



NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
20 OCTOBER 2021

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Statement of National FOP President Patrick Yoes on Chicago's Call for Law Enforcement Volunteers

Washington, DC – The devolving situation in Chicago and the very real threat to public safety in the city has been entirely manufactured and unnecessarily escalated by Mayor Lori Lightfoot. Now she is searching for a way out of this mess and insists that “contingency plans” are in place. The truth is her recent call for help through the Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System (ILEAS), a system designed to help agencies respond to emergency situations that may overwhelm responding agencies, has been met with considerable skepticism and rejection by at least two nearby agencies. This emergency system is for emergencies and is not intended for instances where a mayor or agency suspends or fires a large number of their own police force.

The city of Chicago is served by some of the finest men and women in uniform. They are dedicated and committed to keeping the citizens of Chicago safe. Instead of working cooperatively with police personnel or engaging with the labor union, Mayor Lightfoot mandated that all officers must receive one of the available vaccines for COVID-19 or face potential termination. She has left no room for compromise, and her ultimatum could force a significant number of officers off the streets.

Like many citizens, some law enforcement officers are reluctant to get vaccinated for reasons that are entirely their own. This is true in Chicago and numerous other jurisdictions across the country. The National FOP encourages our members to get vaccinated because we believe in the science and effectiveness of the vaccine, but we do not and cannot support forcing our members to undergo a medical procedure against their will without any regard for their rights as public employees or providing them with even the most basic due process.

Mayor Lightfoot seems to think that her game of brinksmanship is an acceptable risk to the citizens of the city. She was counting on other agencies and ILEAS to respond to incidents in the city in the event that the Chicago Police Department could not. In fact, as far as we know, her call for help is not restricted to officers who have been vaccinated—setting up a potentially ridiculous situation in which she has suspended unvaccinated Chicago police officers only to replace them with unvaccinated officers from other jurisdictions. Clearly, her position has nothing to do with the public's safety or health policy and everything to do with “winning” the political game against the union.

Any law enforcement officers who do respond and volunteer to assist the citizens of Chicago should understand that Illinois and Chicago have instituted new rules governing police procedures relating to the use of force. Officers who make good faith

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mistakes leave themselves open to potential prosecution, which is among the reasons local agency heads contacted through ILEAS have rejected the call for assistance—they do not want their officers to be placed in legal jeopardy.

Mayor Lightfoot should not use the safety of Chicago citizens as a pawn in her political game. We implore her to engage with the FOP and find a way to keep the city safe while respecting the rights of its officers.

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Founded in 1915, the Fraternal Order of Police is the largest law enforcement labor organization in the United States, with more than 364,000 members. With national offices in Nashville, Tennessee, and Washington, D.C., the FOP is committed to improving the working conditions of law enforcement officers and the safety of those served through education, legislation, information, community involvement, and employee representation. Please visit <https://www.fop.net> for more information.