



**WORLD-CLASS SCHOOLS. WORLD-CLASS CITY.**

April 21, 2023

Honorable Members  
Illinois General Assembly  
Springfield, Illinois 62706  
[executivecommittee@hds.ilga.gov](mailto:executivecommittee@hds.ilga.gov)

Dear Members of the House Executive Committee:

For the first time, Chicago voters will have a direct say in who represents them on the Board of Education. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) parents who are citizens will be able to hold the board accountable. With the first of the phased-in [elections in 2024 and 2026](#), we will complete the transition to a fully-elected, 21-member board in January of 2027.

Illinois lawmakers have a deadline of July 1, 2023 to draw new electoral districts. District creation can get pretty ugly – you need look no further than last year’s Chicago City Council battles over mapmaking as an example. However, these districts are being drawn for a newly-created elective body, without parties or incumbents to protect. Those who must be protected are the parents and students who attend CPS, the most important stakeholders.

A group led by CPS parents, Kids First Chicago’s Elected School Board Task Force, believes the following principles are essential for State lawmakers to follow as they set out to create Chicago’s school board districts.

- **Transparency and inclusivity.** Districts should be drawn and presented to the public, alongside relevant data, with sufficient time for the public to provide feedback and for revisions to be made.
- **Fair racial representation.** As much as possible, and consistent with legal and constitutional requirements, the districts should be created in a way that takes into account the racial makeup of CPS students and families.

We believe that if lawmakers adhere to these two core principles, then CPS families will be better represented and better served by the future Elected School Board – leading to better outcomes for CPS students.

**A transparent, inclusive process.** The new Senate Special Committee on Chicago’s Elected Representative School Board will be responsible for drawing these districts and has created an online portal for interested parties to submit their own proposed districts. It was also just announced that the House Executive Committee will host hearings on the same topic.

The committees should also release draft district maps well before a vote and they should be accompanied by data, including the racial makeup of each district, along with a summary showing the number of districts with a majority/plurality of each main racial group. A transparent,



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inclusive mapmaking process is the only way to cultivate critical buy-in and ongoing support from the public for the resulting elected board.

**Fair racial representation.** The demographics of Chicago and CPS are very different – CPS is nearly 90% students of color, while Chicago is roughly one-third white. The Black and Latino populations are both at risk of being severely underrepresented compared to their share of the student population.

The [state law](#) that created Chicago’s Local School Councils (LSCs) suggests that the racial composition of each LSC should reflect the makeup of the school. It says “The membership of each local school council shall be encouraged to be reflective of the racial and ethnic composition of the student population of the attendance center served by the local school council.” Although there is no such provision in the law that created the elected school board, we know that CPS parents want a Board who have shared experiences with the students and families they represent and can bring that critical perspective to the table when making decisions that impact their education.

Consider Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest in the country. 74% of the students are Latino while only 10% are White. Yet more than half of the seven school board members are White. Now imagine if a similar mismatch in representation were to play out in Chicago. It would be unlikely that such a board could truly understand the needs of the student population and make decisions in their best interest, and it would be viewed skeptically by a public that has distrusted CPS for far too long.

Lawmakers should try to maximize the number of districts that are favorable for Black and Latino candidates to win, while adhering to constitutional guidelines about compactness. We have created a prototype set of district maps that aims to achieve this goal and serve as a model that it can be done fairly. We submitted these districts through the Special Committee’s map portal and they are available to view on the [committee’s website](#). We encourage lawmakers to look at this example before beginning to draw your own district maps.

Some of the task force members actually preferred a version that more closely reflected CPS families, but they realized that those districts likely wouldn’t meet the legal requirements for compactness, so they thought this was a compromise version that would be acceptable.

CPS families have long waited for the opportunity to have school board members who are accountable to the public. This is a big moment for our parents, students, and the many Chicagoans and lawmakers who worked hard to make this a reality. Let’s make sure we get off to a good start by creating fair, representative districts in a transparent and inclusive manner.

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