
IN RE: SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CHICAGO ELECTED
REPRESENTATIVE SCHOOL BOARD

SENATE HEARING

May 18, 2023

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APPEARANCES

Senators:

- Kimberly A. Lightford
- Seth Lewis
- Dan McConchie
- Celina Villanueva
- Elgie R. Sims
- Mattie Hunter
- Omar Aquino
- Robert F. Martwick

Witnesses:

- Sunny Trivedi
- Martin Klein
- Jianan Shi
- Eli Brottman
- Michaela Vargas
- Miriam Bhimani
- Corrina Demma
- Karla Vanessa Espinoza
- Valerie Leonard

Also present:

- Ashley Jenkins (Clerk)

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18
19
20
21
22
23
24

INDEX

PROCEEDINGS

PAGE NUMBER
4

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24

PROCEEDING

SENATOR LIGHTFORD: The Chicago Elected
Representatives School Board shall come to order. Will
the clerk please call the roll?

0:00:06

THE CLERK: Senator Lewis?

SENATOR LEWIS: Here.

THE CLERK: Senator McConchie?

SENATOR MCCONCHIE: Here.

THE CLERK: Senator Villanueva?

0:00:19

SENATOR VILLANUEVA: Here.

THE CLERK: Senator Villivalam.

SENATOR VILLIVALAM: Here.

THE CLERK: And Senator Sims. Senator
Hunter?

0:00:28

SENATOR HUNTER: Here.

THE CLERK: Senator Aquino?

SENATOR AQUINO: Present.

THE CLERK: Senator Martwick?

0:00:34

SENATOR MARTWICK: Present.

THE CLERK: Chair Lightford.

SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Here.

THE CLERK: There are eight members present.

0:00:41

SENATOR LIGHTFORD: We have eight members

1 present. We shall proceed to conduct business with the
2 quorum. The following credentialed media seek leave of
3 the committee to take photos.

0:00:52

4 Okay, leave is granted. Seeing that there's
5 no one here but us, we're good. So I'd like to call
6 this special committee of the Chicago Elected
7 Representatives School Board to order.

0:01:03

8 When we last met, it was to gather feedback
9 on a draft map that was released in conjunction with
10 our colleagues in the House. We appreciate those who
11 -- who took time to weigh in on that draft, and are
12 here again today with an updated map proposal for the
13 public to consider.

14 The proposal consists of 20 potential
15 districts. Current law requires that one member be
16 elected and one member be appointed by the mayor from
17 each of ten districts.

0:01:25

0:01:38

18 Lawmakers are seeking guidance on whether
19 current law should remain the same and, if so, guidance
20 on the best way to pair the 20 districts into ten
21 districts. The updated proposed map reflects seven
22 black African-American districts, five Hispanic Latino
23 districts, two Hispanic Latino influence districts, one
24 coalition majority minority district, and five white

1 Caucasian districts.

0:02:11

2 Overall, the draft map reflects 75 percent
3 majority minority districts. This is a working
4 proposal that is being put forth so we can gather
5 additional feedback.

0:02:25

6 I've said before that it will not be an easy
7 task to balance various desires and perspectives. And
8 that remains true. But that should not diminish the
9 ultimate outcome, which is a historic transformation of
10 our education system in Chicago that will empower
11 families to elect leaders who reflect their
12 neighborhoods.

0:02:48

13 I take improving education in our state
14 seriously. I fought to make sure our students have the
15 most qualified teachers, nutritious food at schools,
16 prevent bullying and violence on school grounds, and
17 assure black and brown children have the same access to
18 education as everyone else.

0:03:08

19 This process is a continuation of those
20 efforts. Let's remember we are working towards the
21 same goal. Before we hear from witnesses, I want to
22 take a minute to remind everyone of how we got to this
23 point.

0:03:25

24 In 2021, the Senate and House passed House

1 Bill 2908, which requires the Chicago Board of Elected
2 -- of Education to become fully elected by 2027.
3 Starting January 15th of 2025, a two-year hybrid period
4 begins, with ten members being elected to four-year
5 terms, ten members being appointed by the mayor to
6 two-year terms, and the board president being appointed
7 by the mayor for a two-year term.

0:03:59

8 In 2027, when the mayor appointed term
9 expires, the ten members and the elected at large
10 member will be elected to a four-year term. The
11 general assembly faces a July 1, 2023 deadline to draw
12 Chicago School Board districts.

0:04:18

13 Based on Chicago's population, the ten
14 districts will be comprised of approximately 274,601
15 persons and the 20 districts will be comprised of
16 around 137,301 people. According to the census, the
17 City of Chicago is 35.9 percent white, 29.8 percent
18 Hispanic, 29.2 percent black, 7 percent Asian, and
19 about 11 percent describes themselves as two or more
20 races.

0:04:55

21 The school code requires that the district be
22 compact, contiguous, and substantially equal in
23 population and consistent with the Illinois Voting
24 Rights Act. If you know someone who wants to provide

1 input but could not make it today, additional
2 opportunities to provide comment can be assessed at
3 www.illinoisnateredistricting.com. 0:05:24

4 That would be
5 I-L-S-E-N-A-T-E-R-E-D-I-S-T-R-I-C-I-N-G, dot com. Or
6 via email at Chicago, capital E-R-S-B,
7 Committee@senatedem.ILGA.gov. So that's Chicago,
8 C-H-I-C-A-G-O-E-R-S-B-C-O-M-M-I-T-T-E-E at
9 senatedem.ILGA.gov. 0:05:58

10 To date, the committee has received several
11 maps fully districting the Chicago Elected School
12 Board. Some have contained ten districts and some 20. 0:06:09

13 We have also received 18 maps from
14 communities of interest. Thank you so much for taking
15 the time to be here with here tonight. And I know like
16 -- I'd now like to go our vice chair, Senator Martwick,
17 for additional comments. 0:06:28

18 Senator Martwick?

19 SENATOR MARTWICK: Good evening, Madame
20 Chair, and thank you everyone for being here at this
21 latest hearing. You know, this map-making process is a
22 testament to the -- 0:06:41

23 I guess I didn't unmute myself, so -- thank
24 you, Madame Chair, and thank you, everyone for

1 appearing here to testify. This map-making process
2 that we're going through -- it -- it's a testament to
3 the advocacy efforts of the students, parents, all of
4 the community groups who fought for so long for a
5 greater say in how our schools are run.

