

IN RE: PENDING SCHOOL BOARD LEGISLATION

SENATE HEARING

DATE:

April 12, 2023



schedule@churchillreporting.com



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9	IN RE	: PENDING SCHOOL BOARD LEGISLATION
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14		SENATE HEARING
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18	WITNESS(ES):	Melanie Lopez
19		Corrina Demma
20		Carl Nyberg
21		James Dispensa
22		Denali Dasgupta
23		Colleen Murphy
24	DATE:	APRIL 12, 2023
25	REPORTER:	KORTNEY CHASE



Also Present: Senator Robert F. Martwick, Vice-Chair; Senator Mattie Hunter, Member; Senator Ram Villivalam, Member; Senator Dan McConchie, Member; Ashley Jenkins, Clerk Clerk 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19
Senator Mattie Hunter, Member; Senator Ram Villivalam, Member; Senator Dan McConchie, Member; Ashley Jenkins, Clerk Clerk 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18
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1	STIPULATION
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3	The hearing took place at COPERNICUS CENTER, 5216 WEST
4	LAWRENCE AVENUE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60630 on WEDNESDAY
5	the 12TH day of APRIL 2023 at approximately 4:24 p.m.
6	(CT); said hearing took place pursuant to the ILLINOIS
7	Rules of Civil Procedure.
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PROCEEDINGS

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MR. MARTWICK: Good evening. Good evening, everyone. Hello, hello. Hi. The Senate Special Committee on the Chicago Elected Representative School Board shall come to order. Will you please call the role?

MS. JENKINS: Lewis? McConchie?

MR. MCCONCHIE: Here.

MS. JENKINS: Villanueva? Villivalam?

MR. VILLIVALAM: Here.

MS. JENKINS: Sims? Hunter?

MS. HUNTER: Here.

MS. JENKINS: Aquino? Martwick?

MR. MARTWICK: Here.

MS. JENKINS: Lightford?

MR. MARTWICK: There being four members present, we shall proceed with business. So on behalf of the -- of everyone here in the Tenth District, we are happy to host this important hearing which will help shape the future of the Chicago Public Schools for years to come. I would also like to extend my thanks to the Copernicus Center for welcoming us. It's great to see

everybody here. We're here today, because of the

advocacy efforts of students, parents, community groups, so many people who believed in the importance of the democratic process and fought for a greater say in how our schools are run, and that starts now, as we look to your input on what these new school boundaries should look like. proud to have been the sponsor of the legislation that created this elected representative school board, but obviously, our work isn't done. neighborhood schools are facing challenges. During these hearings, we've heard about the need to increase violence prevention -- prevention initiatives and improve transportation. We've heard about facilities that need to be repaired and expanded -- and I just talked to a school that needs some of that -- and calls to address long-standing inequities and inequalities and how resources are allocated. That's why this process is so important. We simply cannot continue the status quo. So thank you to all of those who fought to get us to this point. We have much more work to do. I'd like to provide some important information. In 2021, the Senate and the House passed House Bill 2908, a measure I was proud to sponsor, which requires the Chicago Board of Education to become fully elected



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by 2027. Starting January 15, 2025, a two-year
hybrid period begins with ten members being elected
to four-year terms, and ten members being appointed
by the mayor to two-year terms, and the board
president being appointed by the mayor also for a
two-year term. In 2027, when the mayor- appointed
terms expire, the ten members and the elected at
large members will be elected to four-year terms.
The General Assembly must comply to the July 1, 2023
deadline to draw Chicago School Board Districts.
Based on Chicago's population, the ten districts
will be comprised of approximately 274,601 people,
and the 20 districts will be comprised of around
137,301 people. According to the census, the City of
Chicago is 35.9 percent white, 29.8 percent
Hispanic, 29.2 percent Black, seven percent Asian,
and about 11 percent describe themselves as two or
more races. The school code requires that the
districts be compact, contiguous, and substantially
equal in population and consistent with the Illinois
Voting Rights Act. If you know someone who wants to
testify but couldn't make it today, there will be
additional public hearings, and we encourage you to
spread the word. There are as follows: Tomorrow,
April 13th from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the National



