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**MAYOR EMANUEL AND CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY COMMISSIONER BANNON ANNOUNCE
EXPANSION OF EARLY LEARNING EDUCATIONAL INVESTMENTS**

*Funds From Exelon Will Support Establishment of Flagship Early Learning Center at Harold
Washington Library and Expansion to Fourteen Branches Across the City*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel was joined this morning by Chicago Public Library (CPL) Commissioner Brian Bannon at the Albany Park Library branch to announce a significant expansion of Chicago Public Library early learning spaces across the city. Thanks to a \$2.5 million grant from Exelon Corporation to the Chicago Public Library Foundation, CPL will open an 18,000 square foot flagship location at Harold Washington Library Center with 14 additional satellite locations to follow. This is the largest single gift ever made to the early learning initiatives at Chicago Public Library, and the expansion supports joint goals of the Library and the City of Chicago to provide access to quality early educational programming year round.

"There is nothing that's more important than our kids. Giving them a quality education from day one and helping provide their parents with the tools to be consistent and active partners in their children's education is the best investment any of us can make," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "Whether it is pre-K in our schools or programming in our libraries, we are giving every child the support they need in their early years to ensure their success in college, career, and in life."

The innovative early learning spaces will incorporate science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and the five practices of early learning – Talk, Sing, Read, Write and Play -- into the space itself. The early learning areas and CPL librarians will also focus on supporting parents and caregivers as a child's primary teacher.

"We're honored to be the primary sponsor of Mayor Emanuel's program to create early childhood learning centers at public libraries throughout the city," said Chris Crane, president and CEO of Exelon. "Given Exelon's strong commitment to technical education and employment in Chicago, we're particularly pleased the program will include an emphasis on early science, technology, engineering and math education."

Studies show that play is a primary building block for a child's development and successful play spaces inspire creativity, encourage interaction with materials and other children, and keep reading materials at eye level. The CPL early learning spaces will increase high quality learning

experiences and will support the development of deeper learning skills through literacy and STEM experiences.

“It is a primary tenet of Chicago Public Library to provide access to valuable and innovative learning opportunities, especially for our youngest patrons,” said Commissioner Brian Bannon. “This opportunity allows us to embed STEM design directly into our library spaces. We are leveraging our unique structure of being in every neighborhood in the city to bring early learning opportunities to Chicago kids’ backyards.”

Chicago Public Library is a pioneer in early learning initiatives with cutting-edge programs available through 80 branch locations, and has longstanding experience championing early literacy and STEM learning. With more than ten million visits to neighborhood locations annually, CPL is among the city’s largest providers of free, high-quality early learning support. Each year more than 35,000 children and families participate in early literacy workshops provided by branch libraries. These programs are designed to support the basic building blocks for early literacy and success in school.

In 2011, the summer reading program was re-imagined to the “Summer Learning Challenge” to incorporate science, technology, engineering and math as well as creative discovery activities. Rahm’s Readers Summer Learning Challenge successfully engages more than 80,000 Chicago kids in STEM learning throughout the summer months. The five early-learning focus areas – Talk, Sing, Read, Write and Play – are included in all current CPL early learning programming because they play a critical role in children’s social and cognitive development. These five focus areas will be featured within the early learning locations.

The 18,000 square foot children’s space at Harold Washington Library Center will serve as the flagship early learning center, much like the existing YOUmedia for teens and Maker Lab for advanced manufacturing. The fourteen satellite locations will draw inspiration from these current early-learning initiatives and the early learning prototype that opened in September 2014 at Chicago Public Library’s Albany Park location. Each of the following fourteen sites will provide STEM programming specific to the neighborhood each serves:

- Harold Washington Library Center
- Woodson Regional Library
- Sulzer Regional Library
- Austin Irving Branch
- Budlong Woods Branch
- Legler Branch
- Lozano Branch
- Little Village Branch
- Sherman Park Branch
- Toman Branch
- Kelly Branch
- South Chicago Branch
- Thurgood Marshall Branch
- West Englewood Branch
- West Pullman Branch

Design of these centers will be informed by CPL’s strong ties to partners throughout the city, such as the Thirty Million Words Initiative, the Erikson Institute and the Chicago Children’s Museum.

Since 1873, the Chicago Public Library (CPL) has encouraged lifelong learning by welcoming all people and offering equal access to information, entertainment and knowledge through

innovative services and programs, as well as cutting-edge technology. Through its 80 locations, the Library provides free access to a rich collection of materials, both physical and digital, and presents the highest quality author discussions, exhibits and programs for children, teens and adults. CPL received the Social Innovator Award from Chicago Innovation Awards; won a National Medal for Library Services from the Institute for Museum and Library Services and was ranked number one in the U.S. and third in the world by an international study of major urban libraries conducted by the Heinrich Heine University Dusseldorf in Germany. For more information, please call (312) 747-4050 or visit chipublib.org.

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