



# Illinois African Americans For Equitable Redistricting

April 17, 2023

Hon. Kimberly Lightford  
Chairperson  
Senate Special Committee  
on the Chicago Elected  
Representative School Board  
4415 Harrison St., Ste. 550  
Hillside, IL 60162

Hon. Robert F. Martwick  
Vice-Chairperson  
Senate Special Committee  
on the Chicago Elected  
Representative School Board  
4349 N. Milwaukee Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60641

Hon. Omar Aquino  
Vice-Chairperson  
Senate Special Committee  
on the Chicago Elected  
Representative School Board  
4053 W. Armitage Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60639

Dear Members of the Legislature:

First of all, we would like to thank the Illinois State Legislature for passing legislation that creates an elected representative elected school board. We have reviewed the legislation in its entirety, and request that you amend Public Act 102-0177 to

1. **Create a standing African American Affairs Committee of the Board of Education to prioritize problems that are unique to African American children and their families.**

The committee would interface with other Board committees, CPS and local stakeholders to improve academic outcomes for Black children and create an environment for CPS and its schools that is welcoming to parents and community stakeholders. The Board Committee would be chaired and co-chaired by members of the Board of Education, with advisory members who may be selected from the community, Local School Councils, Parent Advisory Councils, the faith community, the business sector, the civic sector, local universities, etc. This structure would not impact the size of the Board of Education or provide an undue expense to implement.

**Rationale:** The Chicago Public Schools population is nearly a third Black, and our children are suffering from entrenched problems that have only been exacerbated by closing 50 schools in 2013 and shutting down from the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020-2021. Black children, as a group have suffered significant learning loss, trauma, isolation and reduction in social and emotional supports, economic loss and health and safety concerns. Here are some very stark examples:

- a. In 2021, 80% of Black children graduated from high school in 5 years, as compared to 85% of Hispanic children; 91% of White children and 92% of Asian children. (Block Club Chicago, 2021)
- b. African Americans comprised 36% of Chicago Public Schools but accounted for up to 61% of the 19,799 school suspensions in 2021. (Julian Johnson, Esq., 2021) Today, Black children only comprise 29% of the CPS population.(CPS 2023)

- c. African American children accounted for 63% of the 2,244 school referrals to police. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the detainees in the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center are Black. It costs \$4,397 per year to educate a child in CPS (Julian Johnson, Esq., 2021) and \$28,196 per year to detain them in the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center (National Juvenile Justice Network 2011).
- d. Between March 8<sup>th</sup> and March 12, 2021, a daily average of 89% of White students showed up to in-person classes, compared with daily averages of 77% for Latino students and 60% for Black students during that same period. Asian students had a daily in-person attendance average of 83%. (Matt Masterson, WTTW, 2021)
- e. Approximately 88% of school actions (ie, school closings, turnarounds, removing principals, etc.) have occurred at predominantly African American Schools. (CTU, 2013) These actions alone have disrupted student learning and further destabilized Black communities that have endured decades of disinvestment.
- f. A WBEZ investigative report has found that since the pandemic, the need for mental health services has increased, particularly for students from very low income families, many of whom are Black. The state is failing to ensure thousands of children get any follow-up help after mental assessments, let alone the type of intensive behavioral health support many need. Senator Lightford has called for public hearings and the creation of a 15-member task force to better understand the problems explore the issue, (including operational, programmatic and financial issues surrounding the program). (Sarah Karp, WBEZ, 2023)

These problems persist despite the fact that there are board committees to address the needs of all CPS students and their families. We need a standing committee that is laser focused on moving the needle on the issues that keep Black students from meeting their potential.

**2. Adopt our mapping proposal, which was developed taking into account the following criteria:**

- a. Each district must be compact, contiguous and substantially equal in population and consistent with the Illinois Voting Rights Act, pursuant to Public Act 102-0177.
- b. Communities of interest will be kept intact to the fullest extent possible
- c. School Board electoral districts will be aligned with other political and educational districts to the fullest extent possible. This will allow community residents and local leaders to coordinate policy advocacy efforts that may require interaction with multiple layers of government.

To this end, our map includes 10 districts, each comprised of 5 contiguous wards. To the extent possible, wards are clustered together by their majority/plurality racial composition. Our map includes 4 majority/plurality Black districts, 3 majority/plurality Latino districts and 3 majority/plurality White districts. Because ward boundaries were vetted for compliance with the VRA during the most recent redistricting process, we expect the proposed map to pass legal muster.