0:07:15

6 Each draft of this map brings us closer to a
7 truly community -- community-centered education
8 experience that will help put students first. It's an
9 exciting transition.

0:07:26

10 It's going to bring much-needed
11 accountability and transparency to CPS. And I am
12 really proud to have been the chief sponsor of this
13 legislation that created this elected school board.

0:07:36

14 We've already learned so much throughout
15 these hearings, and I look forward to continuing that
16 conversation about the best way to provide equal --
17 equitable representation for all of Chicago's
18 communities.

0:07:47

19 So with that, I -- I thank everyone again for
20 being here. Thank you, Madame Chair, and I -- I yield
21 back.

22 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you, Senator
23 Martwick. Thank you. Senator McConchie, would you
24 like to add anything?

0:08:00

1 SENATOR MCCONCHIE: Thank you, Madame Chair.
2 Again, can I just ask, what is our expected plan going
3 forward, since this is subject matter on a revised
4 version of the map but in -- in respect to -- will we
5 have a bill that we will then hear in committee as well
6 at some point? We have an idea as what will be -- our
7 plan is?

0:08:20

8 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you, Senator, for
9 that question. We're still in our phase of gathering
10 information. We'd love to find out what all of those
11 who are here tonight has to say about the map that was
12 submitted.

0:08:39

13 And then based on the information that's
14 shared, we will then move forward. But tonight we're
15 still doing some gathering of information.

0:08:48

16 SENATOR MCCONCHIE: Okay. Thank you very
17 much, Madame Chair.

18 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you.

19 Okay. We can begin. So thank you again to
20 those who took their time out this evening to join us.
21 I look forward to hearing tonight's testimony.

0:09:09

22 And again, while I know passions may run
23 high, I urge all witnesses to please stick to the topic
24 at hand as we focus on a successful implementation of

Page 11

1 this transition.

0:09:22

2 With that in mind, I welcome Sunny Trivedi,
3 Indo-American Center, to the microphone. Good evening.

4 DR. TRIVEDI: Good evening, Senator. Thank
5 you for that. So my name is Dr. Sunny Trivedi, and I
6 am the community education program manager at the
7 Indo-American Center in the West Ridge neighborhood.

0:09:43

8 IAC is a community-based organization serving
9 the immigrant community in West Ridge and South Asian
10 immigrants through the metro area with legal services,
11 ESL classes, senior lunch program, chronic disease
12 intervention, and case management.

0:09:58

13 I'm here to express my enthusiastic support
14 for the current proposed Chicago Elected School Board
15 district map. We would like to support the map that
16 Grace Pai from Asian-Americans Advancing Justice
17 submitted as part of her testimony.

0:10:11

18 This proposed map, if enacted, will keep
19 communities of interest together, and particularly for
20 IAC, the Asian-American community of interest in West
21 Ridge.

22 One of the programs that I help to manage is
23 the parent mentor program, which recruits black,
24 Latina, and immigrant mothers to work in classrooms in

1 small groups or one-on-one with students.

0:10:30

2 Currently we are in two CPS schools, Boone
3 and Clinton Elementary, with 18 parent mentors who work
4 eight hours per week in the classroom, supporting
5 students identified as English language learners and
6 other students who could benefit from additional
7 support.

0:10:44

8 According to CPS school profiles of Clinton
9 and Boone, both area 90 percent low income, over 60
10 percent of students have limited English, and 46 and 36
11 percent of students, respectively, are Asian.

0:10:58

12 At Clinton, students speak 45 different
13 languages. And at Boone, students speak over 30.
14 Other schools in the area have similar demographics.

0:11:06

15 We're here tonight to support the
16 Asian-American plurality districts as designed in the
17 map submitted by Grace Pai from Asian-Americans
18 Advancing Justice. We believe that's essential to keep
19 the four elementary schools and Mather High School in
20 West Ridge together so that parents can voice the needs
21 of our local schools to an elected school board member
22 that most accurately represents the needs of the
23 concentrated Asian-American community in West Ridge and
24 Albany Park.

0:11:32

1 These needs entail the multitudes of
2 languages spoken, which points to issues such as
3 language access, the different immigration statuses
4 individuals occupy, and the high percentage of asylum
5 seekers and refugees who are navigating complex
6 bureaucratic systems and structures that they might not
7 be familiar with.

0:11:48

8 To be clear, I am not speaking to other
9 issues as they relate to other districts or
10 redistricting processes. I am only speaking to the
11 need to keep together the four proposed
12 Asian-influenced districts of West Ridge, Albany Park,
13 Chinatown, and Uptown.

0:12:02

14 We support our allies who have expressed
15 reservations in other districts. With this proposed
16 map, we are glad the community voice is kept together
17 and want to advocate that it stays together in future
18 iterations. Thank you.

0:12:13

19 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you, Dr. Trivedi.

20 Next we would like to welcome Michaela
21 Vargas, Latino City Council executive director.

22 MS. VARGAS: Thank you for the opportunity to
23 speak. My name is Michaela Vargas, executive director
24 of the Chicago City Council.

