





**IN RE: PENDING SCHOOL BOARD LEGISLATION**

**DATE:**

**April 05, 2023**

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WITNESSES: Cata Truss  
Dwayne Truss  
Claiborne Wade  
Valerie Leonard  
Elizabeth Triplett  
Kee Taylor  
Karl Brinson

DATE: APRIL 5, 2023

REPORTER: KORTNEY CHASE

APPEARANCES

SENATORS:

Kimberly A. Lightford, Chair

Robert F. Martwick, Vice-Chair;

Omar Aquino, Vice-Chair;

Mattie Hunter, Member;

Ram Villivalam, Member;

Celina Villanueva, Member;

Dan McConchie, Member;

ALSO PRESENT: Ashley Jenkins, Assistant

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STIPULATION

The hearing was taken at WESTINGHOUSE HIGH SCHOOL, 3223 WEST FRANKLIN BOULEVARD, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60624 on THURSDAY the 5th day of APRIL 2023 at 4:25 p.m. (CT); said hearing was taken pursuant to the ILLINOIS ules of Civil Procedure.

## 1 PROCEEDINGS

2 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you. Good evening,  
3 everyone. The Senate Special Committee on the  
4 Chicago Elected Representatives School Board will  
5 come to order. The Special Committee on the Chicago  
6 Elected Representatives School Board, will you  
7 please take the roll?

8 MS. JENKINS: Lewis. McConchie.

9 SENATOR MCCONCHIE: Here.

10 MS. JENKINS: Villanueva.

11 SENATOR VILLANUEVA: Here.

12 MS. JENKINS: Villivalam.

13 SENATOR VILLIVALAM: Here.

14 MS. JENKINS: Sims. Hunter.

15 SENATOR HUNTER: Here.

16 MS. JENKINS: Aquino.

17 SENATOR AQUINO: Present.

18 MS. JENKINS: Martwick.

19 SENATOR MARTWICK: Here.

20 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: All right. Thank you. We  
21 do have a quorum. We shall proceed to conduct  
22 business on this evening. Okay. I'm Senator  
23 Kimberly Lightford. I am the Chair of -- okay, it  
24 keeps cutting off. But if you guys don't mind,  
25 yeah, I'll keep talking if you can hear me out

1 there. If the mic goes out, just let me know if  
2 you don't, okay? So good evening and welcome to  
3 the first of several meetings of the Senate Special  
4 Committee of the Chicago Elected Representative  
5 School Board. On behalf of my colleagues, I'd like  
6 to thank George Westinghouse College Preparatory  
7 High School for hosting us on tonight, so thank you  
8 Westinghouse. As a bit of background, in 2021, the  
9 Senate and House passed House Bill 2908, which  
10 required the Chicago Board of Education to become  
11 fully elected by 2027. Starting January 15th of  
12 2025, a two-year hybrid period begins with ten  
13 members being elected to four-year terms, ten  
14 members being appointed by the mayor to two-year  
15 terms, and the board president being appointed by  
16 the mayor for a two-year term. Starting also, on  
17 January 15th of 2027, two years later, is when the  
18 mayor-appointed terms expire. The ten members and  
19 the elected at-large members will be elected to a  
20 four-year term. The General Assembly must comply  
21 to the July 2023 deadline to draw Chicago's school  
22 board districts. And based on Chicago population,  
23 the ten districts will be comprised of  
24 approximately 274,601 people, and the 20 districts  
25 will be comprised of around 137,301 people.

1 According to the census, the City of Chicago is  
2 35.9 percent White, 29.8 percent Hispanic, 29.2  
3 percent Black, and 7 percent Asian, and about 11  
4 percent describe themselves as two or more races.  
5 The school code requires that the districts be  
6 compact, contiguous, and substantially equal in  
7 population, and consistent with the Illinois Voting  
8 Rights Act. That brings us to today, which is the  
9 start of an exciting new era in community-led  
10 education. And as we start this transition to a  
11 fully elected Chicago Board of Education, this  
12 transition is about empowering families to elect  
13 leaders who reflect their neighborhoods, and that  
14 begins with these hearings where we will gather  
15 public input about potential district boundaries.  
16 Chicago's strength is in its diversity. And our  
17 goal in the coming weeks is to hear from a wide  
18 variety of stakeholders, including parents,  
19 education advocates, and community groups, and  
20 communities across the city. In addition to  
21 participating in these public hearings, we  
22 encourage you to visit our website at  
23 [www.illinoisnateredistricting.com](http://www.illinoisnateredistricting.com).  
24 [Illinoisnateredistricting.com](http://Illinoisnateredistricting.com), where there is a  
25 page dedicated to implementing new Chicago school