While we believe this map can pass legal muster, there are limitations. For example, Chicago is 29% Black, 29% Latino, 33% White and 8% Asian and others. The CPS population is approximately 36% Black; 47% Latino, 11.0% White and 6% Asian and others. Our methodology resulted in a map with 40% of the districts that are majority/plurality Black; 30% that are majority/plurality Latino and 30% that are majority/plurality White. At the root of this challenge

is the fact that the law requires that elected representative school board boundaries be apportioned based on the Census and that districts must be of approximately equal size. This is a situation that is worth further exploration with the Legislature and expert demographers and legal counsel.

In closing, we thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any questions regarding this statement, please feel free to contact Valerie F. Leonard, Co-Founder, Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting, at 773-571-3886 or [valeriefleonard@msn.com](mailto:valeriefleonard@msn.com). Our proposed board structure and mapping proposal are attached.

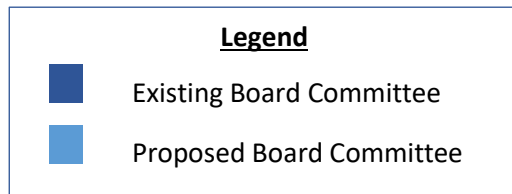
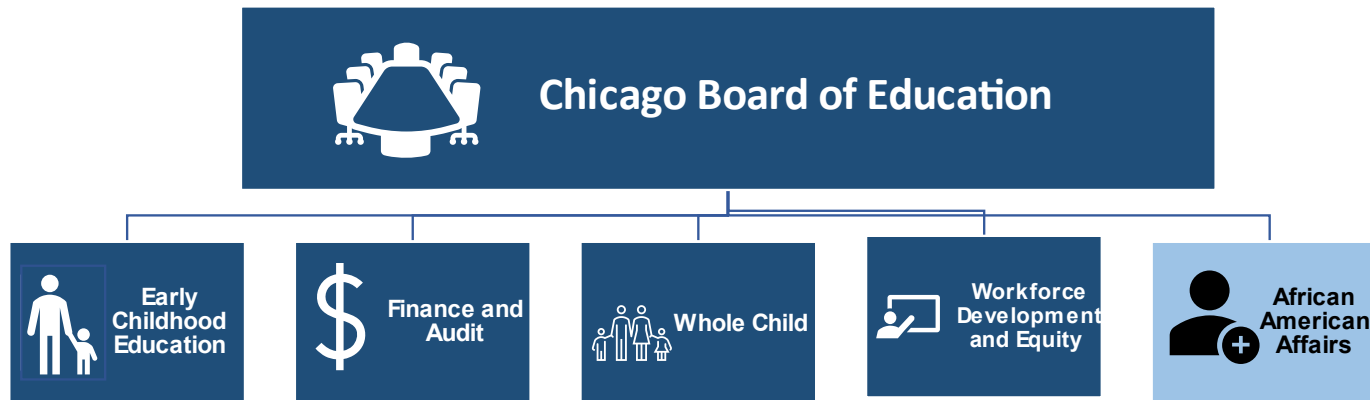
Respectfully submitted,