0:12:38

1 The caucus was created to fight for equal
2 representation, the well-being and betterment for all
3 Latino residents of Chicago. Our members urge this
4 committee to slow down the process of creating the map
5 for Chicago's first elected school board and go back to
6 the drawing board to develop a map that will accurately
7 reflect and give more representation to our growing
8 Latino communities.

0:13:07

9 The current draft map disproportionately
10 proposes seven majority white districts, seven majority
11 black districts, and six majority Latino districts,
12 which closely resemble the City's population.

0:13:22

13 However, the Chicago Public School student
14 population is 11 percent white, 36 percent black, and
15 47 percent Latino. The Chicago City Council Latino
16 Caucus urges the state to create an elected school
17 board map based on the City's student demographics
18 rather than its overall population.

0:13:43

19 As it stands now, Springfield has proposed a
20 map that creates a majority white school board, which
21 will govern the outcome of black and Latino students.
22 The caucus urges this committee to create a map that
23 will protect all communities, not unfairly dilute their
24 power. Thank you.

0:14:02

1 We provided testimony during the subject matter
2 hearings about the importance of transparency and
3 accessibility of the process for public input. 0:15:19

4 We urged the committee to provide the public
5 with ample time and opportunity to review and comment
6 on the final and proposed maps, to make the hearings on
7 the map accessible, and to make the underlying data
8 available to the public. 0:15:36

9 We're disappointed that this committee has
10 chosen to disregard these requests. The decision to
11 release the map and schedule this hearing less than 24
12 hours in advance is -- of this hearing is not
13 transparent and does not facilitate robust public
14 participation and input. 0:15:54

15 The committee's proposed map -- we are
16 concerned that the map has divided the Latino community
17 of interest in the southeast Chicago between Districts
18 F and J. That was kept whole in District S of the
19 committee's first proposed map. 0:16:12

20 The Latino community has historically
21 experienced voting discrimination and attempts to
22 dilute the effectiveness of their votes. And their
23 communities of interest should be kept together. 0:16:23

24 The Chicago Board of Education electoral

1 districts must take into account the need to overcome
2 the lingering effects of discrimination and offer all
3 minority voters an equal opportunity to elect their
4 candidates of choice. Thank you for your time.

0:16:38

5 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: And thank you for your
6 testimony tonight.

7 Alderman Nicole Lee of the 11th Ward?

0:16:52

8 ALDERMAN LEE: Good evening. Thank you.
9 Sorry, I was just unmuting everything here. I
10 appreciate the opportunity to -- to address this body
11 and I appreciate all the work that's already been done.

0:17:03

12 I represent the 11th Ward of the City of
13 Chicago, which under the newly drawn boundaries is the
14 first Asian majority ward in the City of Chicago. As I
15 mentioned, I appreciate everybody's attempt to redraw
16 the initial map to address the concerns about
17 representation.

0:17:17

18 And as I've been listening to this call this
19 evening, the one voice that has not been voiced yet is
20 the voice of Asian-Americans. And as the -- as the
21 first elected Asian-American female on the City Council
22 and the first Asian majority ward, it's very
23 disconcerting to me that this is not being addressed
24 and the current version of this map also does not allow

1 for our community to have a sufficient voice in the
2 school board.

0:17:46

3 I want to acknowledge and agree with the
4 concerns voiced by many about underrepresentation,
5 especially the Latino caucus, and the ability to slow
6 -- to slow this process down to allow for more
7 discussion and transparency.

0:18:04

8 Given the lack of consensus and the deep
9 concern from -- from others, especially CPS families
10 like mine, because both of my children go to CPS
11 schools, I'm asking that the vote be postponed so that
12 feedback can be given by more stakeholders and that
13 these concerns are fully addressed.

0:18:20

14 I know that there have been alternate maps
15 that have been proposed, like the one from Eli Brottman
16 and others, and I believe that we deserve some
17 additional time for Chicago residents to give feedback.

0:18:31

18 This fight for an elected school board has
19 been long fought for, and this map represents the first
20 and crucial blueprint for the future of Chicago public
21 schools and the communities they serve.

0:18:40

22 And ours in the Asian-American community is
23 certainly one that is also important and the fastest
24 growing in our region in the City of Chicago as well as

1 the State of Illinois. I thank you for your time. 0:18:51

2 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you, Alderwoman,
3 and --

4 I'm sorry. I don't know. Did you -- did you
5 all hear me? Okay. 0:19:07

6 Alderman Ervin? Okay. We'll come back to
7 the alderman. Next we will hear from Miriam Bhimani,
8 the FOIA Bakery. Miriam? 0:19:22

9 MS. BHIMANI: Hi. Can you hear me?

10 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Yes. Good evening. 0:19:25

11 MS. BHIMANI: Okay. Good evening. My name
12 is Miriam Bhimani, and I'm with the FOIA Bakery, a
13 group of researchers and parents who focus on public
14 education. 0:19:35

15 We aim to understand the choices powerholders
16 are making, to work together and add context to public
17 discussions for those who have to live with those
18 choices. Last time I was before this committee, the
19 general assembly had not yet released a map. 0:19:51

20 There was a possibility of a thorough process
21 that seriously considered the Voting Rights Act and CPS
22 students. Now, with two maps released, I urge this
23 body not to defer to the courts. 0:20:04

24 You have an opportunity to do to the hard

1 work and provide stability through a well-designed
2 school board map. This week, we submitted written
3 testimony to this committee and the House Executive
4 Committee.

0:20:18

5 Our goal is to adhere to three principles:
6 Comply with the state and federal laws; build 20
7 districts; create districts that contain substantially
8 similar number of students.

0:20:31

9 In service of these principles, we wrote a
10 program to generate maps. We provided this body with a
11 family of 1,000 maps that each have ten minority
12 effective districts.

