



# Illinois African Americans For Equitable Redistricting

## Statement On The Chicago Elected Representative School Board November 12, 2023

We commend the Illinois House and Senate chambers for making significant progress in passing historic legislation to create an elected representative school board (ERSB) and Black student achievement committee for the Chicago Board of Education. It is very clear that the Legislature took the time to listen to voters' concerns and addressed them within the limits of the Constitution, the Voting Rights Act and other laws concerning the drawing of electoral districts and the operations of local government entities. We applaud both chambers for choosing to adjourn rather than pass bills out of political expedience. This work is very important and will have a permanent impact on how CPS operates in the future.

We appreciate the fact that both the Senate and the House demonstrated commitment to closing the Black student achievement and opportunity gaps by codifying IAAFER's proposal for a Black Student Achievement Committee. The Committee will provide evidence-based solutions to move the needle on some of the most entrenched barriers that prevent Black students from doing as well as their peers. Most importantly, there will be Board-level accountability with periodic public progress reports. Regardless of who is in office, this work will continue for years to come.

There is much to like about the comprehensive proposals put forth by each chamber. We like the fact that both the Senate and the House were thoughtful in optimizing opportunities for minority voters to elect candidates of choice. We also appreciate the fact that each proposal ensures that the Chicago Board of Education is held to the same ethical standards as every governing body in the State of Illinois. Both proposals expand democracy by providing for primary and general elections to ensure that representatives are elected with a clear majority of voters in the district. In summary,

- The subdistrict map for school board elections will include 20 subdistricts, 7 of which are majority Black; 6 are majority Latino; 5 are majority White, with 2 majority minority coalition districts.
- All Chicago voters will have an opportunity to elect candidates of their choice to 2-year terms in the November 2024 Presidential Election.
- The Chicago Board of Education will be subject to the same ethical standards as every other elected representative school board in the State of Illinois.
- In 2026, all ERSB candidates will run in a spring primary. The first and second place candidates will advance to the general election in November 2026.
- The Board of Education will include a committee to address the educational achievement and opportunity gaps that exist for Black students in Chicago Public Schools.

As of adjournment of the Fall Veto Session on November 9<sup>th</sup>, the major unresolved difference between the House and Senate amendments to ERSB legislation centered around the implementation of the elections and mapping proposal.

- The Senate version provides for elections for all 20 districts in 2024. Each candidate will be initially elected for a two-year term. In 2026, half the districts will host elections for 2-year terms, and half the districts will host elections for 4-year terms. This will create a 2-year stagger in which half the Chicago Board of Education is elected every 2 years. This will ensure that, at all times, at least half of the Board is experienced, with requisite institutional knowledge and leadership. All registered voters may vote for candidates of choice and all eligible candidates may run for election.
- The House version provides for a 10-district map subdivided into 2 subdistricts. The subdistricts mirror the subdistricts outlined in the Senate mapping proposal. The 10 districts will remain in effect until 2026, at which time the 20 subdistricts will be the only districts. In 2024, there will be 2 representatives from each district, with 1 representative appointed by the Mayor, and 1 elected. Each representative will serve a 2-year term. Prospective candidates who live in the same subdistrict as a Mayoral appointee will be ineligible to run for election in 2024. In effect, prospective candidates from half the City's subdistricts will be prevented from running for the Board of Education until 2026.

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While each proposal has strong merits, the Senate version is a superior approach for those who have fought for an elected Chicago School board and those that recognize that something must change if we are to improve the education of our children. Not only is the Senate version simpler and easier to follow, but it achieves our goal of having a fully elected school board, with all 20 members elected in 2024. Our children deserve a school board that is accountable to Chicago's citizens in 2024, rather than a confusing phased-in approach over several years. The Senate version ensures greater ballot access by providing opportunity for every eligible candidate to run for the Chicago ERSB and giving equal opportunity for all voters around the City of Chicago to vote.

We strongly urge the House of Representatives to adopt the Senate version of the Legislation. Importantly, IAAFER is asking all Chicago voters and other CPS stakeholders to call the Mayor and their state representative and state senator, to ask them to vote for the Senate version of the Chicago Elected Representative School Board legislation. Again, there is no sound reason to wait until 2027 to achieve our collective goal of an elected representative school board that is accountable to the citizens of Chicago.

Even though the elected representative school board legislation has not yet passed, we are reasonably sure that the proposed subdistrict boundaries will not change in the final version. We as a community should start identifying qualified candidates and encourage them to run for the

Chicago Board of Education. Anyone who wants to run for the elected school board should start mounting his/her campaign sooner, rather than later.

Illinois African Americans For Equitable Redistricting (IAAFER) is a coalition of organizations and individuals that was formed in 2021 to ensure that the State's redistricting process was implemented taking into account issues of concern to Black people around the State. Realizing that operationalizing Chicago's Elected Representative School Board requires drawing electoral districts, we expanded our advocacy to include developing a comprehensive proposal to create electoral districts based on the City's ward boundaries and to create a standing Black Student Achievement Committee of the Chicago Board of Education to specifically and finally close the intransigent educational achievement gap for our children.

Respectfully Submitted,

**IAAFER Core Leadership Team**

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