

Good afternoon, committee members, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Blaire Flowers. I am the mother of 5, with 2 currently in CPS at North Lawndale College Prep and Brunson, 2 already graduated, and one future CPS student. I have been a community activist on the West Side for over 25 years. I sit on both the Austin and the North Lawndale Community Action Councils. I live in Sen. Don Harmon's district. **I am here today representing the Kids First Chicago Elected School Board Task Force.**

Our parent-led task force has been focused on four parent-identified priorities for the future elected school board:

- Fair racial representation
- Campaign spending limits
- Non-citizen participation and
- Parent seats on the board

The new law creates a huge increase in the direct representation of Chicago voters, but how well it represents CPS families will remain to be seen. The demographics of Chicago and CPS are very different – CPS is nearly 90% students of color, while Chicago is one-third white. The Black and Latino populations are both at risk of being severely underrepresented compared to their share of the student population.

Everything we measure is somehow based on the number of students – how much money schools get from CPS, how much money CPS gets from the state of Illinois or the federal government. But when we're talking about representation on the school board, some people will argue we shouldn't pay attention to the number of students or where they come from. I disagree. I recognize that you can't solely depend on those figures, but I strongly believe that you must take CPS representation into consideration as you are creating these districts that will elect school board members, who will in turn make decisions that impact our students more than anybody else.

The first draft of maps that this committee released is unacceptable for our Latino communities. It does a good job of representing CPS's Black student population, but falls way short on representing our Latino counterparts. This committee should work to create at least two more primarily Latino districts while maintaining the seven primarily Black districts you have already proposed.

Now that we finally have the opportunity to elect our own members, we have to have a board that is truly representative of the people it serves. We have to ensure that our board members are representing our students and that they understand the culture of CPS families, which are mostly Black and Brown.

I believe a school board that reflects CPS's diversity can better understand the needs of children in our communities and will deliver better results for our students.

Thank you for your time today.

Blaire Flowers