1 board districts. At that webpage, anyone can draw  
2 and submit proposed communities of interest, and  
3 upload district boundaries. So members of the  
4 public will also be able to draw their own district  
5 boundaries as well. All maps submitted through the  
6 portal will be reviewed as part of the public  
7 record. On a personal note, I am so proud to help  
8 meet this process, which is a continuation of my  
9 life's work to improve education for children, not  
10 just in Chicago, but across Illinois. I've fought  
11 to make sure our schools have the most qualified  
12 teachers, provide nutritious food at schools,  
13 prevent bullying and violence on school grounds,  
14 and worked to ensure Black and Brown children have  
15 the same access to a quality education as everyone  
16 else. The importance schools play in our  
17 children's future cannot be understated. With so  
18 much at stake, it will not be easy to balance  
19 various desires and perspectives. But we are  
20 committed to uplifting voices that too often go  
21 unheard and crafting a product our city can be  
22 proud of. With all that said, I'll now turn it  
23 over to our vice chair, which is Senator Martwick,  
24 and then we will hear from our second vice chair,  
25 Senator Aquino for a few remarks. Vice chair

1 Martwick.

2 SENATOR MARTWICK: Thank you, Chair Lightford.  
3 I appreciate you setting the stage for these  
4 hearings, and I want to add to your point about  
5 this process empowering families. It's been an  
6 honor to partner with you and all of our colleagues  
7 at the General Assembly to improve our education  
8 system by supporting educators and investing in  
9 students. While I'm incredibly proud to sponsor  
10 the legislation creating the elected school board  
11 in Chicago, I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge  
12 all those who came forth who never gave up, even  
13 when the fight seemed impossible. We're here today  
14 because of the advocacy efforts of students,  
15 parents, and community groups who believed in the  
16 importance of the democratic process and want the  
17 greater say in how our schools are run. We heard  
18 you, and we're not done listening. You know your  
19 neighborhoods best, and we're relying on you to  
20 provide input on what these new school district  
21 boundaries should look like. So please invite your  
22 neighbors to one of these meetings. Tell your  
23 friends to go to our website and submit commentary,  
24 upload your own map. The more people who weigh in  
25 the better. Again, thank you for being here today,

1 and I look forward to continuing this work with all  
2 of you, and I'll turn it back to our vice chair,  
3 Senator Aquino.

4 SENATOR AQUINO: Thank you Chair Lightford,  
5 vice chair Martwick. It's great to be here today  
6 as we begin this important process, which is the  
7 culmination of decades of hard work, as you both  
8 know. It's undeniable that our nation's schools  
9 are facing challenges and our students and parents  
10 are fed up. That's why this process is so  
11 important. It presents a once in a generation  
12 opportunity to change course and chart a new path  
13 forward that will transform the lives of our  
14 children, help revitalize our communities. The  
15 future of our city relies on us getting this right.  
16 And for that to happen, we need to hear from as  
17 many people as possible. I appreciate those who  
18 will provide testimony today and look forward to  
19 continuing this conversation in future years.  
20 Chairwoman.

21 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you. Thank you,  
22 Senator. Thank you to all of those who took time  
23 to be here today. And I just want to leave the  
24 script for a minute to say, you know, there's a lot  
25 of requests from a lot of people, although we just

1 want to make sure that we give you the best  
2 opportunity to have your voices heard. So if  
3 there's any inconvenience in scheduling for any of  
4 you, just want you to know, just because you live  
5 on the west side doesn't necessarily mean that  
6 you're not welcome to other meetings. The next  
7 meeting is on the south side of Chicago, following  
8 the north side, central Chicago, virtual, so there  
9 will be a number of opportunities that your voices  
10 can be heard. So we want the full city to know that  
11 they can attend a hearing at whatever location that  
12 they choose. And we look forward to hearing the  
13 testimonies, and we're excited to hear your  
14 testimony today. I know my passion runs high and I  
15 get excited, but I urge all the witnesses to please  
16 stick to the topic at hand as we focus on a  
17 successful implementation of this transaction.  
18 Okay. So let's begin with testimony, and I'm  
19 excited to see Mr. and Ms. Truss here, should have  
20 known that I would see you two. And why don't we  
21 have ladies first? So this is Cata. Do you want  
22 to come up from the (Inaudible). When you arrive,  
23 as I call your name, just come up to the -- our  
24 fancy table here, and please provide testimony.  
25 MS. TRUSS: Good afternoon. I want to thank

1 you all for this opportunity to come before you  
2 today. I'll get right to the point. The City of  
3 Chicago is probably one of the most segregated  
4 cities in the United States, I think, because I've  
5 traveled around the world. I would like to see the  
6 map drawn in such a way that we begin to address  
7 that issue. I'd like to see the map drawn where  
8 there is a few people from each of the communities  
9 to represent the whole of the communities. I think  
10 that this is a unique opportunity for us to have  
11 our White students, our Brown students, our Latino  
12 students, our Black students, whatever we  
13 categorize ourselves as, to come together  
14 collectively. I -- I -- I am afraid of maps that  
15 are going to be drawn to represent different  
16 classifications of people. I'd like to see the  
17 maps represent the makeup of the City of Chicago.  
18 I'm not sure what that would look like, but I do  
19 believe that we have a unique opportunity here to  
20 make sure that all voices are heard, and that  
21 people are working collectively, united together,  
22 to bring the best possible outcomes for education  
23 for our children. Thank you.