Museum of Mexican Art, 1852 West 19th Street in And then on Monday, April 17th from 6:00 Chicago. to 8:00 p.m., there will be a virtual hearing, and you can find more information about that on In addition to participating in these public hearings, we encourage you to visit our website, which is www.ilsenateredistricting.com. So I'll spell that all out for anyone who is taking notes. That's I-L-S-E-N-A-T-E-R-E-D-I-S-T-R-I-C-T-I-N-G.com, ilsenateredistricting.com. There's a page there dedicated to implementing the new Chicago Board Districts. At that webpage, anyone can draw and submit proposed communities of interest and upload It's a mapmaking tool. You district boundaries. can go on and you can say these are the communities that I think should be tied together. Soon members of the public will also be able to draw their own district boundaries as well. All maps submitted through the portal will be reviewed as part of the public record. These hearings are the start of an exciting new era and community led education that will empower families to elect leaders who reflect their neighborhoods. With so much at stake, it will not be easy to balance various desires and



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perspectives, but we are committed to upiliting
voices that too often go unheard in crafting a
product our city can be proud of. So with that,
I'd now like to turn to Senator Villavalam for some
additional comments. Senator Villavalam?

MR. VILLAVALAM: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, Chair Martwick. I am so honored and happy to be here representing the city's Northwest side of Chicago, representing the Eighth State Senate District. Like others across Chicago, our community is incredibly diverse, and there will be -- there will no doubt be varying opinions about the best way to craft these new districts. But I honestly think that's what makes this process so special. By giving our communities a greater voice in who runs our school district, we can ensure our values are reflected in these new districts and in the classroom. By having the ability to hold leaders accountable, we can make sure our children receive the tools they need to succeed, regardless of their ZIP code. We can build stronger neighborhoods, reduce income inequality, address the root causes of violences, and advance immigrant, LGBTQ, and women's rights. Our city is on a precipice of major change, and it's being shaped in

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part by the conversations happening here today. I look forward to today's testimony and encourage you to spread the word. As was mentioned, we have additional hearings scheduled in the next week, so if you know anyone who wasn't able to make it today, there are still opportunities for them to provide input move forward. Thank you so much again for coming out and participating in this process.

Thank you, Senator Villavalam, MR. MARTWICK: and thank you for all of those who took time to be here today. Look forward to hearing today's testimony. While I know, you know, this can be a very -- a big issue for a lot of people. I would urge anyone who is testifying please stick -- stick to the topic at hand as we focus on a successful implementation of this -- of this transition. With that, we have the following witnesses seeking to testify, so I want to begin by welcoming Mary Gardner. Are you here, Mary, of Urban Technicians? No. Okay. Then the next is --person who is listed to testify is Mark McKelvey. Mark, are you here? Mark?

MR. MCKELVEY: I would like to take a pass.

MR. MARTWICK: You want to pass?

MR. MCKELVEY: Well, what I thought you were

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soliciting input on isn't exactly germane, so...

should be a microphone there for you.

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MR. MARTWICK: Perfect. All right. Very good. Thank you. Next is Melanie Lopez with Kids for Chicago. Melanie, welcome. Oh, over here at the -- right here at the table over there, and there

Thank you. Hi. Good afternoon. My MS. LOPEZ: name is Dr. Melanie Lopez, and I'm with Kids for Sorry. Like I said, my name is Chicago. Dr. Melanie Lopez. I'm with Kids for Chicago. also a CPS educator and CPS parent of twin girls who attend Preston Elementary School. I am a product of CPS, having attended (Inaudible) High School. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak with you-all today. As many of you have already spoken and have committed to attending or sending staff to attend our virtual town hall, as Kids for Chicago with be hosting a panel discussion today at 6:00 p.m., and this conversation will focus on Chicago's transition to the elected school board with parent priorities being discussed and district creation conversations. We hope all community members will be represented so that you can hear from CPS parents about their priorities to the transition for the elected school board, and the registration is still

open for anyone interested at
www.kidsforchicago.org/townhall. Kids for Chicago is
a parent I'm sorry, Kids for Chicago's parent
elected school board task force is what I am a
member of, and it is committed to submitting federal
district maps through the committee online portal
that Senator Martwick mentioned earlier. We
submitted our ideas last week, and we encourage
lawmakers to please take a look at the example
before beginning to draw your own district maps.
I believe this committee must consider the need for
the school board to be culturally representative of
the student population and the families that
whose children actually attend the schools the board
is intending to represent, of course. The
demographics of Chicago and CPS are very different.
CPS is nearly 90 percent students of color, while
Chicago is 33 percent considered white. The Black
and Latino populations are both at risk of being
severely underrepresented compared to the rest of
the student populations. We know that
representation matters, having people at the
decision- making table who have shared experiences
with the students and families they are serving is
critical for the students' successes. A 2022 report



