



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON

January 30, 2024

The Honorable Don Harmon
Senate President
State of Illinois
309-G Capitol Building
Springfield, Illinois 62706

Dear President Harmon:

I write to express my strong support of the school board transition plan articulated in SB689 HA2 and the Senate ethics provisions captured in SB2324 HA2.

An elected representative school board is personal for me. As you already know, I worked on the issue for a decade alongside community organizations across the city knocking on doors, educating voters, and assisting with successful ballot measures in 2012 and 2015. Additionally, over the years I worked closely with General Assembly members to ensure the passage of an elected school board bill through multiple attempts.

I was personally involved in negotiating HB2908, the bill you helped pass in 2021 that created a phased-in elected board. We engaged in multiple discussions specifically about that proposal at the end of the 2021 Spring session. I remain proud of the work of all stakeholders who contributed to the process and my role in ushering in greater democracy to the Chicago Public Schools.

Together, alongside stakeholders in the legislature, we helped parties reach an agreement on the structure and timing for an elected school board in Chicago. That structure and timing included an initial hybrid board that would transition to a fully elected board over several years. The first step in the timeline starts in 2024 when voters would elect ten members in the general election, and the mayor would appoint ten members from districts across the city in December 2024. Additionally, the mayor would be responsible for appointing the citywide school board president that same year. Results of the 2026 general election would fulfill the plan for a fully elected school board.

My position on SB689 HA2 reflects the expressed implementation of the 2021 law as passed. Furthermore, the initial 2021 law clearly communicated to interested parties the timeline and structure of the initial elections, thereby informing their plans for participation. Those



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agreements should be honored to allow for the intended phased transition to a fully elected school board. Therefore, I ask that the Senate pass the school board transition plan articulated in SB689 HA2 and the Senate ethics provisions captured in SB2324 HA2. This will allow the respective agencies ample time to prepare for the necessary next steps for ensuring an effective roll-out.

I appreciate our ongoing collaboration and look forward to working with you and members of the Senate to bring greater democratic school governance to the City of Chicago.

Sincerely,

Mayor