1. Tina Augustus, Member, Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting
2. Clifton Ballard, Founder, Dreamchasers United, NFP
3. Matt Brandon, President, Operation Neighborhood Safety
4. Karl Brinson, President, Chicago Westside NAACP
5. Apriel Campbell, Founder, The Ivy Group
6. Michael Cannon, Founder, C.A.N.D.O.R. Enterprises, NFP
7. Rosita Chatonda, Founder, CAUSE
8. Bernard Clay, Executive Director, Introspect Youth Services
9. Willie Cole, Member, Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting
10. Cecile DeMello, Executive Director, Teamwork Englewood
11. Michelle Dinneen-White, Founder, Play Smart Literacy
12. Audrey Dunford, Founder, Be Aud
13. Natasha Dunn, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Black Community Collaborative
14. Christyn S. Freemon
15. Mary Russell Gardner, President, Urban Technicians, LLC, Resident, Austin Community
16. Rev. Walter C. Harris, Pastor, Carey Tercentenary AME Church
17. Nicole Jeanine Johnson, The Lotus Lair
18. Joyce Lane, Resident, Bronzeville
19. Valerie F. Leonard, Co-Founder, Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting
20. Essie Leonard, Retired Educator, Chicago Public Schools
21. Brian Mullins, Founder, Brian Mullins, Citizens for Civic Education, Co-Founder, Black Community Collaborative
22. Nonprofit Utopia, LLC
23. Crystal Overton, The Overton Group Consultants
24. Dr. Carmen Palmer, PhD, Founder, Educational Village Keepers (EDVK)
25. Tanesha Peeples, Executive Director, The Roots Initiative, Co-Founder, Black Community Collaborative
26. Mattie J. Phillips, BA, MACM, DD, Senior Pastor, Jesus Word Center Church
27. Nachele Pugh, Co-Founder, John Walt Foundation
28. Tumia Romero, Resident, Austin Community
29. Queen V. ShaRize, Executive Director, BLACK - Building Leadership And Community Knowledge
30. Gloria Smith, Executive Director, the Black Star Project
31. Ruby Taylor, Executive Director, Taproots
32. Cata Truss, Resident, Austin Community
33. Dwayne Truss, Resident, Austin Community
34. Karen Cecile Wallace, Kenwood Oakland Community

35. Tawana Watts, Founder, BeBe's Ark
36. Kenneth Wesbrooks Founder and Chairman A Work of Faith Ministries, Inc.
37. Audrey L. Woodley, Founder, Changing Oasis, Inc.
38. Wanda Wright, President South West Area Civic League

cc: Hon. Don Harmon, Illinois Senate President  
Hon. Emmanuel "Chris" Welch, Speaker of the Illinois House of Representatives  
Members of the Senate Special Committee On the  
Chicago Elected Representative School Board:  
Hon. Mattie Hunter, Senator, 3<sup>rd</sup> District  
Hon. Elgie R. Sims, Jr., Senator, 17<sup>th</sup> District  
Hon. Ram Villivalam, Senator, 8<sup>th</sup> District  
Hon. Celina Villanueva, Senator, 12<sup>th</sup> District  
Hon. Dan McConchie, Senator, 26<sup>th</sup> District  
Hon. Seth Lewis, Senator, 24<sup>th</sup> District

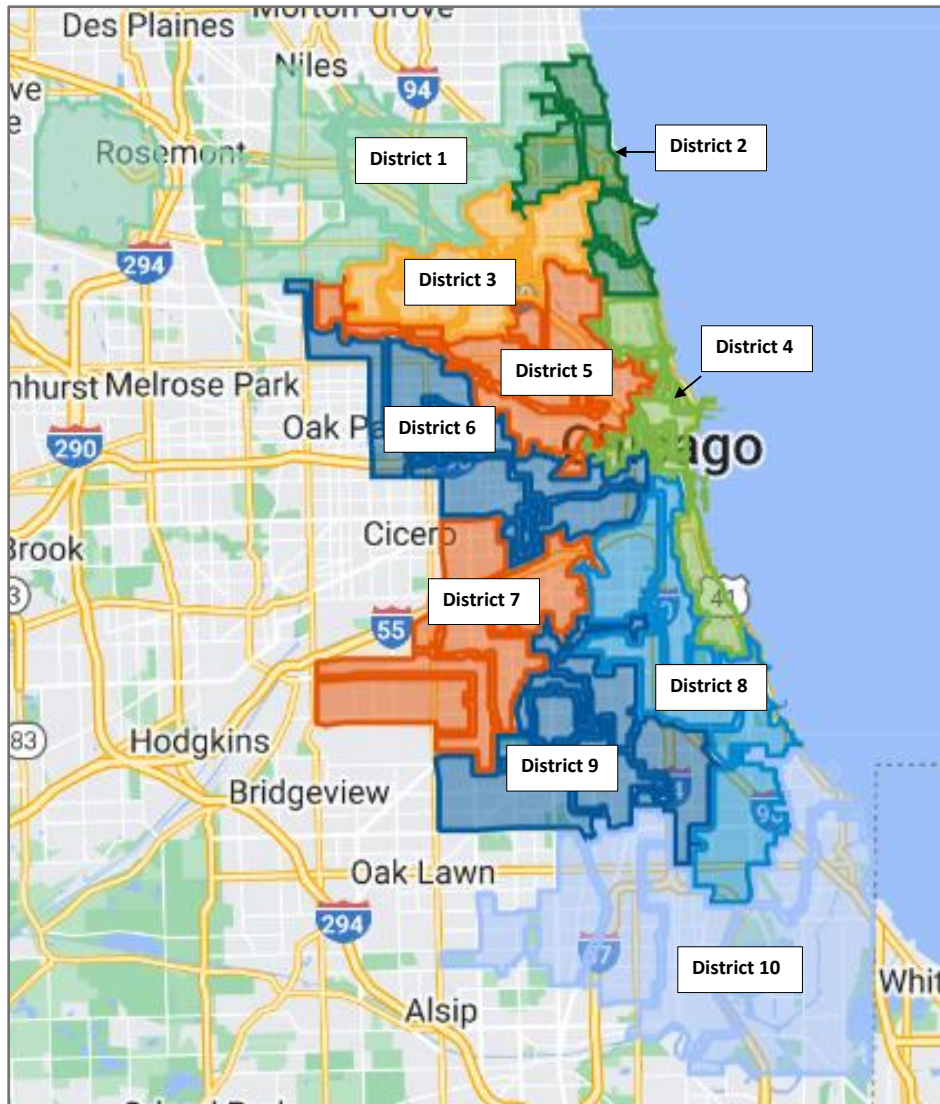
# Proposed Chicago Board of Education Structure





