



Illinois African Americans For Equitable Redistricting

Public Comments To The Senate Special Committee On the Chicago Elected Representative School Board April 5, 2023

Introduction

Hello, my name is Valerie Leonard. Over the years, I have worked on a number of issues that have impacted my home community of North Lawndale and other disinvested communities around the city. Through my involvement with groups like the Lawndale Alliance and PACE, I helped to advocate for the creation of Chicago Educational Governance Task Force to study the feasibility of an elected representative school board in Chicago back in 2012. During this time, I have also worked with community groups to put an advisory referendum on the ballot in the 24th Ward for an elected school board. The measure passed overwhelmingly in every precinct, with results ranging from about 87% to 98%. As the co-founder of Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting (IAAFER), I worked with other African American leaders and multi-cultural groups to advocate for redistricting proposals that would optimize our ability to elect candidates of choice. I am also the Founder of Nonprofit Utopia, LLC, which created the ideal community for leaders who want to start, manage and scale nonprofits. As we work with organizations to build their leadership and organizational capacity, we also provide training and coaching to help them develop policy advocacy campaigns so they can better advocate for their clients and communities.

I am here today on behalf of Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting (IAAFER). IAAFER is an ad hoc group of Black leaders across various sectors that came together in 2020 to ensure that our most recent redistricting process was implemented taking into account issues of concern to Black people around the State.

We have read Public Act 102-0177, HB2908 in its entirety, and have noted the transition of the Chicago Board of Education from a 7 member board that is currently appointed by the Mayor of the City of Chicago, to a board of education that will be fully elected by 2026. The legislation calls for 10 electoral districts for the 2024 elections with 2 representatives each. The Mayor will select the President and 1 representative from each of the 10 districts for the 2024 election cycle. There will be 20 electoral districts established for the 2026 elections, with 1 representative each. The President of the Board of Education will run at large, and will be elected by Chicago voters.

The legislation also calls for the creation of the Chicago Board of Education Non-Citizen Advisory Board with A Chicago Board of Education Diversity Advisory Board to provide non-citizen students with maximum opportunity for success during their elementary and secondary education experience.

Our Mapping Proposal

We have developed our mapping proposal taking into account the following criteria:

1. Each district must be compact, contiguous and substantially equal in population and consistent with the Illinois Voting Rights Act, pursuant to Public Act 102-0177.
2. Communities of interest will be kept intact to the fullest extent possible
3. School Board electoral districts will be aligned with other political and educational districts to the fullest extent possible. This will allow community residents and local leaders to coordinate policy advocacy efforts that may require interaction with multiple layers of government.

To this end, our map includes 10 districts, each comprised of 5 contiguous wards. To the extent possible, wards are clustered together by their majority/plurality racial composition. Our map includes 4 majority/plurality Black districts, 3 majority/plurality Latino districts and 3 majority/plurality White districts. Because ward boundaries were vetted for compliance with the VRA during the most recent redistricting process, we expect the proposed map to pass legal muster.

While we believe this map can pass legal muster, there are limitations. For example, Chicago is 29% Black, 29% Latino, 33% White and 8% Asian and others. The CPS population is approximately 36% Black; 47% Latino, 11.0% White and 6% Asian and others. Our methodology resulted in a map with 40% of the districts that are majority/plurality Black; 30% that are majority/plurality Latino and 30% that are majority/plurality White. At the root of this challenge is the fact that the law requires that elected representative school board boundaries be apportioned based on the Census and that districts must be of approximately equal size. This is a situation that is worth further exploration.

Recommendations

In addition to the recommended electoral district boundaries, we make the following recommendations:

- Create An Additional Advisory Committee to specifically address the needs of children and their families who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, including learning loss, trauma; isolation and reduction in social and emotional supports, economic loss and health and safety concerns. Creation of the elected board of education has already resulted in the Chicago Board of Education Diversity Advisory Board to provide non-citizen students with maximum opportunity for success during their elementary and secondary education experience. We need the same level of attention for all children and their families who have been impacted by the ravishes of COVID 19.
- Strengthen the relationship between the Local School Councils and the Board of Education to further amplify the voice of schools and communities. This may be achieved through adding an at-large seat for a LSC representative or by developing an advisory structure in which LSC's can provide more robust feedback.