0:20:44

13 Your new proposed map contains eight minority
14 effective districts: Six for African-American
15 districts and two Hispanic districts. The Voting
16 Rights Act demands that we create maps that allow
17 minority voters to select the candidate of their
18 choosing.

0:21:01

19 This is different from just racial
20 demographic metrics. We cannot flatten the analysis.
21 We must consider voter turnout. As an example, let's
22 look at District S on your new map.

0:21:15

23 This district is 65 percent black citizen
24 voting age population that would gone to Paul Vallas by

1 over 5,000 votes in the recent Chicago mayoral general
2 election. For those who tell me school board elections
3 will not be as acrimonious as this last mayoral
4 election, I defer to my over 20 years of experience in
5 public schools.

0:21:38

6 Parents are very involved. We are seeing
7 right wing groups attempting coups with school board
8 elections. District S also contains hyper-segregated
9 schools.

0:21:50

10 Twenty-eight of the schools have 90 percent
11 or more black students. In total, one out of every 12
12 black CPS students attends a school in District S.

0:22:01

13 How will the general population of students
14 be served in this district? By someone the white
15 voters choose. The Voting Rights Act demands we look
16 at how power translates to elected officials, not
17 simple racial blocks.

0:22:16

18 While we generated our first 1,000 maps, we
19 were hopeful that the general assembly would engage,
20 would choose to produce a map that complies with the
21 law. We have now submitted a second 1,000 maps that
22 also take into account where children live.

0:22:33

23 These maps still contain at least ten
24 minority effective districts, which is also still more

1 than the current Senate map proposed, while also
2 considering where children live in the City of Chicago. 0:22:46

3 The legislature's May 17th, 2023 proposal has
4 a district with about 2,000 students on the low side.
5 This is an 87 percent deviation from the ideal number. 0:22:59

6 Chicago Public Schools is a majority minority
7 district. Creating districts that are majority white
8 and contain very few kids in them is, to put it mildly,
9 not appropriate or responsible. 0:23:12

10 It is still our hope that the general
11 assembly chooses to produce a map that does not divest
12 from minorities in Chicago. We are confident that if
13 we can produce more maps with more effective minority
14 representation, you can too. 0:23:27

15 It is your duty to provide a map with
16 minority considered districts. Please rise to the
17 challenge.

18 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you, Miriam. 0:23:39
19 Alderman Jason Ervin?

20 ALDERMAN ERVIN: Thank you -- thank you,
21 Madame Chair, and members of the committee. Jason
22 Ervin, alderman of the 20th Ward, chairman of the
23 Chicago Alderman Black Caucus. 0:23:55

24 As it relates to the maps that have been

1 presented, while I -- I see you all have made
2 adjustments in what has happened, we still believe that
3 the representation overall in the African-American
4 community (inaudible) or respective population.

0:24:16

5 Furthermore, on the West Side of Chicago, the
6 two districts that are there, still are below our --
7 our targeted numbers, still in the 50 -- 50 percentage
8 range. However, we were able to draw additional wards
9 and districts and the proposal by IAFFR where using the
10 current communities of interest as designated by the
11 wards that have been remapped as an effective --
12 actually effective on Monday, have the communities of
13 interest utilizing that as a basis to create those
14 maps, I think is the fairest way, as this is something
15 that has been designated by the particular
16 representatives in the City of Chicago in whole.

0:24:56

17 Now, while you all do represent the State of
18 Illinois in its entirety, and some members of the
19 general assembly do represent forces of the City of
20 Chicago, we, the elected -- locally elected officials,
21 you know, have drawn maps of greater communities of
22 interest that are being woefully bifurcated in this --
23 in the maps that you have drawn.

0:25:16

24 For a point, some wards are entirely in one

1 district, whereas other wards, such as mine, are split
2 between five different districts. So we just think
3 that these maps could be tighter and have greater
4 communities together, and I -- and I believe that the
5 program using the current ward boundaries and making
6 the necessary splits to -- to meet the -- you know, the
7 two districts for the -- for the one would better
8 represent something that's already been tested and
9 presented and passed by the representatives of the
10 people in the City of Chicago.

0:25:50

11 So I know you guys have a -- a task at hand.
12 I would agree that adding a little bit more time and
13 potentially getting a little more sunlight to the
14 process may help generate a -- a better product that
15 all of us have to live with for the next ten years.

0:26:05

16 Thank you for your consideration, thank you,
17 Madame Chair, in this effort that you've been leading
18 for a number of years. We appreciate your support and
19 appreciate the efforts that you have put into creating
20 all of this legislation within the school board.

0:26:19

21 That does not go unnoticed, and we appreciate
22 your support. Thank you very much.

23 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you, Alderman.

0:26:26

24 Okay. So we will now hear from Corrina

1 Demma, Educators for Excellence.

2 MS. DEMMA: Hello. Thank --

3 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Hi. 0:26:36

4 MS. DEMMA: -- you so much for -- thank you
5 for inviting me in this space to participate in the
6 process. I am again coming to you from my kitchen. 0:26:46

7 I wanted to chime in and say that I know this
8 body has heard from me previously about concerns about
9 this process moving forward, talking about
10 compensation, non-citizen voting rights, and some
11 oversight on campaign finance. 0:27:06

12 But I'm really concerned right now about the
13 size of the map, and I'm unclear as to why it's drawn
14 for 20 districts when the law only required ten. And I
15 feel strongly that if you all went back and -- and did
16 that and went for the ten for the first draft, that --
17 that could potentially get closer to solving some of
18 these larger issues that people are raising. 0:27:32

19 I just feel like it's a jump too far, too
20 soon, and I would love to see a map that is in line
21 with what was required with -- with the law. So yeah.
22 That's my statement for today. Thank you. 0:27:49

23 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you.