# Illinois African Americans For Equitable Redistricting

## Proposed Elected School Board Boundaries for Chicago Public Schools



District 1 41 <sup>st</sup> Ward 38 <sup>th</sup> Ward 45 <sup>th</sup> Ward 39 <sup>th</sup> Ward 50 <sup>th</sup> Ward	District 6 29 <sup>th</sup> Ward 37 <sup>th</sup> Ward 28 <sup>th</sup> Ward 24 <sup>th</sup> Ward 25 <sup>th</sup> Ward
District 2 40 <sup>th</sup> Ward 49 <sup>th</sup> Ward 48 <sup>th</sup> Ward 46 <sup>th</sup> Ward 44 <sup>th</sup> Ward	District 7 22 <sup>nd</sup> Ward 12 <sup>th</sup> Ward 14 <sup>th</sup> Ward 23 <sup>rd</sup> Ward 13 <sup>th</sup> Ward
District 3 30 <sup>th</sup> Ward 31 <sup>st</sup> Ward 35 <sup>th</sup> Ward 33 <sup>rd</sup> Ward 47 <sup>th</sup> Ward	District 8 11 <sup>th</sup> Ward 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ward 20 <sup>th</sup> Ward 5 <sup>th</sup> Ward 8 <sup>th</sup> Ward
District 4 43 <sup>rd</sup> Ward 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ward 42 <sup>nd</sup> Ward 34 <sup>th</sup> Ward 4 <sup>th</sup> Ward	District 9 15 <sup>th</sup> Ward 16 <sup>th</sup> Ward 17 <sup>th</sup> Ward 18 <sup>th</sup> Ward 6 <sup>th</sup> Ward
District 5 36 <sup>th</sup> Ward 26 <sup>th</sup> Ward 1 <sup>st</sup> Ward 32 <sup>nd</sup> Ward 27 <sup>th</sup> Ward	District 10 19 <sup>th</sup> Ward 21 <sup>st</sup> Ward 9 <sup>th</sup> Ward 10 <sup>th</sup> Ward 7 <sup>th</sup> Ward

Author: Valerie F. Leonard, Co-Founder, Illinois African Americans for Equitable Redistricting.  
Data Sources: City of Chicago Data Portal, Google My Maps

This map was drawn to align CPS Elected School Board districts with specific wards for greater accountability and coordination with members of the City Council while maintaining racial equity and balance. Ward boundaries were vetted for compliance with the VRA during the most recent redistricting process. Districts in blue were generally developed using boundaries for wards that are majority or plurality Black. Districts in orange or yellow were generally developed using boundaries for wards that are majority or plurality Latino. Districts in green were generally developed using boundaries for wards that are majority or plurality White. A link to the map on Google My Maps is found below.

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1p6oaDMbREAjXzekNERRgdtLgJrHMySk&usp=sharing>