

Hello. My name is Miriam Bhimani and I am with The FOIA Bakery, a group of researchers and parents who focus on public education. We aim to understand the choices power-holders are making, to work together and add context to public discussions for those who have to live with those choices.

Last time I was before this committee, the General Assembly had not yet released a map. There was a possibility of a thorough process that seriously considered the Voting Rights Act and CPS students.

Now, with two maps released, I urge this body not to defer to the courts. You have an opportunity to do the hard work and provide stability through a well designed school board map.

This week, we submitted written testimony to this Committee and the House Executive Committee. Our goal is to adhere to 3 principles:

1. Comply with state and federal law;
2. Build 20 districts;
3. Create districts that contain substantially similar number of students.

In service of these principles, we wrote a program to generate maps. [We provided this body with a family of 1,000 maps that each have 10 minority effective districts.](#) Your new proposed map contains 8 minority effective districts - 6 for African American districts and 2 Hispanic districts.

The Voting Rights Act demands that we create maps that allow minority voters to select the candidate of their choosing. This is different from just racial demographic metrics. We cannot flatten the analysis - we must consider voter turnout.

As an example, let's look at District S on your new map. This district is 65% Black, citizen, voting age population but would have gone to Paul Vallas by over 5,000 votes in the recent Chicago mayoral general election. For those who tell me school board elections will not be as acrimonious as this last Mayoral election, I defer to my over 20 years of experience in public schools. Parents are very involved and very heated. We are seeing right-wing groups attempting coups with school board elections. District S also contains hyper-segregated schools - 28 of the schools have 90% or more Black students attending which amounts to 1 in 12 students in all of CPS. How will the general population and students be served in this District? By someone the white voters choose. The Voting Rights Act demands we look at how power translates to elected officials, not simple racial blocs.

While we generated our first 1,000 maps, we were hopeful that the General Assembly would engage - would choose to produce a map that complies with the law. [We have now submitted a second 1,000 maps that also take into account where children live.](#) These maps still contain at least 10 minority effective districts which is also still more than the current Senate map proposed while also considering where children live in the city of Chicago. The legislature's May 17, 2023 proposal has a district with about 2,000 students on the low side. This is an 87% deviation from

the ideal number. Chicago Public Schools is a majority-minority district; creating districts that are majority White and contain very few kids in them is, to put it mildly, not appropriate or responsible.

It is still our hope that the General Assembly chooses to produce a map that does not divest from minorities in Chicago. We are confident that if we can produce maps with more effective minority representation, you can too. It is your duty to provide a map with minority considered districts. Please rise to the challenge.