



HR1121

LRB098 21398 GRL 59868 r

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, Article X of the Illinois Constitution states that: "A fundamental goal of the People of the State is the educational development of all persons to the limits of their capacities. The State shall provide for an efficient system of high quality public educational institutions and services. Education in public schools through the secondary level shall be free."; and

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WHEREAS, The community of Austin on Chicago's West Side is the largest by population of the city's 77 officially defined community areas; the area is over 87% African-American and has a population of about 117,000, of which about 14,000 are of high school-age; Austin, like the other communities of the West Side, continues to suffer from the past recession; and

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WHEREAS, Austin Community Academy High School was a public 4-year high school in the Austin neighborhood; during the mid-twentieth century, Austin High School was considered one of the best high schools in the Chicago area; in later years, however, Austin suffered from low test scores, low attendance, and student violence; the Chicago Public School system subsequently began phasing it out in 2004, ordering the school to stop admitting new freshman; the last graduations were held in June of 2007 and the phase-out was completed by the end of

1 summer in 2007; its successor, Austin Community Academy, was
2 open for one year before it was shut down by Mayor Richard M.
3 Daley; and

4 WHEREAS, The campus that formerly housed Austin Community
5 Academy High School is now home to 3 smaller schools, Austin
6 Business and Entrepreneurship Academy High School, Austin
7 Polytechnical Academy, and VOISE Academy High School, which
8 have a total attendance of 1,038 students, compared to the
9 6,000 students the academy held; and

10 WHEREAS, It is widely felt that these 3 schools do not
11 adequately serve the entire student population of the Austin
12 community and that, if Chicago Public School leaders don't
13 create more high school seats in the West Side neighborhood,
14 more youth will end up in the streets of Chicago's toughest
15 areas; Austin has no public option for high school, forcing
16 students to either travel long distances, apply for selective
17 magnet schools to which they have little chance of acceptance,
18 or drop out of school entirely; and

19 WHEREAS, On April 24, 2014, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel
20 announced plans to build the Barack Obama College Preparatory
21 High School, with selective enrollment open for the 2017-2018
22 school year; the Chicago Public School system is collecting
23 ideas and proposals for more than 40 of the school buildings it

1 shuttered in last year's massive school closings on a website
2 the district launched, and the Chicago Board of Education has
3 asked members of the public and community groups to submit
4 proposals for the old school sites, including the old Emmet
5 School sites; and

6 WHEREAS, The Chicago Board of Education continues to invest
7 in the improvement of Rockne Stadium just south of the proposed
8 site to be used as an athletic field for team sports; \$700,000
9 in improvements to the CPS-owned stadium were recently
10 announced; and

11 WHEREAS, A new high school built on the 133,600 square-foot
12 site of the old Emmet School in Chicago, which has been given
13 the proposed name of West Side Unity High School, would ensure
14 that the student population of the Austin community could
15 receive the quality education that they deserve; and

16 WHEREAS, Building a new high school on the site of the old
17 Emmet School would ensure that the Chicago Public School system
18 would not have to find and purchase a new site, since the
19 proposed site is already owned by CPS; in addition, the land
20 qualifies as a TIF area, which would help fund any new
21 construction project with over \$20,000,000; this decision
22 would also rid the Austin community of an eyesore that has
23 proven to be a detriment on the safety and values of properties

1 and businesses in the community and replace it with a building
2 that will reduce crime and increase property values for
3 families on the West Side; and

4 WHEREAS, Building a new high school at this location would
5 also place it on Madison Street, a street that features
6 numerous public transportation options to enable many students
7 to reach the school safely and easily; and

8 WHEREAS, Building 2 new high schools simultaneously,
9 utilizing the same blueprints, could prove to be a more
10 cost-effective solution to the problems faced by those on
11 Chicago's West Side; and

12 WHEREAS, Numerous schools in Chicago's West Side could
13 serve as feeders for a new school at the old Emmet site,
14 including Austin neighborhood schools and Ellington, GR Clark,
15 DePriest, Spencer, Hay, Nash, Brunson, McNair, Lovett, and
16 Young Schools; and

17 WHEREAS, In this month when we honor the fight that
18 resulted in the Brown v. Board of Education decision, let us
19 come together in our own fight for equal educational
20 opportunities for all; we must fight and work to end racism in
21 education, mass incarceration, and senseless death due to
22 violence; therefore, be it

1 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
2 NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
3 we urge the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, and all
4 stakeholders to work together to bring a school to the
5 Chicago's West Side to help meet the needs of the tax-paying
6 families in those communities; and be it further

7 RESOLVED, That we congratulate President Barack Obama on
8 the dedication of the Barack Obama College Preparatory High
9 School after him and commend Mayor Rahm Emanuel for expanding
10 more opportunities for educational success for families of
11 Chicago; and be it further

12 RESOLVED, That we urge Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the
13 Governor to come together to bring a new high school to
14 Chicago's West Side; and be it further

15 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
16 delivered to Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Governor Pat Quinn.