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**MAYOR EMANUEL ANNOUNCES MARK KELLY TO SERVE AS COMMISSIONER  
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPECIAL EVENTS**

*Kelly to succeed Michelle T. Boone, who has served as commissioner since 2011, and will continue expanding opportunities for arts and culture across the city*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today named Mark Kelly as the new Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) and will submit his nomination for City Council approval. Kelly will replace Michelle T. Boone, who has served as Commissioner since 2011 and is stepping down to pursue other professional endeavors. Kelly will bring a lifelong career in arts education and more than 30-year career in arts development in Chicago to the role, helping advance Chicago's place as a cultural destination for artists and visitors around the world.

"I'm excited to welcome Mark aboard a ship that's steaming full-speed ahead, delivering more cultural opportunities with more benefits for Chicagoans than ever before. His deep experience in the arts and academics will allow us to continue building on our work to make Chicago a global destination for the arts and a great place to call home," said Mayor Emanuel. "For five years Michelle has worked tirelessly to expand and innovate the arts across the city. She has successfully reimagined our most revered cultural traditions—including the Taste of Chicago and Blues Fest—and brought new experiences like the Architecture Biennial to our city. I can't say enough about the work Michelle has done for Chicago, and while she's pursuing another great opportunity, I think she knows she'll still be hearing from me regularly."

Under Commissioner Boone's tenure, the City of Chicago unveiled its first cultural plan in more than 25 years; developed and launched the inaugural Chicago Architecture Biennial; expanded support to Chicago's creative industries and local artists with programs such as the Lake FX Summit + Expo; launched the Fifth Star Awards, a free public celebration event that celebrates and honors Chicagoans who have made significant contributions in the arts worldwide; developed the city's first artist-in-residence program at the Chicago Cultural Center; revitalized signature festival events including the Chicago Jazz Festival and the Gospel Music Festival; and reimagined the Taste of Chicago to showcase more neighborhood-based offerings of diverse and renowned culinary favorites, and including food trucks in the festival for the first time ever. With these efforts Boone has made a lasting contribution to the city's expansion of cultural events and public art experiences in neighborhoods, continuing Chicago's legacy as a global destination for the very best in arts and cultural tourism.

Currently, Kelly is the Vice President for Student Success at Columbia College Chicago, where he has worked for more than 30 years to foster and oversee an immersive arts experience for Columbia's burgeoning student body, across its 100 different degree programs. Kelly has served in numerous leadership roles at Columbia, all while consistently supporting students who view the world through a creative lens in attaining a world-class education that blends creative and media arts, liberal arts and business.

"Mark's passion for promoting the creative community and connecting individuals, educational institutions, cultural organizations and businesses has been a hallmark to his work," said Dr. Kwang-Wu Kim, President and CEO of Columbia College Chicago. "This passion helped our students grow and engage with the city in numerous ways, and Columbia is grateful for his many contributions over the years. The City of Chicago will have a tireless and strong advocate for the arts community, and we look forward to seeing him thrive as he advances Chicago's global influence in the arts, culture and innovation."

Kelly has amassed more than 40 years of experience working as an academic administrator, with prior positions at Wayne State University and City Colleges of Chicago. Kelly is founder and chair of the Columbia's Wabash Arts Corridor (WAC) initiative, framing the South Loop as a hub for street art, installations, and spectacle, and is the artistic director of the Halloween Gathering, an annual parade and festival celebrating Chicago's cultural communities. Throughout his career, Kelly has served on many arts and cultural-centric boards, with active roles on the following: Arts Alliance Illinois Board; the Chicago Loop Alliance Board; and America's Urban Campus Committee. Kelly holds a master of arts in counseling from the University of Cincinnati and a bachelor of arts in sociology from John Carroll University.

Kelly's appointment is subject to City Council approval. He will begin in an interim capacity on August 15.

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