



For Immediate Release:

June 22, 2022

Contact:

Press@KamForMayor.com

Kam Buckner Would Use Real Estate Transfer Tax Increase to Help End Chronic Homelessness

Lightfoot failed on her campaign promise to increase the Real Estate Transfer Tax to fund housing needs

CHICAGO - The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless today sounded the alarm on Mayor Lori Lightfoot's failure to deliver on her campaign promise to increase the Real Estate Transfer Tax (RETT) to generate millions of new dollars for long term, stable housing options for Chicago's unhoused community.

"I announced my plan to create more affordable housing options and to prevent homelessness," **candidate Lori Lightfoot said in a campaign email she sent in November 2018** (see screenshot).

"The plan...replaces the current real estate transfer tax – a regressive tax that leans heavily on middle class homeowners – with a graduated tax structure so that the wealthy will pay their fair share. The new revenue from this tax will go towards preventing homelessness – through short-term rent subsidies, funding mental health resources, or other needed services – in addition to creating more affordable housing."

Fast forward one year later after taking office, Lightfoot tried to pass a RETT increase but abandoned her campaign plan to use it to fight homelessness.

"There's lots of issues that merit: homelessness, mental illness, violence reduction," [Lightfoot said in November 2019](#). "We'd love to be able to fund all of them at the highest possible level but the reality is...we've got to be realistic about managing taxpayer dollars in a responsible way."



Friends—

I know firsthand what it's like when there aren't enough affordable housing options in a community. Growing up, my family struggled to keep up with the cost of rent each month, and we even lost our home after my dad lost his job.

Too many families in Chicago experience this same financial hardship today—it's something I hear about in every neighborhood and at every event. That's why I announced my plan to create more affordable housing options and to prevent homelessness. [The specific details of my plan are on our website, and I'd love for you to add your name as a citizen co-sponsor. Will you sign on here?](#)

One important part of the plan is the Affordable Housing Equity Ordinance, which will limit an alderman's ability to block new affordable housing developments in wards that need them most and streamline the approval process. The plan also replaces the current real estate transfer tax—a regressive tax that leans heavily on middle-class homeowners—with a graduated tax structure so that the wealthy will pay their fair share. The new revenue from this tax will go towards preventing homelessness—through short-term rent subsidies, funding mental health resources, or other needed services—in addition to creating more affordable housing.

The notion that it's irresponsible to fully fund homelessness, mental illness and violence reduction – three things that have the potential to get at the root cause of violence and pave a path to economic opportunity – is one that Candidate for Mayor Kam Buckner cannot support.

Buckner and nine of his Chicago colleagues in the Illinois Legislature led the effort to stop legislation Lightfoot was pushing that would have increased RETT because [she refused to allocate any of it to fight homelessness](#). **See attached letter.**

“Chicago’s RETT has a fundamental flaw that I would fix as Mayor: No revenue raised through RETT is restricted for housing needs, and that is partly why we still have such deep housing needs,” **Kam Buckner said**. “If the City’s RETT dedicated funds to affordable housing, like the State does, programs like permanent supportive housing, transitional shelters, rental assistance, new builds, and expanding the Troubled Building Initiative and Flexible Housing Pool could help us end chronic homelessness and housing insecurity.

“Yesterday was the first day of Summer and Chicago has already experienced extreme heat that will be the standard for the next few months – the dangers of which are akin to sub-zero temperatures in the Winter. Regardless of the time of year or the weather, Chicago’s 80,000 unhoused people have to go from shelter to shelter because the City has failed to provide stable housing options, and those that are housing insecure remain on the precipice of homelessness.

“Our City needs a Mayor with the integrity to change that and the wisdom to understand that preventing homelessness puts people on the path to prosperity and creates safer, more economically stable communities. ”

October 28, 2019

The Honorable Mayor Lori Lightfoot
121 N. LaSalle St.
Chicago City Hall, 5th Floor
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Mayor Lightfoot,

We, the undersigned members of the Illinois General Assembly, are writing to communicate our support for the Bring Chicago Home Coalition's efforts to create a dedicated revenue stream to address homelessness at a significant scale. With over 86,000 Chicago residents experiencing homelessness, we must take the opportunity that we have right now to meaningfully fund solutions to this egregious problem.

Our goal is to provide permanent supportive housing in Chicago to people experiencing homelessness:

- More than 17,000 children experience homelessness, with 1 in 4 children struggling to stay in school in the City of Chicago. Four out of 5 people experiencing homelessness are African American or Latino.
- The City of Chicago spends 5% of what New York City spends per capita and 3% of what Los Angeles spends per capita on homeless prevention.
- New York City is spending \$1.04 billion on efforts to end homelessness.
- Los Angeles spends \$580.8 million on efforts to end homelessness.
- Chicago currently spends \$15.5 Million.
- Your budget allocates an additional \$5 million for homelessness services for youth, still a fraction of what other major cities are investing in ending homelessness.

To provide permanent supportive housing to end homelessness for all the households currently experiencing homelessness in Chicago would cost close to \$1 billion, while your budget only allocates an additional \$5 million. We know that providing permanent housing saves the state money. An Illinois study found that providing 177 people with permanent supportive housing saved the state \$855,477 in costs for prisons, nursing homes, and mental healthcare, a 39% cost savings. Chicago ranks near the bottom of many cities across the country in the amount of resources that we commit to combatting homelessness, and the time to start to rectify this problem is now.

It is our intention to strongly consider your proposed Real Estate Transfer Tax increase. We request that you commit, in statute, a significant and dedicated revenue stream to address homelessness in the eventual ordinance.

To that end, it is our intention to support your proposed Real Estate Transfer Tax increase only if a significant amount is statutorily dedicated to homelessness, and we believe that at least 60% should go toward that purpose. We also encourage you to meet with the Bring Chicago Home Coalition as soon as possible to work out the details of the legislation.

We acknowledge that Chicago faces a budget shortfall which must be addressed. This division of resources is a compromise that helps to solve both pressing matters. In addition, there are other progressive revenue options currently on the table that could close the budget gap.

We hope to collaborate with you to generate this much-needed revenue in order to create a more equitable Chicago and to ensure that you keep your campaign promise of working to end homelessness in the City of Chicago.

Sincerely,

Will I
~~Christine Williams~~
Will I

M.E. S.R.

J.A.
Reynold L. Loh

Sharon

H.A.

Justin

Angela-Mary

Laura

Debra

David