24 Ms. Karla Vanessa Espinoza, Kids First

1 Chicago Elected School Board.

2 MS. ESPINOZA: Good afternoon, committee
3 members, and thank you for the opportunity to speak
4 today. My name is Vanessa Espinoza. I have two
5 children currently in CPS at Gonzalez and Lindblom
6 Academy and one student in college.

0:28:18

7 I am a long-time advocate for our children
8 education. I have served on (inaudible) backpacks,
9 Amigos de Gonzalez, and numerous other committees and
10 working groups associated with education at CPS.

0:28:35

11 I am here today representing the Kids First
12 Chicago Elected School Board Taskforce. Let me start
13 by acknowledging that I understand that you legislators
14 have a tough job right now.

0:28:49

15 This is a challenging task to accomplish in a
16 way that everyone will be pleased. We saw the new
17 draft map posted late last night, and immediately
18 noticed that you had increased the number of plurality
19 Latina district to seven where it had previously been
20 six.

0:29:09

21 This seemed intended to respond to many of
22 the concerns you have heard from CPS parents on the
23 topic. However, two of these districts have such thin
24 margins that when you consider citizen voting age

1 population, they probably give you a slight advantage
2 to white borders.

0:29:30

3 Meaning there are now only five primarily
4 Latina districts. We are CPS parents. We don't have
5 the expertise on this subject that civil rights
6 organization have.

0:29:43

7 And we don't have access to the voting
8 history and modeling that a political organization has.
9 We merely come here to tell you what CPS parents want.

0:29:54

10 But to our amateur eyes, this looks like a
11 cynical maneuver to quiet the complaints while still
12 maintaining the inequity of your first draft. The fact
13 is that we don't know what criteria you use in creating
14 this district, because you have not told us.

0:30:14

15 Your committee is preparing to vote on
16 district maps that will be -- that will perpetrate the
17 inequalities and imbalance of power that have existed
18 in the City of Chicago for far too long.

0:30:29

19 If you vote to approve these district maps,
20 you are setting the stage for -- for a plurality white
21 school board to make decision about policy and how to
22 invest resources for a school body that is 90 percent
23 children of color.

0:30:46

24 You promised us an elected representative

1 school board. But you are not delivering on that
2 promise. Representation matters. This map is not
3 representative for the 300,000 CPS students of color
4 and their families.

0:31:04

5 We have come to these hearings and told you
6 repeatedly that CPS parents strongly prefer a board
7 that reflect their students, share experiences, and
8 understand the communities they are from.

0:31:20

9 They Kids First Chicago Elected School Board
10 Taskforce even submitted a set of district maps as an
11 example that you can take the diversity of CPS families
12 into account as you are drawing district and still
13 adhere to the constitutional requirements guiding
14 district creation.

0:31:41

15 Our maps have eight primarily Latina
16 districts, seven primarily black district, and have
17 substantially equal population in each district.
18 Unlike your latest draft, our maps also maintain the 15
19 percent point margins in Latina and black plurality
20 districts.

0:32:02

21 Creating a stronger opportunity for -- for
22 representation for protected minority groups. This is
23 critical. Because District E and P, in your latest
24 draft, are essentially white plurality districts.

0:32:20

1 Although the Latina population, there is
2 being misrepresented as a plurality. They have a 1
3 percent and 2 percent advantage on paper, which is
4 within the -- the margin of error of census count.

0:32:33

5 Moreover, District P includes Back of the
6 Yards where many of the Latina families who enroll in
7 CPS are non-citizens and will not be able to vote
8 despite the population percentages including them.
9 This map is a misrepresentation of racial equity and
10 feels deliberately disingenuous.

0:32:58

11 Yet after hearing repeatedly from parents
12 asking you to consider the disparities in demographics
13 and seeing an example showing that it could reasonably
14 be addressed, you have put forth another proposal that
15 attempts to hide the problem.

0:33:15

16 CPS parents understandably feel that you have
17 been disregarding their voices throughout this process.
18 And now, in your final actions as a committee, you have
19 disrespected us by holding your final draft secret for
20 the past week, shutting off any further possibility of
21 public input, before you rush this through a vote at
22 the last minute and leave Springfield tomorrow.

0:33:42

23 I am sure most of you have heard of the term
24 anti-racism. The idea is that it's not good enough to

1 just not be racist, because racism exists in the
2 policies and the structures around us.

0:33:59

3 You have to actually work to dismantle it
4 where it exist. Practicing anti-racism through policy
5 means that we have to find ways in which policies
6 produce racist consequences regardless of whether or
7 not those consequences are intentional.

0:34:19

8 You are creating a system by which the white
9 population will be overrepresented in a governing body
10 whose decision disproportionately affects children of
11 colors. It does not matter if this is intentional, it
12 is perpetrating systemic advantages to Chicago's white
13 population at the expense of people of color.

0:34:41

14 Therefore, it is racist. And to practice
15 anti-racism in policy, you have to knowingly work to
16 dismantle those systemic -- systemic inequities.

0:34:53

17 You committee members had the opportunity
18 when you drew these districts, but you have not had the
19 courage to do so yet. The district maps that you
20 created and are about to vote on only include five
21 districts that are minority or a strong plurality
22 Latina.

0:35:11

23 Five out of 20. Or 25 percent. And they are
24 meant to represent the 47 percent of the student

1 population that is Latina. That is unconscionable. 0:35:24

2 Ugh. I know it's a lot. I'm sorry. But
3 this is very important to me. We believe that a school
4 board that reflects CPS diversity can better understand
5 the needs of children in our communities and will
6 deliver better result for our students. 0:35:44

7 We urge you to vote no on this proposal and
8 go back to the drawing board to come up with a map that
9 better reflects CPS families, including at least eight
10 primarily Latina district with solid margins and
11 maintaining the seven primarily black district that you
12 already created. 0:36:04

13 The law gives you until July 1st to complete
14 this task. So please take that additional time to get
15 this right for our children. Thank you. Buenas
16 tardes. 0:36:16

17 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you, Madame.

