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**MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES \$2.07 MILLION BOOST IN FUNDING TO SUPPORT  
EMPLOYMENT OF RETURNING CITIZENS  
AND NEIGHBORHOOD BEAUTIFICATION EFFORTS**

*Additional Funds Will Fund and Support 2,595 Employment and Job Readiness Opportunities*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced that his 2019 budget proposal will include an additional \$2.07 million investment to support the employment of returning citizens and beautification efforts in communities with elevated levels of gun violence. Over 200 more returning citizens would get city funded jobs or support under the Mayor's proposed budget, bringing the total number of city employment opportunities or supports to 2,595. The newly hired returning citizens would be employed to clean and beautify vacant lots in high crime neighborhoods.

“By expanding these programs and partnerships, we will continue to provide residents who are willing to work hard with the chance at a job and the success that comes with it, which in turn, will have lasting impacts on the lives of their families, communities, and the economic health and well-being of our City,” Mayor Emanuel said. “By getting returning citizens into the workforce, we’ll lower unemployment, increase self-sufficiency and reduce recidivism all while beautifying communities across the city.”

The proposed 2019 budget includes a total of \$7.4 million towards employment opportunities for formerly incarcerated citizens. The funds will employ individuals to work with CTA, Department of Streets and Sanitation, Chicago Department of Transportation, Department of Family and Support Services and community-based organizations to clean and beautify parkways and vacant lots in communities affected by gun violence. This reimagining of abandoned spaces will expand neighborhood access to green space and create a significant opportunity for individuals who have barriers to employment due to prior justice involvement and who are at risk of further involvement in violence. Additionally, the City will increase resources for pre-existing programs to provide targeted lot cleanup and weed removal in areas with concentrated violence.

Of the additional \$2.07 million included in the 2019 budget, \$970,000 will be used to support various programs in partnership with Department of Streets and Sanitation, funding a total of 80 new training opportunities. One such program is the Safer Foundation's Neighborhood Clean-up program that engages, trains and employs formerly incarcerated citizens. Participants gain job training through projects directed by the Department of Streets and Sanitation that help beautify neighborhoods.

A 2018 University of Pennsylvania study evaluating a similar program in Philadelphia found that increased green space led to a 29% reduction in gun violence and a 42% reduction in symptoms of depression for residents living near beautified lots. A portion of the new funding will establish a pilot program to beautify high-crime vacant lots in partnership with community-based programs, building off of successful models in other cities.

"By providing training for skills that are in demand, we will keep jobs in our neighborhoods while making those neighborhoods more beautiful and keep more of our residents on the pathway to a career and a better life for themselves and their families," Department of Streets and Sanitation Commissioner John Tully said.

\$400,000 will be directed to the CTA's Second Chance program, a nationally recognized program that provides valuable job skills and career opportunities to Chicago residents who often face challenges re-entering the work force. Additional funding will help create 34 new job opportunities. Since 2011, under Mayor Emanuel's leadership, the program has doubled in size to become one of the largest re-entry programs in the country. So far, more than 975 Chicagoans have participated and more than 285 Second Chance participants have been hired permanently by CTA.

"The opportunities created by CTA's Second Chance program can help make positive changes in the lives of those who truly need a helping hand," CTA President Dorval Carter said. "It is a win-win for CTA and for candidates who commit to being successful: the participants in this program receive valuable training that can help keep them working at CTA or elsewhere, and CTA and our customers benefit from a well-trained, committed workforce."

The remainder of the funding will go towards CDOT Greencorps expansion to add 25 new employment opportunities.

The investment is part of the Mayor's violence prevention efforts and part of his work to ensure returning citizens have employment opportunities. Overall, Mayor Emanuel's 2019 budget will propose spending \$42 million - a nearly \$8 million increase from 2018- on violence prevention programming including employment of returning citizens employment as well as mentoring for at-risk youth, street outreach and after school matters.

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