of the school board partners found that members of color are more likely to view academic -- I'm sorry, systemic racism as an ongoing problem and something that the board must address. And members of color are more likely to prioritize policies focused on equality, equity, raising student outcomes, and closing any achievement gaps. Excuse me. I'm a little nervous. The state law that created Chicago's local school council suggested the racial composition of each local school council should reflect the makeup of the school that it serves, and that the members of each local school council should be encouraged to be reflective of the racial and ethnic composition of the student population of the attendant -- of the attendants that are served by the local school council. While there is no such provision of the law that created the elected school board, CPS parents want a board who have shared experience with the students and families they represent and can bring that critical perspective to the table when making decisions that impact their children. If state laws says that a local school council should reflect the student population of the school, we think the same is true of the school It should reflect the student population of board.



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the school district that it serves as much as
possible, and consistent with legal and
constitutional requirements, these districts should
be created in a way that takes into account the
racial makeup of CPS students and families. We have
submitted a prototype, as I said before, a set of
district maps to this committee that aims to achieve
this goal and serve as a model that can be done
fairly. We encourage committee members to look at
this example before beginning to draw your own
district maps if you can, please. If you do, then
we believe that CPS families and the better will
be better represented and better served by the
future elected school board leading to better
outcomes for our CPS students, and thank you so much
for your time today.

MR. MARTWICK: Thank you. Thank you very much for that. All right. Our next witness that we have on the list is Corinna -- Corinna? And is it Demma?

MS. DEMMA: Demma. Corinna Demma.

MR. MARTWICK: Thank you, Corinna.

MS. DEMMA: And I'm in your district. Okay.

Okay. Hello, members of the special elected school board. My name is Corinna Demma, and I'm really excited about the opportunity to be a part of this

process and be in front of you. I am currently an organizer at Educators for Excellence. I would -what I would additionally like you to know is that I am also a CPS graduate. I'm a former public school teacher for CPS. And I have two students -- two children in CPS today, so my family sees real value in equitable public education. We're committed to sticking with it. So in light of that, before -before we get to the process of drawing maps, which is very, very important, it feels very weighty to me that some additional things be considered in order to create the most equitable districts possible. I'm here today to request that the legislature reduce the size of the elected school board to something more manageable, like nine seats, and also make it possible for these roles to be compensated. And I do know that compensation was in the original draft of this bill for a reason, right? So -- so an equitably structured school board would promote consensus building. 21 members seems like a lot to build true consensus. An equitability structured school board would bring together voices who take the job of addressing students' needs seriously and invest in their future of all of our students. An equitably structured school board would move the



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needle on the opportunity gap between high needs and affluent schools. In order for the board to be made up of everyday parents, educators, and community members, I urge this committee to additionally consider passing trailer legislation to allow board members to be compensated. The only people who can donate their time in this way -- and energy, are people of considerable individual wealth or candidates with a backing of special interests. Compensation is essential for a true representative Structural - - excuse me -- inequities board. across Chicago are putting our most vulnerable students at risk, and the state needs to do everything in its power to put that to an end. That is why I am urging the Senate Special Committee to pause or at least consider or refocus the mapping process and focus first on right sizing the size and compensation so the board can finally cover Chicago Public Schools with equity. I believe waiting is no longer an option. Thank you for your time.

MR. MARTWICK: Thank you, Corrina. That is the extent of the list for people who filed. Is there anyone else at this time who would like to provide testimony to the board? We are happy to have you come and give your thoughts and remarks. We're

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happy to welcome you. Is there anyone who would
like to testify at this time? Sir, could you come
forward? Right up here to the table.
MR. NYBERG: I thought I registered online.
MR. MARTWICK: It may have gotten missed.
I apologize if that was the case, so yeah, just
state your name and and go ahead and begin your
testimony.
MR. NYBERG: Hi. My name is Carl Nyberg.
I'm from Albany Park.
MR. MARTWICK: Sorry. Didn't recognize you
with a facemask, Carl. Welcome.
MR. NYBERG: That's fine.
MR. MARTWICK: Good to see you.
MR. NYBERG: So I actually have a question
because I'm still unclear. You said ten people are
going to get elected from ten districts for
four-year terms, ten people are going to get
appointed for two- year terms, and then you used the
term "at large" for the ten getting elected two
years after that, or did I mishear that?
MR. MARTWICK: Sorry, Carl. The board
president is elected at large. So the process is
that ten people will be elected and ten appointed.