18 MS. ESPINOZA: Mm-hmm.

19 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Jamie Groth Searle, the
20 Southwest Collective. Forgive me if I chopped that up
21 a little bit. The Southwest Collective? Ms. Jamie?
22 Okay. If -- if she hops on, we'll return. 0:36:41

23 Rousemary Vega, raise your hand. No
24 Rousemary tonight? Okay. Jianan Shi, raise your hand?

1 MR. SHI: Yes. Jianan Shi.

2 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Oh. Sorry --

3 MR. SHI: I --

4 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Jianan Shi. 0:37:00

5 MR. SHI: No worries. No worries.

6 Good afternoon, members of the Senate Special
7 Committee on the Chicago Elected Representatives School
8 Board. My name is Jianan Shi, and I'm the executive
9 director of Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public
10 Education. 0:37:11

11 And today I'm speaking on behalf of Raise
12 Your Hand, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, North
13 Side Action for Justice, and Illinois Families for
14 Public Schools. As organizations that represent and
15 serve Chicago public school parents, we continue to be
16 concerned about the elected school board districts. 0:37:26

17 Historically, mayoral control has deeply
18 exacerbated the racial inequities of the City. We have
19 seen chronic financial mismanagement, the destruction
20 of local neighborhood schools, and policies that
21 disproportionately impact black and brown families. 0:37:39

22 We've spoken previously about compensation
23 and non-citizen voting and we'll continue to work on
24 those issues. We have also shared our concerns about

1 specific geographies that are underrepresented and have
2 urged legislators to engage with organizations that
3 already have deep relationships and have served those
4 communities for decades.

0:37:57

5 We expected more significant revisions with
6 the second draft. While we have seen improvements on
7 the Northwest Side, we are still concerned that the
8 districts are not drawn in a way that maximizes the
9 agency of black and brown families who have been
10 historically harmed by mayoral control.

0:38:12

11 We need a map that mirrors the progressive
12 policies and racial demographics of CPS. We need more
13 Latino representation that does not come at the cost of
14 losing black majority districts.

0:38:23

15 There needs to be continued input from the
16 community. Twenty-four hour notice is not sufficient.
17 And also, there is an 8:30 a.m. house meeting now on
18 this.

0:38:31

19 We are concerned about the Southwest
20 districts as it continues to favor wealthier, whiter
21 neighborhoods. While there are Latino pluralities and
22 majorities, folks that do not have students in CPS will
23 continue to have a disproportionate voice.

0:38:45

24 We're also concerned about black

1 representation in agency as Morgan Park, Garfield Park,
2 and Austin communities are included where there are
3 districts where their voices are more likely to be
4 erased by whiter and more affluent communities.

0:38:59

5 These issues need to be addressed in the next
6 draft of the map alongside more information about the
7 election process and how these districts will be
8 combined. Thank you.

0:39:08

9 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Sorry. Ms. Valerie
10 Leonard, Illinois African-Americans for Equitable
11 Redistricting? Hi, Valerie. Unmute yourself, Valerie.

12 MS. LEONARD: Thank you. How are you? How's
13 everybody? Okay. I -- I just want to say thank you so
14 much for holding these hearings. And as you probably
15 know, I'm a little bit disappointed to see that there
16 hasn't been -- I -- I guess there's significant change,
17 but then sometimes the more things change, the more
18 they stay the same.

0:39:56

19 When we look at the impact and the goals that
20 we had in mind, none of those really have come to
21 fruition with the new map. And is it okay if I share
22 my screen?

0:40:09

23 I -- I just want to kind of give a review and
24 then some -- some thoughts. Is that okay? I'll try.

1 Okay. All right. If it's not okay, I'm sure you know
2 how to turn it off.

0:40:29

3 All right. And then I will make sure that I
4 share this, you know, afterwards. All right. So we
5 looked at your current proposal, and our first issue is
6 it still doesn't follow the law that it was intended to
7 fulfill.

0:40:47

8 The map is drawn with 20 districts, and
9 according to the law, it should start off with ten
10 districts and then morph into 20 in 2026. All right?

0:41:02

11 And again, the map proposal still doesn't
12 address the structural flaws that we raised last week.
13 We raised six issues last week, and the only one that
14 was addressed was the request for data behind the
15 numbers, and we appreciate that.

0:41:20

16 Issue number three. The map doesn't indicate
17 how the 20 districts are going to be transitioned and
18 into -- well, it doesn't show how 20 districts are
19 going to be used to elect ten people nor how ten
20 districts will be transitioned into 20.

0:41:39

21 So as you know, the law provides that the
22 mayor is going to appoint 11 people, one of which will
23 be the president, and then one person from each of the
24 ten districts. And the other ten will sit for

1 election. 0:41:57

2 So it's not clear will the mayor appoint ten
3 people to fill the vacancies of ten districts while ten
4 people -- while ten of the districts will hold
5 elections in 2024. Will the 20 districts be coupled. 0:42:11

6 And if so, you know, will that effectively
7 give us ten districts now and then we can uncouple them
8 in two years. And then if the districts will be
9 coupled, what would that pairing look like. 0:42:27

10 So I was expecting something that looked a
11 little bit like this. You -- you know, typically when
12 the state does their redistricting process, we see a
13 Senate map and then, you know, nested within the Senate
14 maps, we will have two districts being the
15 representative districts. 0:42:46

