

Good morning, committee members, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Blaire Flowers. I am the mother of 5, with 2 currently in CPS at North Lawndale College Prep and Brunson, 2 already graduated, and one future CPS student. I have been a community activist on the West Side for over 25 years. I sit on both the Austin and the North Lawndale Community Action Councils. **I am here today representing the Kids First Chicago Elected School Board Task Force.**

Our parent-led task force has been focused on four parent-identified priorities for the future elected school board:

- Fair racial representation
- Campaign spending limits
- Non-citizen participation and
- Parent seats on the board

The new law creates a huge increase in the direct representation of Chicago voters, but how well it represents CPS families will remain to be seen. The demographics of Chicago and CPS are very different – CPS is nearly 90% students of color, while Chicago is one-third white. This unique circumstance puts the Black and Latino student populations both at risk of being underrepresented, and this is why these districts are so crucially important.

Everything we measure is somehow based on the number of students – how much money schools get from CPS, how much money CPS gets from the state of Illinois or the federal government. But when we're talking about representation on the school board, some people will argue we shouldn't pay attention to the number of students or where they come from. I disagree.

I have also heard people say that these districts should be drawn so that the school will represent all taxpayers – not just CPS families – because taxpayers also have an interest in how the schools do. That's a valid argument, and I don't disagree that everyone deserves representation.

But please don't tell me that what you pay in property taxes is more important than my child's education. Please don't make the false equivalency between property values for residents without children and the 300,000 children of color who are going through the school system. Those things are not equal, in my opinion, and we shouldn't be giving them equal weighting in these conversations about creating districts.

I have heard people talking about making these districts equitable for all Chicago neighborhoods. Talking about "equity" for all of Chicago completely misses the mark. Equity is not about giving equal amounts of something to everyone, it is about giving more to the people who need it the most. In this case, equitable representation would be about ensuring representation for the groups who have been historically disenfranchised and who make up the largest percentage of the most-impacted stakeholders – CPS families.

Now that we will finally have the opportunity to elect our own members, we have to have a board that is truly representative of the people it serves. We have to ensure that our board members are representing our students and that they understand the culture of CPS families, which are mostly Black and Brown.

The second draft of maps that this committee released is still not acceptable for our Latino communities. It does a good job of representing CPS's Black student population, but falls way short on representing our Latino counterparts. This new draft only includes 5 districts that are a majority or strong plurality Latino. 25% of the districts, while Latino students make up 47% of the student population.

This committee should work to create at least 8 primarily Latino districts (with strong margins) and maintain the seven primarily Black districts you have already proposed. We urge you to vote no on this map and keep trying until we get this right. The law does not require you to finish these districts until July 1. Please take your time to keep working at this until we get it right for CPS families.

Thank you for your time today.

Blaire Flowers