The ten appointed will be for two-year terms, and

- then -- so the first election will be '24, ten will be elected, and then -- to a four-year term, and then in '26, ten will be elected also for a four-year term. So we'll have, you know, staggered terms, right? MR. NYBERG: So we're not going to go to a 20-district map. We're going to have two reps for each of the ten districts? MR. MARTWICK: Yeah, we're -- yes. The details of that are still being served up, but that's the gist of it, yes. MR. NYBERG: Okay. And this is going to be in November, so are the candidates going to be running with party affiliations or are they going to be running with no party affiliation? MR. MARTWICK: No, they're -- they're nonpartisans, so there will be no primary. They will run on a non-partisan ballot in the November election. So they'll be on the general election ballot, but they will be non-partisans. Somebody might ask you why you MR. NYBERG: don't do judges the same way.
 - MR. MARTWICK: That would be a different hearing, Carl.
 - MR. NYBERG: Yes. Okay. So I don't know

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if there's a couple of you who know me up there,
that before I moved into the city, back a while ago,
I covered school district issues in Proviso Township
primarily, but I also ran for the school board in
Oak Park and North Forest (phonetic) and and did
some work for the regional superintendent of
education covering school districts in the south
suburbs. And I'm a little concerned I think
Corinna raised the point that this job is going to
be a huge amount of work, to listen to the people
who show up at board meetings who have input, to
deal with complaints, reading the financials, dot,
dot, dot, dot, and I have longed felt that
Illinois should have more compensation for school
board members, but also increased conflict of
interest issues. I know that in Proviso Township,
we had situations where I'll I'll refrain from
mentioning specifics names, but people were doing
legal work for the elementary school while the
elementary school people were on the school board,
and, you know, it was just there was a wraparound
on a lot of stuff.

So I do support the billing. I don't support reducing the number of people on the board of education from the point of view of you're already

asking people to run over the equivalent of five wards. I mean, that's a huge undertaking, and if you made the districts bigger, that would be even more financially prohibitive to get into the elections. As to the map, I haven't had much luck with the Senate map tool. Have you guys -- is -- is that a problem on my end or is the tool -- I mean, you seem to say that there's going to be a new version of it coming out: is that true?

MR. MARTWICK: So, Carl, what I am told is that the tool that's online will allow you to draw communities of interest, so you can draw a map around an area that you think should be drawn into a certain district. You're not yet able to draw the entire map of the City of Chicago, but that is coming soon.

MR. NYBERG: Okay. So there's a free website that I used to do that, so I've already submitted that through Senator Pacione-Zayas. I -- I -- I'm a little frustrated you guys went through redistricting and you said officially that you wanted input from the people, and then your tool didn't work. I mean, that kind of makes it seem like you kind of wanted credit for wanting input from the people, but not actually getting the input from the

people, so I -- I find that a little bit of a shortcoming on your end. As for the districts, I mean, like, everybody seems to be on board that they wanted to have ethnic -- ethnic, racial, religious, and, I mean, I think that -- I think you can draw probably four wards that are African American -- are likely to elect African American -or three or four districts. I can see three districts for Hispanics, which one being the far southwest side, one being the northwest side, and one being sort of a wraparound that picks up some of the northwest side and some on the southwest side. If you build a district around West Ridge, the 39th Ward, the 45th Ward, you can conceivably make a district that's over 20 percent Asian American, and if you build out from Chinatown, you can get a district that's a little over 15 percent Asian American, and, you know, compact and contiguous is something that you can always debate. I -- I would run a district up and down the lakefront from Lincoln Park to South Shore, and that's a majority African American district if you do it right. I quess that's my input, and I hope that the final map feels like it does reflect the community input and isn't just sort of trying to get certain people



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elected because there's already a certain amount of
cynicism about things, and the thing about taking
input from lots and lots of different people is you
can always sort of cherry pick the one piece of
input that you liked and use that and then say,
well, we went and asked for input from 100 people,
but you only listed the one, so that's my issue.
MR. MARTWICK: Thank you, Carl. Sir, you want
to testify?
MR. DISPENSA: Just have a clarification
question.
MR. MARTWICK: Can you come up to the table?
MR. DISPENSA: Yeah. Hi. My name is James
Dispensa, and you had mentioned, I think, two
numbers, and I just want to know what those were.
I didn't get a chance to take note of them.
I think 167,000?
MR. MARTWICK: Sure.
MR. DISPENSA: Maybe you were referring to ten
or 20 districts at that time?
MR. MARTWICK: Right. So ultimately, there
will be 20 districts and, of course, population is a
moving number, but based off of estimates, the 20
districts would be comprised of around 137,301
people. But as the first elections are going to be

over ten districts, it would be 274,601.