In closing, we thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions regarding this statement, please feel free to contact me at 773-571-3886 or valeriefleonard@msn.com. Our mapping proposal is a work in progress, and is attached on the following page.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie F. Leonard

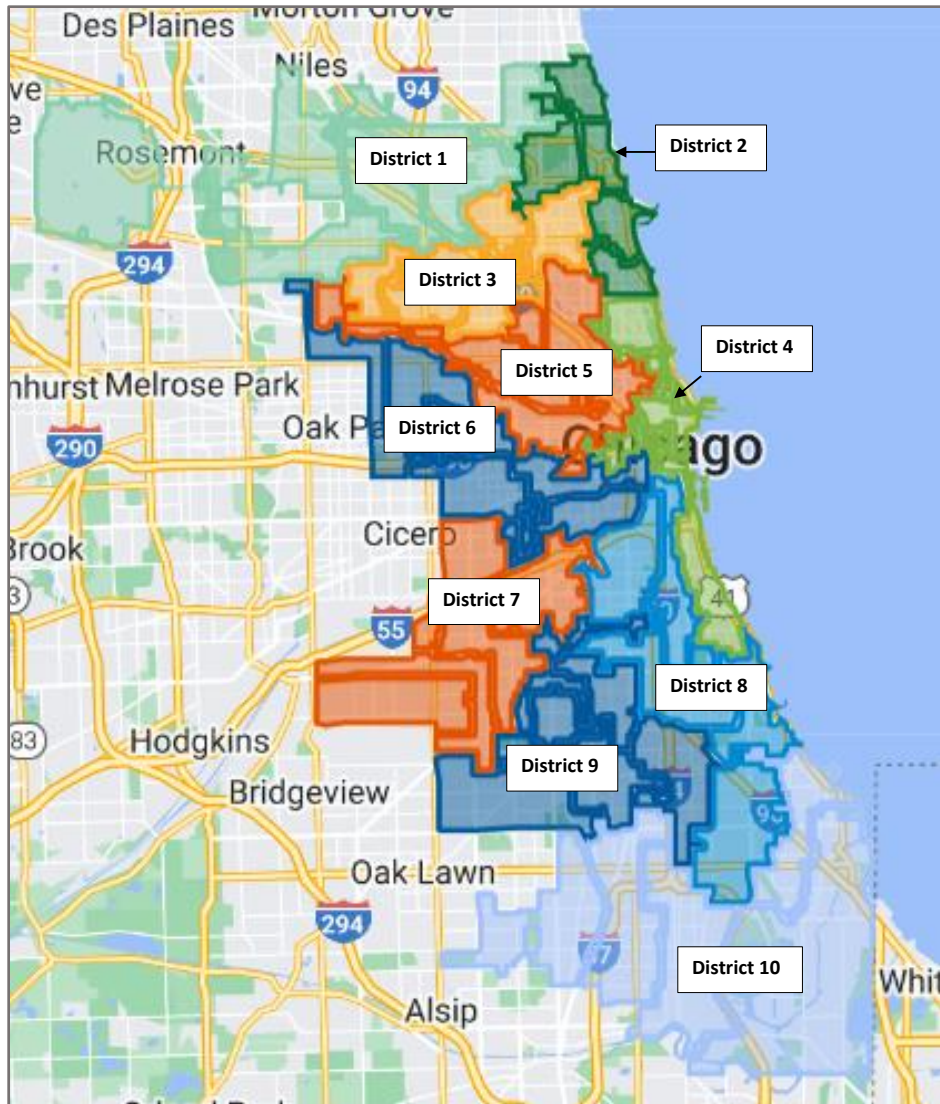
Co-Founder

Illinois Africa Americans for Equitable Redistricting



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Proposed Elected School Board Boundaries for Chicago Public Schools



District 1	District 6
41 st Ward	29 th Ward
38 th Ward	37 th Ward
45 th Ward	28 th Ward
39 th Ward	24 th Ward
50 th Ward	25 th Ward
District 2	District 7
40 th Ward	22 nd Ward
49 th Ward	12 th Ward
48 th Ward	14 th Ward
46 th Ward	23 rd Ward
44 th Ward	13 th Ward
District 3	District 8
30 th Ward	11 th Ward
31 st Ward	3 rd Ward
35 th Ward	20 th Ward
33 rd Ward	5 th Ward
47 th Ward	8 th Ward
District 4	District 9
43 rd Ward	15 th Ward
2 nd Ward	16 th Ward
42 nd Ward	17 th Ward
34 th Ward	18 th Ward
4 th Ward	6 th Ward
District 5	District 10
36 th Ward	19 th Ward
26 th Ward	21 st Ward
1 st Ward	9 th Ward
32 nd Ward	10 th Ward
27 th Ward	7 th Ward

Author: Valerie F. Leonard, Co-Founder, Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting.
Data Sources: City of Chicago Data Portal, Google My Maps

This map was drawn to align CPS Elected School Board districts with specific wards for greater accountability and coordination with members of the City Council while maintaining racial equity and balance. Ward boundaries were vetted for compliance with the VRA during the most recent redistricting process. Districts in blue were generally developed using boundaries for wards that are majority or plurality Black. Districts in orange or yellow were generally developed using boundaries for wards that are majority or plurality Latino. Districts in green were generally developed using boundaries for wards that are majority or plurality White. A link to the map on Google My Maps is found below.

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1p6oaDMbREAjXzekNERRgdtLgJrHMySk&usp=sharing>