24 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you. Thank you.  
25 Thank you, appreciate your testimony. Dwayne,

1 you're up next.

2 MR. TRUSS: Is it okay, Madam Chairperson, if  
3 I defer to Valerie Leonard, and go after her?

4 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Don't change our agenda.  
5 You are next, sir, if you'd like to go --

6 MR. TRUSS: Just being a gentleman.

7 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Okay. Thank you. I know,  
8 but we have order.

9 MR. TRUSS: Yes ma'am.

10 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you.

11 MR. TRUSS: Good evening. Again, this is my  
12 wife. I just want to thank you all for taking out  
13 time from your schedule, and Chairperson Lightford,  
14 thank you for, you know, again sharing the  
15 prospective challenges you all have as -- as our  
16 elected representatives. My name is Dwayne Truss.  
17 I formerly served on Chicago Board of Education.  
18 Also served on Chicago Teacher's Pension Fund, and  
19 I've just got to say real quick -- I've got to give  
20 a shoutout to my wife, because the work that she  
21 did in terms of Westinghouse High School, coming up  
22 with a concept that if you think about it,  
23 Westinghouse was the last school that had a  
24 gymnasium and auditorium, and it's because of the  
25 work -- and also props to former Mayor Richard

1 Daley for working with us for Westinghouse. And  
2 also, I've got to give props out to Valerie  
3 Leonard, who was the one who laid the foundation  
4 for the latest school board, because of the way she  
5 designed a referendum for the 24th ward, which  
6 became precedent to able to allow every ward to  
7 circulate petitions and put their referendum on the  
8 ballot, so shout out to Valerie Leonard. I just  
9 want to say that -- that -- that obviously, yeah,  
10 I'm going to be really interested in making sure --  
11 sure that the west side -- make sure we have  
12 representation, because there's been a lot of  
13 challenges on the west side. We've had school  
14 closings, lack of resources, lack of type of  
15 schools. For instance, like we don't have --  
16 people talk about they want vocational education in  
17 our schools, which is now known as CTE. But we  
18 haven't had a CTE school since Westinghouse was  
19 repurposed from a CTE school to a -- a -- this  
20 mixed bag. But also, out of that came something  
21 pretty beautiful, because it is a CTE magnet. But  
22 those are some of the -- the -- the -- the wants of  
23 people in the community, and it's just being into  
24 how individuals, the people here, that would like a  
25 voice to say that, you know, we will love this. And

1 then going back to what my wife said about  
2 collectively being intentional, one thing we were  
3 intentional about in this Westinghouse, if you look  
4 at the student population at Westinghouse, it's  
5 pretty diverse in a sense, and it captures kids  
6 from different communities because, yeah,  
7 segregation as we know is -- is not a good thing in  
8 our communities. And the more we can be thoughtful  
9 about it, we can, but, you know, at the same time  
10 you've got to realize that there's those -- those  
11 certain realities. But we just want to be able to  
12 say, yes, we -- we will love to have the elected  
13 representative school board, who are obviously  
14 reflective of the people of the community, but  
15 especially on the west side of Chicago, when it  
16 comes to elections, you can't control that. We --  
17 we get it. We know that you all had that  
18 challenge, in terms of are you really going to get  
19 a reflective school board. But when I met with a  
20 state legislator a long time ago and they were,  
21 like, skeptical about it, because of the politics,  
22 and I'm not trying to be sexist or whatever about  
23 this, but my response to them is always like  
24 this -- politics and democracy are not always  
25 pretty or sexy, but my wife is. And we just have



1 to sometimes, you know, go through those different  
2 things. And politics and democracy and is still,  
3 as far as I'm concerned, the best system around.  
4 So I'm willing to say that, yes, we should have  
5 elected school board, and I do believe in my heart  
6 that it will -- people -- we can elect people who  
7 will work for the best interest of our students.  
8 And thank you all, again, for the opportunity to  
9 testify before you.

10 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you, Dwayne.  
11 Appreciate it. Our next invited guest is Claiborne  
12 Wade. He is First Chicago. Thanks for being here,  
13 Claiborne.

14 MR. WADE: Absolutely. Thank you. Good  
15 afternoon, committee members, and thank you for  
16 this opportunity to speak to you today. My name is  
17 Claiborne Wade. My wife and I are proud parents of  
18 four Chicago public school students. We live in  
19 your district, Senator Lightford. And I am here  
20 today representing Kids First Chicago's parent-led  
21 elected school board task force. Some of our task  
22 force members have had the pleasure to speak with  
23 some of you about this issue already, including the  
24 delightful Senator Martwick and Senator Villanueva.  
25 Kids First Chicago is hosting a town hall and panel

