 16 months. I wish them both nothing but the best as they embark on this exciting next chapter of their lives and enjoy their well-earned retirement."

After over 30 years serving the residents of Chicago, Commissioner Rosa Escareño will retire at the end of July 2021. This well-earned retirement comes after serving under four mayors and helping to lead the city in a variety of demanding leadership roles, most recently as BACP Commissioner for the last four years. Through her accomplished and varied career, Commissioner Escareño has worked tirelessly to make Chicago a better city to work and live and has repeatedly demonstrated unwavering leadership and selfless service to this city.

As BACP Commissioner, Rosa has modernized Chicago's marketplace and navigated Chicago's businesses and workers through a time of unprecedented upheaval. She



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



led the City's efforts to adapt to the emerging shared economy, overseeing the creation of regulations that serve as national models for shared housing, ride-hailing, scooters and other industries. She also created the Office of Labor Standards and led the implementation of Chicago's landmark labor laws, including Fair Workweek and the \$15 Minimum Wage. Commissioner Escareño has consistently worked to reduce red tape and simplify processes for businesses by championing Mayor Emanuel's Small Business Reform Initiative and recently spearheading the passage of Mayor Lightfoot's Chi Biz Strong Initiative. Over the past 16 months she has helped lead the City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic by working tirelessly to navigate Chicago's business and workers through the crisis.

When Mayor Lightfoot took office, Commissioner Escareño stayed on board to assist with the transition, with the intention of serving the city for one final year under the new administration. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, however, she put off retirement to help navigate the city's business community through this difficult time, and she is now looking forward to spending more time with her family, especially her 14-year-old son Mikey.

"It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve the residents of this great city for over 30 years," said Commissioner Escareño. "As a lifelong public servant, I have had the great fortune to dedicate my life to making this city a better place. While I am looking forward to retirement and spending more time with my family, it will be a bittersweet day as the sun sets on a career spanning four mayors, seven departments and countless long days and nights giving back to a city that gave me and my family so much. I want to thank Mayor Lightfoot for her mentorship, friendship and incredible leadership, especially during the immense challenges of this last year. I also want to thank Mayor Emanuel and Mayor Daley for pushing me to be the public servant that I became, as well as all my other colleagues including Chicago's legislative, business and community leaders. I especially want to thank my team at BACP – it has been an honor to work with so many talented public servants and I am confident that the department and the city are in great hands moving forward."

Commissioner Escareño's career with the City of Chicago began shortly after high school as an Administrative Assistant in the Office of Budget and Management. She continued working full-time at the City while attending night classes to obtain her Bachelor of Arts from Loyola University Chicago and Master's in Communication from Northwestern University. Prior to beginning as BACP Commissioner in 2017, Rosa worked in numerous roles in the City government, including as the Deputy Chief Operating Officer for the Mayor Emanuel Administration, Deputy Press Secretary in Mayor Daley's Office, as Director of Media Relations for the Chicago Fire Department and as the Deputy Commissioner at Business Affairs and Licensing, a



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



role in which she helped create the current Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection.

BACP's First Deputy Commissioner Kenneth Meyer will serve as Acting Commissioner beginning in August. Ken has served as the First Deputy Commissioner at BACP for over five years and has more than 25 years of experience working for the City of Chicago in a variety of leadership roles.

DCASE Commissioner Kelly was appointed to his post by Mayor Rahm Emanuel in July 2016 after more than 40 years of experience working as an academic administrator for various post-secondary institutions including Columbia College Chicago, Wayne State University and City Colleges of Chicago.

"I want to thank Mayor Lori Lightfoot and First Lady Amy Eshleman for their support, passion, and commitment to Chicago's arts community. Make no mistake – the new arts recovery resources we are bringing forward are due to their efforts, along with those of Deputy Mayor Samir Mayekar," said Commissioner Kelly. "I also want to thank former Mayor Rahm Emanuel for making his "out-of-the-box" decision to hire me for this position. Let me also recognize my professional colleagues, for your support, partnership, inspiration, and feedback. I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to work with each and every one of you. Chicago is one of the great cultural capitals and we have collectively strengthened our cultural sector."

Kelly previously served as the Vice President for Student Success at Columbia College Chicago, where he fostered and oversaw an immersive arts experience for Columbia's burgeoning student body, across its 100 different degree programs. For more than 30 years, Kelly served in numerous leadership roles at Columbia, supporting students who view the world through a creative lens in attaining a world-class education that blends creative and media arts, liberal arts, and business. Kelly was the founder of the Wabash Arts Corridor (WAC) initiative, and he created the artistic vision for the Arts in the Dark Halloween Parade. He is a percussionist who worked with free form jazz artist Hal Russell, and he had the honor of bringing percussion to an Allen Ginsberg performance. Kelly holds a Master of Arts in counseling from the University of Cincinnati and a Bachelor of Arts in sociology from John Carroll University.

Commissioner Kelly's leadership of DCASE has reminded Chicago that the arts should not be relegated simply to a stage or a gallery but are central to the human experience and should be valued as such; that every generation brings new visions and ideas that should be expected and embraced; and that arts organizations are



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



stronger when they adopt a more collaborative approach with other organizations in their orbit.

As the Commissioner for DCASE the last five years, Kelly has made huge accomplishments by way of cultural affairs and special events in Chicago. Most notably, addressing inequitable distribution of the arts in Chicago where he introduced several new programs that prioritize the South and West Sides of the city including Chicago Presents, the Artists Response Program, Culture in My Neighborhood, and the Neighborhood Access Program. Commissioner Kelly's work on COVID recovery for the arts sector has ensured a successful resurgence of the arts in Chicago's economic future.

Through Commissioner Kelly's service, DCASE has become a beacon for the Chicago residents bring joy and culture to the from all 77 neighborhoods. His work has contributed to equity in the arts, new and returning Chicago traditions, and has brought people together through the sharing of music, culture, food, and dance.

As Commissioner, Kelly worked tirelessly with different partners across the city resulting in numerous investments in public art including \$18.5 million supporting public art in different neighborhoods and \$25 million to support monuments honoring Jean Point DuSable and his wife, Kitihawa. Other notable public arts projects shepherded by Kelly include 50 x 50 Neighborhood Arts project, Year of Public Art in 2017, the Artist in Residence Program, the Mural Art Registry, Art on theMART, and the Chicago Monuments Project that reconciles Chicago's history and reimagines the future of public art and monuments in the city.

Following a tumultuous sixteen months battling the pandemic and advocating for Chicago's cultural community, Commissioner Kelly's leadership has set the stage for a very strong arts recovery with various arts and culture programs and investments that will continue with the introduction of new leadership to the department.

Prior to Commissioner Kelly's departure, he will continue support Chicago theaters following the Year of Chicago Theatre in 2019 where DCASE placed a spotlight on Chicago's theatre community, and the reopening of the city with the Year of Chicago Music and the Chicago In Tune festival, bringing together the music community to highlight Chicago as an international music capital.

A national search will be conducted immediately for the new Commissioner for DCASE and will conclude ahead of Commissioner Kelly's retirement in the fall. He will continue to serve as the DCASE Commissioner until the position is filled.

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