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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 11, 2019

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**MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES A RECORD 57.6 MILLION VISITORS TO CHICAGO IN 2018**

*The City is already underway to break that record in 2019 by hosting 'The World's Largest Annual Gathering of Soccer Coaches and Administrators'*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced Chicago welcomed over 57.6 million visitors in 2018 - a growth of 4.3% over the previous year, resulting in a new tourism record.

"When it comes to attracting tourists and business travelers, Chicago can go toe-to-toe with any city in the world," Mayor Emanuel said. "By continuing to set new tourism records and bring millions more people to Chicago every year, we are creating jobs and economic opportunities that reach every neighborhood."

The Mayor made the announcement at the United Soccer Coaches Convention –McCormick Place's first major convention of the year.

Billed as 'The World's Largest Annual Gathering of Soccer Coaches and Administrators', the United Soccer Coaches Convention and US Youth Soccer Workshop brings more than 20,000 participants to Chicago over five days, with an estimated economic impact of more than \$31 million.

"We chose Chicago because the facilities are top notch", said United Soccer Coaches CEO Lynn Berling-Manuel. "Couple that with the proximity of hotels, downtown and ease of access to the city it made the choice to come to Chicago an easy one. Add in the rich soccer tradition in the city and it was a perfect match for the world's largest gathering of soccer coaches and administrators."

The annual visitor projections released by Choose Chicago today were fueled by a growth of 4.4% in domestic visitors and an increase of 2.9% in overseas visitors.

"It's encouraging to not only see growth, but to see the pace of growth increase," said David Whitaker, President & CEO of Choose Chicago. "The previous year, visitor volumes grew 2.7%, so to see the pace improve with now a 4.3% annual increase is a reflection of the momentum that Chicago is enjoying and the growing impact the tourism, meetings and events industry generates in our community."

Growth was also achieved in convention sales in 2018 as Choose Chicago and its partners at McCormick Place and participating host hotels announced that 59 additional new major

conventions have committed to meet in Chicago in future years, that's in addition to 2,301 smaller meetings welcoming more than 1 million delegates committing to meet in partner hotels. In all, more than 2.6 million future room-nights are projected to be generated from an additional 4 million delegates.

The increases in 2018 were also reflected in major meetings and trade shows hosted in Chicago. Of the 50 largest events convening at McCormick Place in 2018, 40% (20 conventions) broke either attendance for exhibitor participation records, with 15 of these meetings setting new all-time attendance records, including 11 setting new exhibition space sales records and 8 that reported record-breaking number of exhibitors.

"2018 was a great year for Chicago and a great year for McCormick Place. The final numbers are still being calculated, but preliminary totals show that events held on campus increased by 31% since 2017, with nearly 3 million visitors," said Lori Healey, CEO of MPEA. "McCormick Place's outstanding results are directly related to all of the other great work that goes into making Chicago a top travel destination. We appreciate the hard work that has gone into keeping Chicago at the top of people's minds for pleasure, and business, travel."

The overall impact of the visitor industry continues to be demonstrated by a variety of key barometers. Chicago tourism-related employment is estimated to have reached 150,616 jobs in 2018, an increase of 1.2%. More than 22,000 new tourism-related jobs have been added since 2011.

Seven additional hotels opened in Chicago in 2018. Hotel room demand (rooms consumed) by visitors last year grew 4.3%. The overall annual occupancy rate increased to 75.4% for the year. The growth in demand helped fuel an increase in the average daily room rate of 4.6%, resulting in a reported 9.1% rise in hotel revenues. With this success and growth, Chicago hotels generated a record \$140 million in city hotel tax revenues, resulting in an additional \$11.7 million in tax collections to support city services. An additional \$12.9 million in state hotel taxes was generated by hotel room sales to support state services.

There was an important increase in international travelers to Chicago in 2018. Airline Passenger Information System (APIS) data collected from arriving non-stop international flights to Chicago for the first 11 months of the year show an increase of 3.9%, led by a growth in the number of passport holders from Brazil (up 16.2%), United Kingdom (up 14.1%), Italy (up 10.9%), South Korea (up 9.2%), Mexico (up 7.4%), Canada (up 2.5%) and China (up 2.1%).

"The diversity of our visitors continues to grow as we welcome more and more people both from around the US and increasingly around the world," noted Whitaker. "Diverse customers help match and fulfill the incredible diversity of experiences, venues, flavors and performances found here. A great city to visit is borne out of a city that is a great place to live, work and play."

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### **About Choose Chicago**

Choose Chicago is the official sales and marketing organization responsible for promoting Chicago as a global visitor destination leveraging the city's unmatched assets to ensure the economic vitality

of the city and its member business community. For more information, visit [choosechicago.com](http://choosechicago.com). Follow @ChooseChicago on Twitter and on Instagram @choosechicago. Like us on Facebook.