



HR0814

LRB103 40845 LAW 73779 r

1

HOUSE RESOLUTION

2

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

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

WHEREAS, The community of Austin on Chicago's West Side is 84.2% African-American and has a population of approximately 100,000, with more than 30% under the age of 19; and

10

11

12

WHEREAS, Austin Community Academy High School was a public 4-year high school in the Austin neighborhood; during the mid-twentieth century, the high school was considered one of the best in the Chicago area; in later years, however, it suffered from low test scores, low attendance, and student violence, leading the Chicago Public School (CPS) system to begin phasing it out in 2004, ordering the school to stop admitting new freshman; the high school's last graduation was held in June 2007, and the phase-out was completed by the end of summer; its successor, Austin Community Academy, was open for one year before it was shut down by Mayor Richard M. Daley; and

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

1 WHEREAS, West Side residents have faced inequalities for
2 decades, including drug arrests, the savings and loan crisis
3 of the 1990s that lost billions for bank customers, the 2008
4 financial crash, and the closure of 50 schools under Mayor
5 Rahm Emanuel in 2013; and

6 WHEREAS, A WBEZ-Sun-Times investigation showed the school
7 closures largely did not deliver on the promises that students
8 would be better off elsewhere at new, improved schools or that
9 their old school buildings would be overhauled; and

10 WHEREAS, A Chalkbeat investigation showed that roughly
11 one-third of the students who attended closed schools
12 transferred out of CPS entirely; due to families leaving CPS
13 after the closure of their students' schools, the usual
14 channels for local high schools withered; at the time,
15 families and advocates expressed concerns that the school
16 closures would exacerbate displacement and disinvestment in
17 segregated Black neighborhoods; and

18 WHEREAS, According to the CPS's Annual Regional Analysis,
19 58% of high school students on the West Side attended school
20 outside of the district's region in the 2022-23 school year;
21 of those leaving the West Side for high school, the majority
22 head to the Far Northwest Side and Near West Side; and

1 WHEREAS, Currently, the West Side is home to three smaller
2 schools, Austin College & Career Academy High School,
3 Frederick Douglass Academy High School, and Michele Clark
4 Academic Preparatory Magnet High School, which have a combined
5 student body of less than 800 students; by comparison, the
6 former high school previously had a total attendance of 6,000
7 students; and

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

17 WHEREAS, CPS is increasing the Equity Grant program from
18 \$50 million this year to \$55 million next year to stabilize
19 funding for smaller and under-enrolled schools, mostly on the
20 South and West sides; and

21 WHEREAS, The families and students of Chicago's West Side
22 deserve access to equal educational opportunities, and

1 establishing one traditional area high school will assist in
2 the fight to end racism in education, mass incarceration, and
3 senseless death due to violence; therefore, be it

4 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
5 HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
6 we urge the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, and all
7 stakeholders to work together to support Michele Clark
8 Academic Preparatory Magnet High School and to build a new
9 traditional neighborhood high school in the Austin
10 neighborhood on Chicago's West Side to help meet the needs of
11 the tax-paying families in those communities; and be it
12 further

13 RESOLVED, That we urge Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson and
14 Governor JB Pritzker to support, in every way possible, the
15 establishment of a traditional high school in the Austin
16 neighborhood on Chicago's West Side; and be it further

17 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
18 delivered to the Chicago Board of Education, Chicago Mayor
19 Brandon Johnson, and Governor JB Pritzker.