MR. DISPENSA: Thank you.

MR. MARTWICK: You're very welcome. Okay. Is there anyone else seeking testifying -- or providing testimony? Yes, ma'am. Please step up. And while you're walking up here -- please come have a seat -- I also want to acknowledge today in the room the presence of our alderman here in the 45th Ward. Alderman Jim Gardiner is here. Thank you, Alderman, for attending.

MS. DASGUPTA: My name is Denali Dasgupta.

I am a recent current resident of the 39th Ward, and I wanted to raise some points that I think are significant as far as principles for how we do districting. And so, when we talk about electoral districts, we look for compactness with continuity, and we look for the protection of civil rights. And what happens with voting districts like this is that the voter base, the tax base, and the constituency for our schools -- you can't talk right now -- are not distributed equally. In fact, the voting age population is distributing in almost exactly a photo negative of where the children who attend CPS live. And for me, it's really important that in addition to optimizing around the distribution of voters that

we also try to get parity in school-aged children and potential CPS students. That feels really significant because what I don't want to see is continued entrenchment of existing segregation, but now that we have a democratic term on it, giving that sort of a mandate. And I worry that the places where our children live will be lumped into districts so the families that we are trying to empower will actually get less of a voice than they So that was the first principle that I would really like to see you try. There's a couple of other ones, but I will be looking to create some kind of rubric that we can assess the proposals on to let folks know how well they do to give the families and communities where our children live in this city, and where resources need to be directed for appropriate opportunities. Finally, the last piece is, even as we talk about racial and ethnic groups and other groups that require particular consideration. In the school district world, we also have a special population, so we have students with disabilities. We have English language learners. These are fluid populations that we can't district around, but they are populations that I believe it should be the role of the board to



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publish these numbers by, like, the residents who meet these criteria in students so that we understand how the policies and decisions of the board will and won't disparately impact our students, so keep it up. Thank you.

MR. MARTWICK: Thank you very much. And great job on both aspects there, so -- I know exactly what that's like. Okay. Look around. Anyone else seeking to offer testimony to the committee, raise your hand, stand up. Okay. Thank you-all for joining us. Our next hearing is scheduled again for tomorrow, April 13th, at 4:00, at the National Museum of Mexican Art, 1852 West 19th Street.

Again, if you know of anyone who wants to weigh in on this, please let them know about that, and then let them know about the virtual meeting, which is next Monday. Yes, sir?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I had a quick question. You are allowing for written testimony also, right?

MR. MARTWICK: Yes, written testimony can be submitted at ilga.gov -- oh, to the committee e-mail address, which we can provide to you, if you want to stick around afterwards. And, yeah, then you can submit maps and written testimony. So, yes,

25 | Colleen?



1	MS. MURPHY: Monday, there's a virtual meeting.
2	How do we get the link to that?
3	MR. MARTWICK: It's on ilga.gov.
4	MS. MURPHY: ilga.gov?
5	MR. MARTWICK: Yeah, and you can fill out a
6	witness slip there, and you can e-mail the committee
7	and we'll yeah, we'll get
8	MS. MURPHY: Is that easy to find?
9	MR. MARTWICK: It should be.
10	MS. MURPHY: Okay.
11	MR. MARTWICK: Yeah, I'm told it is.
12	MS. MURPHY: What witness slip do we fill out?
13	MR. MARTWICK: We'll Colleen, if you stick
14	around, we'll run you through it afterwards.
15	MS. MURPHY: Got you. Okay. Okay.
16	MR. MARTWICK: All right. There being no
17	further business to come before the Senate Special
18	Committee on the Chicago Elected School Board, we're
19	adjourned. Thank you, everybody.
20	(HEARING CONCLUDED AT 4:54 P.M. (CT))
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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF ILLINOIS

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I do hereby certify that the hearing in the foregoing transcript was taken on the date, and at the time and place set out on the Title page here of by me and that the said matter was recorded digitally by me and then reduced to type written form under my direction, and constitutes a true record of the transcript as taken, all to the best of my skill and ability. I certify that I am not a relative or employee of either counsel, and that I am in no way interested financially, directly or indirectly, in this action.

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KORTNEY J CHASE Official Seal Notary Public - State of Illinois My Commission Expires Sep 24, 2025

KORTNEY CHASE,

COURT REPORTER/NOTARY

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES ON: 09/24/2025

SUBMITTED ON: 04/21/2023

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