16 So for me personally, I was expecting
17 something like that. I was expecting ten districts to
18 be drawn, and then they would be subdivided into two to
19 make the 20. 0:43:01

20 And if that's your intent, I -- I think that
21 would be very, very, very challenging to do within less
22 than 24 hours' time. And also given the way the
23 districts are drawn, given the shapes, given how
24 they're -- what, how they're arranged, for lack of a

1 better word, I think it'd be very, very challenging. 0:43:28

2 You know, I -- I ran this through my head and
3 tried to do it at least ten times, and -- and I
4 couldn't come up with any pairing that made sense, and
5 at a couple points, I really ran out of places to go. 0:43:45

6 I -- I couldn't find a contiguous area to --
7 to match one to another. But, you know, you guys --
8 I'm sure you'll run your own exercise. That's what I
9 found. 0:43:55

10 You know, maybe my eyes aren't as good, and
11 I'm not a mapper, but I -- I think that current
12 configuration is going to be very, very challenging for
13 you to find two districts to put together. 0:44:07

14 And then as we found in the first draft, only
15 11 of 50 wards, or 22 percent of the wards, are
16 actually -- you know, have all of their land mass
17 within one district. Ideally, you would expect that 40
18 of the 50 wards would have their boundaries fully
19 contained in 20 districts. 0:44:29

20 Issue number six. The map breaks up
21 communities. You completely disregard the existing
22 wards as communities of interest as we indicated. And
23 we also found in some instances the districts might
24 include as many as seven -- as many as seven wards. 0:44:49

1 And then other instances, some districts
2 would have as few as three, and there doesn't seem to
3 be a rhyme or rhyme as to how the wards are distributed
4 within the districts or vice-versa.

0:45:03

5 And this slide here shows you, you know, Map
6 1 versus Map 2, both superimposed over our ward
7 boundaries. And as you can see, the situation is not
8 much improved.

0:45:18

9 You know, there are still many, many pockets
10 where small groups of voters would be left out
11 completely of their -- you know, the center of gravity
12 for their wards. And then they wouldn't really be able
13 to make that big of a difference in the larger
14 district.

0:45:36

15 And this happens regardless of race,
16 regardless of community. I -- I think, you know,
17 there's something else going on with the way these
18 boundaries were drawn.

0:45:47

19 And the only thing is I'm not privy to what
20 the building blocks were for -- you know, for these
21 districts, so I couldn't comment any further. I just
22 know many, many communities across the City have been
23 separated.

0:46:02

24 Number seven. The map leaves many unanswered

1 questions. For example, will we have to vote for
2 candidates in multiple board electoral districts, or
3 will we only see candidates on the ballots whose
4 district have some land mass in our ward or in our
5 precinct.

0:46:22

6 What happens to those of us who live in areas
7 where we happen to be separated from the rest of our
8 wards. Not only a very small section of a larger
9 school district that is culturally and politically
10 different from our wards.

0:46:35

11 And clearly, regardless of race -- regardless
12 of culture, not every voter will have the opportunity
13 to elect the candidate of his or her choice given the
14 way those lines are drawn.

0:46:51

15 And issue number eight. As we said before,
16 your proposal doesn't encourage collaboration between
17 the elected officials, meaning the aldermen and the
18 elected school board representative.

0:47:03

19 You know, with so many unrelated boundaries,
20 at least if there is a relationship, I can't tell with
21 my naked eye. The service requests are bound to slip
22 between the cracks, and we're at a point in our society
23 and I guess in this time where our schools are being
24 asked to address a lot of social problems.

0:47:25

1 And we're going to need all hands on deck.

2 And I think it's really important that our schools

3 begin to collaborate more with our aldermen.

0:47:34

4 But that -- that's a better idea. And if

5 you're going to change the law, here's some ways you

6 can do it. You can draw ten districts with five wards

7 nested within them.

0:47:50

8 You can elect one representative from each

9 district as you outlined and then, you know, have the

10 other representative -- ah, representative be selected

11 by the mayor.

0:48:04

12 You can create a standing African-American

13 affairs committee of the Board of Education. And then

14 here's another place where you might consider changing

15 the law.

0:48:13

16 Keep the same districts you use for 2024 for

17 2026 and then allow for the election of the 10

18 remaining open seats, and you still keep your members

19 at 20. Another alternative so that you increase

20 representation -- right, and people can work even more

21 closely with neighbors that are even closer to them --

22 you can expand the number of members on the board to 25

23 and have 25 districts for two wards.

0:48:46

24 And for those of you who think that that's

1 too unwieldy, I just look at my own alma mater, Spelman
2 College, teeny tiny college in Atlanta. We have 25
3 board members.

0:48:58

4 And since I graduated three days ago, we have
5 more than tripled the endowment, because those 25 board
6 members really, really dig in and do the work. And we
7 have a heck of a lot of work ahead of us.

0:49:14

8 The current structure of the board, you have
9 seven members of the board, you have four committees,
10 and you can see everything in dark blue -- those are
11 existing. The light blue, we're asking for a permanent
12 or a standing committee that focuses purely on
13 African-American affairs.

0:49:36

14 This committee would be led by two board
15 members. And then the staff being -- and for a lack of
16 a better word, but the other membership would include
17 people from the packs, people from the cacks, other
18 organizations, parent groups, civic groups, as well as
19 business leaders.

0:49:56

20 We want to make sure that, you know, the
21 board is well-informed from people on the ground who
22 have lived experiences as well as, you know, positive
23 solutions that they can bring to the table.

0:50:11

24 And our last iteration -- we've gone through

1 several iterations of this map. We've provided you
2 with three. This last map was done as a result of
3 conversations with several members of the black
4 community, several members of the Latino community,
5 several members of the Asian community, including
6 Chinatown and on the North Side.

