

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACT:** José Ochoa  
*Executive and Artistic Director*  
news@chiarts.org

### **ChiArts Senior Security Officer, Efrem Blue Honored by The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation**

Chicago, IL — The Chicago High School for the Arts (ChiArts) is proud to announce Efrem Blue, ChiArts Senior Security Officer as the 2019 “Warrior of the Light” recipient of The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation (BLHF). Founded by Taraji P. Henson, the foundation works to eradicate the stigma around mental health issues in African-American communities. Mr. Blue was presented the award during the foundation’s inaugural “Can We Talk?” Conference and Benefit Dinner in Washington D.C. this past weekend (June 7-9). He was honored for his work leading restorative practices at ChiArts and the implementation of a Peace Room for students and staff to de-escalate and diffuse conflict through restorative practices.

Since the official launch in September 2018, The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation has made major strides through nonprofit partnerships. ChiArts is proud to be a founding community partner of the foundation. The foundation’s mission is to provide resources to individuals and organizations that offer mental health services to young people in urban schools, combat recidivism within the prison system, and aims to ensure cultural competence in caring for African-Americans by offering scholarships to African-American students who seek a career in the mental health field.

During the “Can We Talk?” conference, BLH Foundation hosted attendees including educators, therapists, social workers, medical doctors, thought leaders, and policy makers in a benefit dinner, a wide variety of conference sessions, and panel discussions created to “to collectively identify national trends that have been barriers to mental health treatment in the black community.” As Mr. Blue was graciously honored at the benefit, he reinforced the message on how important it is to begin this work in our schools and encourage our children to continue normalizing restorative practices and conversations around mental health in their communities. In addition to Mr. Blue’s honor, David Johns was awarded the “Compassionate Justice Award,” Jenifer Lewis was awarded the “I Rise Award,” and a beautiful tribute was presented to honor John Singleton. ChiArts staff members present supporting Mr. Blue included Executive and Artistic Director, José Ochoa, Director of Development and Marketing, Contessa Gibson, Creative Writing Head and Arts Instructional Coach, Tina Boyer Brown, and ChiArts Principal, Mike Wang.



ChiArts is excited to build on the work of the The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation, as they work to serve more schools that are committed to breaking the cycle of stigma associated with mental illness in African-American communities.

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**The Chicago High School for the Arts (ChiArts)** is Chicago's first public high school for the arts. With disciplines in creative writing, dance, music, theatre, and visual arts, ChiArts provides its scholar-artists with a tuition-free, pre-professional arts training program paired with a college-preparatory academic curriculum. ChiArts opened its doors in 2009 and has graduated six classes of scholar-artists at a rate between 92-100% each year. Learn more about recent ChiArts news and performances on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#). For more general information about ChiArts, visit <https://chiarts.org/>.

**The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation** The Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation's vision is to eradicate the stigma around mental health issues in the African-American community. The foundation's mission is to provide support and bring awareness to mental health issues that plague the African American community. BLH Foundation partners with other nonprofit organizations who offer programs that educate, celebrate, and make visible the positive impact of mental health wellness.