



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

LORI E. LIGHTFOOT  
MAYOR

July 20, 2020

President Donald Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I am responding again to your letter from June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and recent statements from you and members of your Administration regarding offers of federal assistance to the City of Chicago. Despite the misplaced and incendiary rhetoric from you and your staff which is divisive and unhelpful, I will take you at your word that you want to assist the City in its effort to reduce violence so I will be specific about what we need from the federal government to make us safer.

Let me state clearly and proudly that it is my honor and privilege to serve the people of Chicago. Each life lost in our city breaks my heart and is felt personally both as a tragedy by the family who has lost a brother, sister, mother, father, or child and by every resident.

What we have here in Chicago—and what dozens of American cities alike are facing—requires leadership at all levels of government. It requires genuine efforts to unite us and collaborate, not more conflict and division. It requires focus and resources in two major areas of public health: on guns and COVID-19, both of which disproportionately impact our Black and brown residents. I have led a city response to keep Chicagoans safe, and we have curbed the impact of COVID-19, but our residents and our national economy are cracking. To address these challenges, I have identified the following areas in which the federal government has the unique ability to step up.

**Common-sense gun safety reform.** We need you, as President, to take a leadership role in enacting meaningful and common-sense gun control legislation, which you have so far refused to do. One of our primary problems with addressing gun violence in Chicago is there are too many illegal guns that flood our streets year after year, seemingly without end. Most of the guns are not originating in Chicago: sixty percent of illegal firearms recovered in Chicago come from outside of Illinois. They are coming from neighboring states that have very relaxed gun ownership laws, and from federally licensed gun dealers who repeatedly sell guns that end up associated with violent crime within three years or less of sale. This means that Chicago and Illinois cannot make the needed change on its own. Federal support and intervention are needed in the following ways:

1. We need universal background checks and closure on simple loopholes, a ban on assault weapons, and policies that keep guns out of the hands of people who are dangerous to themselves and others as well as promoting gun safety.
2. Additionally, adequate federal enforcement of existing laws is critical, including supporting federal efforts to investigate federally licensed gun dealers, including the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) which has been constrained by the gun lobby. Year after year, the Chicago Police Department takes more guns off the street than NYPD and LAPD combined. In 2017, it was 8,600; in 2018 it was 9,500; in 2019 it was 10,800, and 5,296 already in 2020. Why? In part because there is an illegal gun trafficking market originating in other states and ending up on the streets of Chicago. Interstate gun trafficking requires a federal focus. It can never be adequately addressed by local law enforcement alone and requires sufficient staffing.
3. Additionally, every day, on social media platforms, illegal gun sales are happening among criminals. Our Police Department has extensive experience investigating and prosecuting these sales, but the weight of the federal government could demand a real change in behavior.
4. Finally, it would be helpful if you would authorize the provision of resources for the purchase of National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBN) machines and staffing for more firearms examiners. These two elements would be important and worthwhile investments.

**Public safety support, not games.** What we do not need, and what will certainly make our community less safe is secret, federal agents deployed to Chicago. Any other form of militarized assistance within our borders that would not be within our control or within the direct command of the Chicago Police Department would spell disaster. As any law enforcement official will tell you, what is needed more than anything in an operation to protect lives is a clear mission, a detailed operations plan, and a chain of command. Secret, federal agents who do not know Chicago, are unfamiliar with the unique circumstances of our neighborhoods and who would operate outside the established infrastructure of local law enforcement would not be effective, regardless of the number, and worse will foment a massive wave of opposition. Deploying resources like we have seen in Portland, Oregon, does not make residents safer, particularly when gun violence plays a significant role in Chicago's loss of life. Quite the opposite. The deployment of secret, federal agents in Portland has undermined residents' confidence in all levels of government and fomented more unrest. Such a deployment of secret, federal agents who arrest, and detain residents without any cause and then deprive those residents of due process is clearly unconstitutional. It is a bad idea and I urge you not to do it.

As a former federal prosecutor, I can attest that more federal prosecution or investigatory resources to augment existing federal violent crime suppression efforts, under the leadership and control of the U.S. Attorney, could assist in keeping communities safe. Given the urgency of the gun violence, we need federal violent crime and particularly gun cases investigated and the worthy ones charged in weeks and months, not years.