1 discussion next Wednesday, April 12th, at 6:00 p.m.  
2 This conversation will focus on Chicago's  
3 transition to an elected school board, parent  
4 priorities, and district creation. Committee  
5 members have been sent invitations, and we hope  
6 that you or your staff can join us to hear from  
7 hundreds of parents about their priorities for the  
8 transition to an elected school board. We have  
9 already received responses from some of you that  
10 someone from your office will attend. Kids First  
11 Chicago Elected School Board Task Force, a group  
12 led by CPS parents, believe the following  
13 principles are essential for state law makers to  
14 follow as they set out to create Chicago's school  
15 board districts. One, transparency and  
16 inclusive -- inclusivity. Districts should be  
17 drawn and presented to the public alongside  
18 relevant data with sufficient time for the public  
19 to provide feedback, and for revisions to be made.  
20 Two, fair racial representation as much as possible  
21 and con -- and consistent with legal -- and  
22 consistent with legal and constitutional  
23 requirements. The districts should be created in a  
24 way that takes account the racial makeup of CPS  
25 students and families. We believe that if

1 lawmakers adhere to these two principles, that CPS  
2 families will be able to present a better -- better  
3 represent and better serve by the future elected  
4 school board, leading to better outcomes for CPS  
5 students. The demographics of this -- demographics  
6 of Chicago and CPS are very different. CPS is  
7 nearly 90 percent students of color, while Chicago  
8 is roughly one-third White. The Black and Latino  
9 population are both at risk of being severely  
10 underrepresented compared to their share of the  
11 student population. Lawmakers should try to  
12 maximize the number of districts that are favorable  
13 for Black and Latino candidates to win, while  
14 adhering to constitutional guidelines about  
15 compactness. We have created prototypes set --  
16 prototype sets of district maps that aim to achieve  
17 this goal and serve as a model that if we can do  
18 it, that it can be done fairly. We will be  
19 submitting these district through the special  
20 committee map portal, and they should be available  
21 to view online soon. We encourage lawmakers to  
22 look at these examples before drawing your own  
23 district maps. I thank you for your time today.  
24 And, again, we hope that you or your staff can  
25 attend the virtual town hall next week, Wednesday,

1 April 12th at 6:00 p.m. Registration is available  
2 at [www.kidsfirstchicago.org/townhall](http://www.kidsfirstchicago.org/townhall). Thank you,  
3 committee members.

4 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you. If you would,  
5 please submit your written statement, if you'd  
6 like, to the committee.

7 MR. WADE: Absolutely. Thank you.

8 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you. And just for  
9 the record, let me say I will not be in town next  
10 week, so I won't be able to be at the town hall.  
11 And I -- I would love to -- to learn from the town  
12 hall, so stay in touch.

13 MR. WADE: Absolutely. Thank you so much.

14 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you. Ms. Valerie  
15 Leonard from the Illinois African Americans for  
16 Equitable Redistricting.

17 MS. LEONARD: All right. Good evening. Good  
18 evening. If I'd have known I was on Zoom, I would  
19 have brought my flash drive so people could see my  
20 map.

21 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Oh, you've drawn one  
22 already.

23 MS. LEONARD: I drew one already. I -- I got  
24 a flash drive, if you want I could upload it. Is  
25 that okay? Is that okay, or would that take too --

1 don't do it? Okay. All right, I tried. I -- I  
2 did submit it, though.

3 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Good.

4 MS. LEONARD: All right. Hi, my name is  
5 Valerie Leonard. I am the founder of Illinois  
6 African Americans for Equitable Redistricting. We  
7 are an ad hoc group that came together as a result  
8 of the last (Inaudible) redistricting process, and  
9 we thought it important to weigh in today, as it  
10 relates to the -- the elected representative board  
11 for Chicago public schools. All right. So we have  
12 had a chance to read Public Act 102-0177 HB 2908 in  
13 its entirety, and that is legislation, I presume,  
14 around elections in the State of Illinois. It  
15 apparently had some changes, as it relates to our  
16 elected board, here in Chicago. So we have read it  
17 and we have noted the transition of the Chicago  
18 Board of Education from a seven-member board that  
19 is currently appointed by the mayor of the city of  
20 Chicago. And for those of you who are here and  
21 you've heard this already, doesn't hurt to repeat  
22 it. And it's going to be transitioning to a board  
23 of education that would be fully elected by 2026.  
24 The legislation calls for ten electoral districts  
25 for the 2024 elections with two representatives

1 each. The mayor will select the president and one  
2 representative for each of the ten districts for  
3 the 2024 election cycle. There will be 20  
4 electoral districts established for the 2026  
5 elections with one representative each. The  
6 president of the board of education will run  
7 at-large, and will be elected by Chicago voters, if  
8 I understood that correctly. The legislation also  
9 calls for the creation of the Chicago board of  
10 education non-citizen advisory board, with the  
11 Chicago board of education diversity advisory board  
12 to provide non-citizen students with maximum  
13 opportunities for success during their elementary  
14 and secondary education experience. And that's a  
15 move that we really support. And we have also  
16 provided our map and proposal. You don't see it,  
17 but basically, our criteria are one, each district  
18 much be compact, contiguous, and substantially  
19 equal in population, and consistent with the  
20 Illinois Voting Rights Act, pursuant to Public Act  
21 102-0177. Two, communities of interest will be  
22 kept intact to the fullest extent possible. And  
23 three, school board electoral districts will be  
24 aligned with other political and educational  
25 districts to the fullest extent possible. This

