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**MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES CITY WILL EXPAND SCHOOL-BASED VISION PROGRAM TO
SERVE 45,000 CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS**

City's Free Eye Exams Program Will Now Serve 15,000 Additional Students in Need

Mayor Emanuel announced today that the City of Chicago budget for 2014 will invest an additional \$550,000 to expand its school-based vision program to serve 45,000 Chicago Public School (CPS) students. With the additional funding, the total City sponsorship behind the program comes to \$2 million. In 2013, the City first invested in a program to provide eye exams and eyeglasses, at no cost to the families, for 30,000 CPS students. The expansion to 45,000 students in 2014 will increase the number of students served by 50 percent since last year.

"This investment in the children of Chicago is a direct reflection of our values as a city," said Mayor Emanuel. "It is critical to reach students in need of vision care to ensure they have the resources necessary to succeed both in and outside the classroom. The City of Chicago will continue to work with parents through this program expansion to provide glasses to students as they look towards their bright future."

Parents of over 30,000 Kindergarten students are required by state law to obtain a vision exam for their children by October 15th, and to report this screening to their schools. However during fiscal year 2012 (FY12), only 11 percent of parents reported getting their child's eyes exam. The City recognized a need and prioritized funding to ensure students are completing eye exams. This vision program will also increase access for students who have failed their vision screening in the past, as well as those required to have a vision exam, and those referred by a teacher or parent. Students who have failed their vision screenings in the past, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade students will be the target populations for the new vision program that will provide proper eye exams and then when needed glasses.

"Children succeed when we provide them with the resources necessary for success – including glasses," said CDPH Commissioner Bechara Choucair, M.D. "By investing more in this successful program we are helping ensure 45,000 young people will see better, learn more and go further."

Vision is a critical factor in a child's education as more than 80 percent of a child's learning occurs visually, according to the United States Department of Labor. The school-based vision program delivers on-site comprehensive vision exams and eye glasses to students in need of vision correction. The eye glasses are ordered using the Medicaid system and are made of the same materials as those made available to insured students. If a student needs glasses, immediately

following the exam, the child can make a selection from a minimum of 15 different frames and the glasses are delivered within 8-10 weeks of the exam date. The vision program works with parents to provide written and oral eye care information and education, making referrals if necessary.

The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) is committed to increasing access to health services for students through working in partnership with the Chicago Public Schools. During the 2012-2013 school year, 174,860 students were provided one or more vision screenings by CPS Audiometric and Vision Screening Technicians. A total of 37,535 students were referred to an optometrist for a comprehensive eye exam, but most students do not follow-through due to lack of information, limited access, or limited resources. With the City of Chicago's sponsorship behind the school based vision program thousands of students will receive the proper vision care.

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