**Community-based outreach.** An important step in mitigating gun violence during COVID-19 as gun sales continue to rise and emergency health services are strained, we ask for your support in providing robust investment in community-based violence interventions. This includes street outreach and trauma support that sustains lifesaving community-based violence intervention

programs, retains violence interrupters, and allows for the development and replication of effective models for lifesaving violence intervention initiatives. Further, any federal funding must not be restricted because of hateful policies towards our residents such as restricting support for Sanctuary Cities that support all residents equally.

**Get at the root cause through community investment.** By investing in neighborhoods and addressing the root causes of gun violence, we can continue to make meaningful gains in public safety in communities throughout the city. This means focusing on the systemic issues—racial inequities, poverty, community divestment—that drive gun violence in Chicago. The violence our city is confronting is symptomatic of a larger public health and economic crisis, only exacerbated by this COVID-19 pandemic. Despite having previously managed a balanced budget, city finances are strained due to less revenue from COVID-19 safety measures and a weakened economy. One of your first acts in supporting us should be direct aid to state and local governments in the next COVID-19 relief package under consideration now in Congress. Your June 26<sup>th</sup> letter notes that Chicago received funding through the Coronavirus Relief Fund but does not mention the restrictions of having to go toward COVID-19 expenses only. What cities, towns and villages need now is flexible funds to cover shortfalls due to the COVID-19 restrictions and struggling economy, and fund essential city operations such as public safety and mental health. You have previously expressed your support for this funding to communities across the county, and I ask that you keep your original word. Additionally, as a part of the support for our neighborhoods that are suffering under the stress of COVID-related challenges, we request your assistance to our residents who are most at risk for violence involvement:

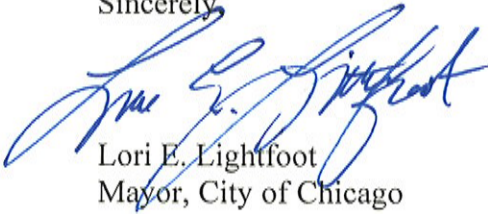
- Extend expanded Unemployment Insurance benefits to help millions get by during this economic downturn.
- Enable affordable housing, and rental assistance to provide stability for those at risk for homelessness. Your administration's budget regularly proposes elimination of the HOME Investment Partnerships (HOME) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and public housing capital fund. We are grateful that Congress acts on a bipartisan basis to restore these cuts, which assist in stabilizing our neighborhoods, which is needed now more than ever.
- End regulatory rollbacks that impact the health, safety, and well-being of Chicagoans.
- Create more opportunities for returning residents. I applaud the First Step Act, but we must do more to build our communities.
- Stitch our broken social safety net, which—as a start—means to stop attempts to claw back the Affordable Care Act.
- Stop doing more injury and harm to our immigrant and refugee communities. Every individual and every child adds value, their lives matter and instead of treating them with humanity and compassion.

In the end, we very much want to *partner* with an executive branch that respects our city, inclusive of *all* our residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, country of origin, religion, sexual orientation or ability. Partnership includes respect that you have not shown our residents as of late in mocking the level of violence that challenges Chicagoans. Please stop with the rhetoric and find the moral courage to simply support the needed actions listed above: enact common sense gun laws, partner with our law enforcement actors through providing investigative resources, deliver on community-

based resources for public safety, and invest in our neighborhoods and residents. These acts will deliver on your promise to make Chicagoans safer—not derision, mandates, or militarized forces. I would be more than happy to have my team sit down with yours to go through the actionable policy and legislative items that you can support to help make these actions a reality.

Because of the depth of these challenges, we must recognize that this will not be solved overnight, but I fight every day to ensure that it is improved. We'll continue working with Chicagoans from every neighborhood and background — from block clubs and faith groups to businesses and school communities — who have joined us hand-in-hand in our multifaceted, comprehensive approach to reducing the violence in our city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lori E. Lightfoot", is written over the printed name and title.

Lori E. Lightfoot  
Mayor, City of Chicago