1 will allow community residents and local leaders to  
2 coordinate policy advocacy effort that may require  
3 interaction with multiple layers of government. To  
4 this end, our map includes ten districts, each  
5 comprised of five contiguous wards. To the extent  
6 possible, wards are clustered together by their  
7 majority plurality racial composition. Our map  
8 includes four majority plurality Black districts,  
9 three majority plurality Latino districts, and  
10 three majority plurality White districts. Because  
11 ward boundaries were vetted for compliance with the  
12 VRA, or Voting Rights Act, during the most recent  
13 redistricting process, we expect the proposed map  
14 to pass legal muster. While we believe this map  
15 can pass legal muster, there are limitations. For  
16 example, Chicago's 29 percent Black, 29 percent  
17 Latino, 33 percent White, and eight percent Asian  
18 and others. The CPS population is approximately 36  
19 percent Black, 47 percent Latino, 11 percent White,  
20 and six percent Asian and others. Our methodology  
21 resulted in a map with 40 percent of the districts  
22 that are majority plurality Black, 30 percent that  
23 are majority plurality Latino, and 30 percent that  
24 are majority plurality White. At the root of this  
25 challenge is the fact that the law requires that

1 elected representative school board boundaries be  
2 apportioned based on a census and that districts  
3 must be of approximately equal size. This is a  
4 situation that is worth further exploration, and we  
5 will be reviewing this with a number of African  
6 American organizations that are represented here  
7 today, including the NAACP. While we have, you  
8 know, shared our map with you, we do have  
9 additional recommendations. And the first one is to  
10 create an additional advisory committee to  
11 specifically address the needs of children and  
12 their families who have been disproportionately  
13 impacted by COVID-19. This includes learning loss  
14 and trauma, isolation and reduction in social and  
15 emotional support, economic loss, and health and  
16 safety concerns. Creation of the elected school  
17 board of education has already resulted in the  
18 Chicago Board of Education Diversity Advisory Board  
19 to provide additional support for non-citizen  
20 students to make sure that they have the maximum  
21 opportunity for success during their elementary and  
22 secondary education experience. We need the same  
23 level of attention for all children in the city of  
24 Chicago, particularly those children in communities  
25 like where I'm from -- North Lawndale, East and



1 West Garfield, many of those children are totally,  
2 totally disengaged in the Chicago public school  
3 system. We need to raise that issue to the same  
4 level of urgency that we're dealing with students  
5 who are not citizens. You know, and we need to  
6 make sure that we are re-engaging them. So that  
7 needs to be elevated, not only from a legal  
8 perspective but needs to be also elevated to  
9 governance, just as we have done for the children  
10 of immigrants, you know, which we also agree with.  
11 I think that's very important. And then secondly,  
12 we need you to strengthen the relationship between  
13 the local school councils and the board of  
14 education to further amplify the voices of schools  
15 and their communities. This can be achieved  
16 through adding an at-large seat for LSC  
17 representation, or by developing an advisory  
18 structure, which LSC can provide more robust  
19 feedback. And I realize that what I'm sharing with  
20 you is adding yet additional bureaucracy, but it's  
21 really, really important that we not just rely on  
22 the Voting Rights Act and the chance of elections,  
23 to make sure that there's sufficient representation  
24 from marginalized groups. We need to be doing  
25 whatever it is in our power to make sure that we

1 elevate these concerns, to not necessarily meet  
2 them at the operational level, but they should also  
3 be elevated to the governance level. So in  
4 closing, I want to say thank you so much for your  
5 time and consideration. And as some of you have  
6 come to know, Senator Aquino I know has come to  
7 know, that I've never met a word that I didn't  
8 like, so I just want to thank you so much for  
9 bearing with me. And I have already submitted  
10 written -- a written copy of the map, as well as my  
11 comments.

12 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you. Thank you,  
13 Valerie. Valerie, your map submission and all the  
14 others will be uploaded, and it can be found on  
15 [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov).

16 MS. LEONARD: Okay. Awesome. Thank you.

17 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Please post to  
18 [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov). Our next guest that's giving  
19 testimony is Elizabeth Triplett, Chicago Teacher's  
20 Union. Okay. Is Ms. Kee Taylor also from the  
21 Chicago Teacher's Union? Are you Elizabeth?

22 MS. TRIPLETT: Yes, I am.

23 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Okay. Welcome, Elizabeth.

24 MS. TRIPLETT: Thank you. Good afternoon,  
25 everyone. Thank you for this opportunity --

1 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Can you turn  
2 your mic on please?

3 MS. TRIPLETT: Okay. I'm sorry. Okay. Good  
4 afternoon, everyone. And to Representative  
5 Lightford, and all those distinguished people on  
6 the panel, and to the audience, my name is  
7 Dr. Elizabeth C. Triplett. I am a teacher at Herzl  
8 School of Excellence. This is my second year  
9 there. I've taught at Melody High School -- I mean  
10 Melody School, for over seven years, and I've been  
11 a teacher in Chicago public schools for over 30  
12 years. It's a pleasure and I'm so happy to be able  
13 to testify that schools in North Lawndale really  
14 need to be representative, and the schools in North  
15 Lawndale need to have specific resources to address  
16 the problems of students and parents, because to  
17 me, education is a family affair. Parents are  
18 teachers first. Needs are great in my school  
19 because of historical neglect of appropriate  
20 resources, as noted by Jonathan Kozol in the book  
21 Savage Inequalities. He was featured on Oprah  
22 Winfrey show, so you know it's very important. If  
23 he was on Oprah, he was right. For years, schools  
24 in North Lawndales -- Lawndale, have not had  
25 sufficient resources to meet unique needs of the

1 students. For example, unfortunately, last year we  
2 had two students to die due to violence. Okay? I  
3 was blessed to be able to have a garden to -- with  
4 seven garden beds, and unfortunately, we had -- we  
5 dedicated those garden beds to the students in our  
6 community. In our community, we need extra  
7 counselors to deal with traumatic events. We need  
8 extra materials to help children deal with  
9 traumatic events. Presently, I am the parent  
10 resource teacher, and I listen to parents who  
11 complain of a lack of affordable housing, which has  
12 created to the instability of families. And also,  
13 the CPC, which I am working these major repairs, or  
14 needs to be replaced. Because of lack of  
15 resources, high traumatic events, schools in North  
16 Lawndale need representation that reflect the  
17 student population and their specific needs.  
18 That's why we need someone from North Lawndale --  
19 we need that map to definitely reflect that area,  
20 because needs need to be met -- met. And, also, I  
21 have lived in North Lawndale mostly all of my life.  
22 We moved out south for a couple of years to stay  
23 with my uncle, and I even remember, at Herzl, when  
24 Dr. King died, I remember the stu -- troops on top  
25 of Herzl school, and I remember how devastating

1 that event was, because we felt like he would bring  
2 some things that we needed in our communities, and  
3 things we need to survive and to compete. And as a  
4 young child, I think I was about 5 years old, I was  
5 overwhelmed by his death, because I felt a loss of  
6 hope and everything. So I'm so happy that  
7 yesterday his hope was realized, and I think we  
8 need to help a lot of students in that community in  
9 North Lawndale realize that they have hope, and if  
10 they come into beautiful schools with a lot of  
11 resources, a lot of things to help them feel like  
12 they are valued -- and I'm just going to say, as  
13 I -- when I -- I hold workshops with the parents  
14 and we talked about suicide, and how it's a  
15 suicide -- I can't think of the article right now  
16 because I'm kind of nervous, but it was a  
17 congressional -- congressional paper written --  
18 talked -- talked about how there's a high suicide  
19 rate among African American and Brown students.  
20 That's because they go into schools where they  
21 don't look too nice. There's not a lot of money,  
22 have been allocated to improve those schools, like  
23 the building I'm in. A couple of friends came to  
24 visit me. They said, oh, we thought that was an  
25 abandoned building, but that school has been on the

1 list to be improved and whatever -- and it has not  
2 happened. I think last year, I spent a lot of  
3 money trying to clean up and decorate around. But,  
4 you know, as a teacher for 32 years teaching in  
5 areas where there's not enough resources, it's  
6 extra stress, because we basically have to beg for  
7 what we need. We should be given what we need so  
8 we can compete as a global -- with a global  
9 society. We shouldn't have to beg for stuff. I  
10 shouldn't have to beg for this and that and  
11 everything. I should come -- I should be able to  
12 come in the classroom, have enough in the budget to  
13 have -- meet the basic needs. And as a teacher,  
14 I'm always going to go above and beyond, you know,  
15 try to look for resources, that's what I do. I've  
16 had -- I've had to do it all of my life as a  
17 teacher for over 32 years. So I would like for  
18 North Lawndale definitely to be given  
19 representation, and I -- I'm sorry, it needs to  
20 reflect the present students. It needs to reflect  
21 their needs. It needs to give students hope that  
22 people care about them. When I did my doctorate  
23 and when I did my research, I had -- it was on  
24 collaboration between schools, administrators,  
25 students, teachers, and communities. And I

1 remember interviewing a student at Collins High  
2 School and he said, they don't really care about us  
3 because in the chemistry lab, the Bunsen burners  
4 don't even have any worth. And when I go into the  
5 inner city in North Lawndale, when I go into  
6 libraries, no librarian. When computers don't  
7 work in a library, it just looks a hot mess,  
8 chemistry -- it's ridiculous. So we need to have  
9 resources, and our schools need to look just as  
10 good as the schools on the north side or in  
11 Schaumburg, Greenwood -- we -- we have to create an  
12 environment where kids feel like someone cares  
13 about them and wants to give them the resources so  
14 they can compete. So please, please, please,  
15 please make this map reflect North Lawndale, and so  
16 we can have someone who really knows what we need  
17 in our community. We don't need anyone to tell us  
18 or give us something. And as a -- also when I was  
19 doing my dissertation, I'm going back a long time  
20 ago. I remember when I first started at CPS, and  
21 they had a Persian (phonetic) role, they had a big  
22 old building, and they had all these resources in  
23 the back where teachers didn't even know about it,  
24 and it just -- a lot of that stuff went to waste.  
25 So -- but if you would ask a teacher what you need,

1 we don't need another set of desks. We don't need  
2 this. We need stuff where we need to be able to  
3 make these kids feel like they are valued. So  
4 that's all I want to say right now, and thank you  
5 all for listening and have a good one. And Happy  
6 Easter, all of that. I need to go home and cook.

7 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you, Elizabeth.  
8 Thank you for your testimony tonight. One of your  
9 colleagues is also up for testimony, Kee Taylor.  
10 Is Kee here? Hi, Kee. Come on up. While Kee is  
11 walking up, Ms. Triplett, I need to tell you that  
12 in 1971 and 1972, Herzl was preschool. Is it still  
13 there? It was a small yellow building that was on  
14 the curb.

15 MS. TRIPLETT: Okay. In 1968, I attended  
16 kindergarten at Herzl, and it was a trailer, do you  
17 remember? And now it's still -- it was a small  
18 building, but it --

19 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: It was yellow, and my  
20 sisters both went to Herzl.

21 MS. TRIPLETT: Okay. Well, it needs repair.

22 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: It does need repair. I  
23 think it looks the same way it looked when I was  
24 there in 1971.

25 MS. TRIPLETT: And plus, that was supposed to



1 have been a temporary place.

2 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Uh-huh.

3 MS. TRIPLETT: They supposed to have given us  
4 a permanent one and it never has happened, and we  
5 need it. Thank you.

6 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: You're welcome. Okay.  
7 Kee.

8 MS. TAYLOR: Hello. My name is Kee Taylor. My  
9 pronouns are they/them, and my students know me as  
10 Mix Taylor, because I stir the pot. I work at  
11 Michele Clark High School, I teach band. I'm a  
12 first-year teacher, and I'm here to advocate for my  
13 students' needs and what they need. We had a lot  
14 happen in my first year. One of the biggest things  
15 that, you know, I want to advocate for, is safety,  
16 and I mean consistent transportation to and from  
17 school. A lot of my students take Ubers to school,  
18 which creates issues with them getting to school on  
19 time, a lot of anxiety around dismissal. Not to  
20 mention the fact that, like, we've already had two  
21 school shootings this year. Both were at  
22 dismissal. And so, a lot of my students express  
23 anxiety around that part of our day. The closest  
24 Blue Line stop to Michele Clark is on Cicero, which  
25 is about a 12-minute walk, and you-all know how

1 Chicago winters are, so like, it's a thing.  
2 We're -- my students are advocating for robust  
3 community violence prevention. And that doesn't  
4 look like more police in our school. That looks  
5 like collaboration with organizations like A Long  
6 Walk Home, Circle with the Ciphers (phonetic),  
7 really like, community-based organizations. I was  
8 taken aback -- I've never been to Westinghouse  
9 before. This is a beautiful building. It looks  
10 very different from Michele Clark, though. We  
11 don't even have a field. My students who run track  
12 run in our hallways. So we have grave disparities  
13 in our district, and I want to make sure that when  
14 we draw these boundaries for elections, that  
15 Austin, North Lawndale, Garfield Park, is being  
16 represented, because a lot of these inequities are  
17 present in all of these neighborhoods, right? I  
18 also want to make sure that students -- our student  
19 populations who are consistently neglected, like  
20 our Black students, like our Brown students, are  
21 getting the representation that they need on our --  
22 on -- on our elected board. So that's why, for me,  
23 it's important that we really make sure that as we  
24 draw these boundaries, that we are prioritizing and  
25 centering students and communities that we've

1 neglected. That's all I have for you. Thank you.

2 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you. Thank you,  
3 Kee. Is Crystal Overton (phonetic) here? Crystal  
4 see the opportunity to present an oral testimony.  
5 Did she make it? Okay. Crystal is our last  
6 individual that filled out a slip to speak, but if  
7 there's anyone here that would like to provide  
8 testimony, please come on up. This will be the time  
9 for you to state your name, where you're from, and  
10 be able to provide oral testimony. Anyone? I  
11 thought so, Mr. Brinson.

12 MR. BRINSON: I'll be very brief. I'm Karl  
13 Brinson with the Chicago Westside Branch of the  
14 NAACP. I'm Karl Brinson, President of the Chicago  
15 Westside Branch of the NAACP. This will just be  
16 brief. Like Ms. Leonard and so many other friends  
17 of mine -- colleagues of mine, and soldiers of the  
18 struggle said earlier, we need to district this map  
19 to reflect the community in which it serves on the  
20 west side of Chicago. Everybody said -- I don't  
21 want to beat the horse, but so many disparities, so  
22 many inequities, so if we have an opportunity to  
23 create something that's going to create some --  
24 some fairness and some resources, and bring  
25 resources back to our side of town. We need to

1 have a map of representation that represents and  
2 reflects our community on the west side. So I just  
3 wanted to make that statement and just wanted to  
4 say that. And we hope to have some real good input  
5 and that the maps that are being presented from our  
6 communities are being seriously looked at and not  
7 just played with, or just like some formality.  
8 We'd like to make sure you're taking us -- what  
9 we've presented very seriously. And not only to  
10 the point of taken seriously, (Inaudible) submitted  
11 to support our causes. Thank you.

12 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you. Before we  
13 close out, is there any member that would like to  
14 provide any comments? Any members? No? Okay.  
15 Great. Before I just thank all of you for coming  
16 out tonight, I want to remind you that you are able  
17 to participate in any public hearing. And we  
18 encourage you to visit our website, and I'll repeat  
19 that once again, at [www.I-L-S-E-N-A-T-E](http://www.I-L-S-E-N-A-T-E-redistricting.com) --  
20 [redistricting.com](http://www.I-L-S-E-N-A-T-E-redistricting.com). I-L -- Illinois senate --  
21 [redistricting.com](http://www.I-L-S-E-N-A-T-E-redistricting.com), where there is a page that's  
22 dedicated to implementing new Chicago school board  
23 districts. And at that webpage, anyone can draw  
24 and submit proposed communities of interest and  
25 upload district boundaries. And so, the members of

1 the public will also -- we're trying to add on and  
2 make sure that we cover all of our bases and get  
3 the best input possible. We'll be adding on,  
4 members of the public will also be able to draw  
5 their own district boundaries as well. And all  
6 maps submitted through the portal will be reviewed  
7 as part of the public record. So I want to thank  
8 you all for coming out tonight to get us started.  
9 This is our very first meeting. I don't know that  
10 I announced the other dates and locations. Let me  
11 see if I can find them quickly. That's not where  
12 it is. Where did they go? Hold on, I know I had  
13 them here, I just don't see them anymore. And I  
14 have my glasses on. Oh, okay, at least that will  
15 help. I would like to provide all of the  
16 locations, so while we're looking them up, because  
17 I think it's important for you guys to know that.  
18 So the first one will be tomorrow, April 16th (sic)  
19 at 11:00 a.m., at Imani Village, 901 East 95th  
20 Street. That's again, 11:00 tomorrow at Imani  
21 Village, 901 East 95th Street. So we mixed some  
22 times up in here, so we can capture and work with  
23 schedules as best as possible. The following one  
24 after that will be next week on April 12th, and  
25 that location will be at the Copernicus Center,

1 5216 West Lawrence Avenue in Chicago. That one is  
2 at 4:00, the same time we're here today. We'll have  
3 one more in person on the following day on April  
4 13th, also at 4:00. That one will be at the  
5 National Museum of Mexican Art, 1852 West 19th  
6 Street, in Chicago. And then we will have -- and  
7 that one starts at 6:00 p.m. Oh, that's at 4:00?  
8 I thought I saw a 6. Well, it's at 6:00 -- I  
9 thought I saw a 6. That's at 4:00. But the virtual  
10 one is at 6:00. Our last and final virtual one  
11 will be on [www.ilga.gov](http://www.ilga.gov), and you will just go on  
12 for 6:00 p.m., for the subject matter of the  
13 drawing of the new Chicago Elected Representative  
14 School Board. And that will be on Monday night,  
15 April 17. That will be the last one that we would  
16 have. So today, tomorrow, two next week, and one  
17 on the following Monday, so I'm hoping you share  
18 that message with your colleagues in -- in the  
19 advocacy of education, who would like to present.  
20 If nothing else, if they don't want to come in  
21 person, if they could please take interest on the  
22 webpage, draw a map, have a conversation, because  
23 this is the first time, and we want to make sure we  
24 get it right, or as close to right as possible.  
25 Well, with that being said, there being no further

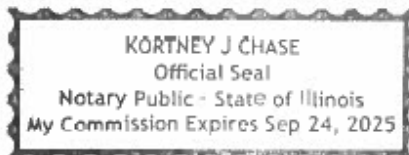
1 business to come before the senate special  
2 committee on the Chicago elected representatives  
3 school board, we are adjourned. Thank you.

4 (MEETING CONCLUDED AT 5:16 P.M. (CT))  
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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF ILLNOIS

I do hereby certify that the hearing in the foregoing transcript was taken on the date, and at the time and place set out on the Title page here of by me and that the said matter was recorded steno-graphically and mechanically by me and then reduced to type written form under my direction, and constitutes a true record of the transcript as taken, all to the best of my skill and ability. I certify that I am not a relative or employee of either counsel, and that I am in no way interested financially, directly or indirectly, in this action.



*Kortney J Chase*

KORTNEY CHASE

COURT REPORTER/NOTARY

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES: 09/24/2025

SUBMITTED ON: 04/14/2023



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