0:50:37

7 It's still not perfect, but we believe that
8 this map is representative of major communities all
9 around the City. We have a total of three majority
10 black districts, three majority white districts, with
11 some pluralities, I -- I guess in there, as well as
12 three major- -- I'm sorry -- four majority white
13 districts with a couple pluralities in there and then
14 three Latino districts.

0:51:09

15 So we believe the -- the black and Latino
16 populations are represented equitably here, but we also
17 have listened to, you know, the Asian community, we've
18 observed presentations from the Jewish community, and
19 we try to, you know, keep as many of those cultural
20 clusters together as possible.

0:51:35

21 And you know, here are, you know, two other
22 alternatives. So with that said, that completes my
23 presentation. I'll make sure that you guys get a
24 written statement. And if there any questions, I'll

1 feel free to answer them.

2 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you for your
3 testimony and for sharing your map, Valerie.

0:51:55

4 Eli Brottman?

5 MR. BROTTMAN: Hi. Good evening, everyone.
6 Thank you, Madame Chair, and thank you to everyone on
7 the committee for listening tonight and for the
8 opportunity to be here.

0:52:16

9 I want to start by thanking everyone for all
10 the work they've done on the maps so far. I know
11 there's been some edits that have been made amidst a
12 busy season with the budget and everything else going
13 on, so I want to acknowledge and thank you for that.

0:52:34

14 I do see some improvements on the map, in the
15 map on the North Side, as somebody else had mentioned.
16 However, I do have significant concerns about the map
17 that's proposed. Last week we had a hearing, and many
18 witnesses testified to various concerns they had,
19 including the districts span 70 blocks from north
20 south, that there were only five Latino majority
21 districts, that the majority black districts have very
22 weak majorities, just slightly over 50 percent, and
23 that communities of interest, particularly communities
24 of color were subpar, that there was not an Asian

1 plurality district. 0:53:12

2 And unfortunately, none of those things have
3 been rectified in this new version of the map. In
4 fact, the maps are largely the same with the exception
5 of some differences on the North and Northwest Sides. 0:53:24

6 When going through the new map piece by
7 piece, I saw districts centering on Bridgeport area
8 some 71 blocks from north to south, starting north in
9 River North and going pretty far south into the
10 Southwest Side. 0:53:40

11 Similarly, the district amongst River North
12 going Back of the Yards spans 71 blocks from north to
13 south. That's nearly 9 miles. This isn't
14 representative of the people. It is going to be
15 districts (inaudible) that are likely to elect people
16 from the River North area quite possibly and that
17 fractures communities of color, significantly
18 decreasing the odds that they will be represented on
19 the board. 0:54:16

20 It's of great concern to me, and I know to so
21 many others, that all of this feedback was provided and
22 yet it hasn't been implemented. I know, as I said
23 before, it's a very busy time. 0:54:30

24 You're trying to pass a budget. Session is

1 scheduled to end tomorrow. And for this reason, I
2 would urge you to (inaudible) session to late June to
3 have more time to work on these maps.

0:54:46

4 This will enable the chambers to gather more
5 feedback from the public, to consider other maps that
6 have been submitted, including the one by myself and
7 many others who have taken lots of time to produce maps
8 that are designed to be more representative, and will
9 allow more time to be given as notice to members of the
10 public before further hearings so they have time to
11 find time in their schedule to testify.

0:55:17

12 The hearing today was posted around 10:00
13 last night. The hearing for tomorrow morning in the
14 House was just posted. It's hard for many people to
15 testify with such little notice, and that (inaudible)
16 the transparency of the process in the (inaudible)
17 maps.

0:55:38

18 I really just want to emphasize again
19 transparency as the core concern here. This type of
20 lack of transparency is exactly why so many people,
21 especially people of color, don't trust our government.

0:55:54

22 If we want to do right by our CPS families
23 and by CPS students, we need more time to work on the
24 map and to hear feedback on both the proposals that

1 have been submitted by many different people across the
2 City.

0:56:11

3 I -- as I said in a previous hearing, I am a
4 strong supporter of an elected representative school
5 board, but the proposal here is simply not
6 representative, and it will take time and input to
7 produce a map that is truly representative.

0:56:29

8 So for those reasons, I would ask that you
9 have a special session in the second half of June to
10 address these things, since the statute allows for the
11 maps to be enacted any time on or before July 1st.

0:56:45

12 I thank you for your time tonight and would
13 be happy to take any questions.

14 SENATOR LIGHTFORD: Thank you, Eli.

15 Eli was the last registered speaker on
16 tonight. But before we adjourn, I again want to thank
17 all of you, everyone who offered their perspectives and
18 their feedback through this map-making process.

0:57:08

19 It's heartening to see the passion and
20 dedication of parents, students, educators, and
21 community groups. It's not too late to make your voice
22 heard. As a reminder, we are taking input 24/7 at our
23 website.

0:57:28

24 I've said it a couple times and I'll say it

1 for this final time, www.ilsenateredistricting.com, or
2 via email at chicagoersbcommittee@senatedem.ilga.gov.

3 Thank you again and have a good night.

4 With there being no further business to come
5 before the Senate Special Committee on the Chicago
6 Elected Representatives School Board, we are adjourned.
7 Thank you.

8 (End of recording.)

9

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CERTIFICATION

I, Allyson Pritchard, do hereby certify that the foregoing transcript of said hearing is a true, complete and correct report of the entire testimony so given by said participants present at the taking of said recording to have appear of record.

I further certify that the testimony that was recorded by audio/visual recording device and thereafter transcribed into typewriting under my direction and control.

I further certify that I am not counsel for, nor attorney for any of the parties to the aforesaid cause, nor am I related to any of the parties to the aforesaid cause, nor am I interested in any manner in the said cause or in its outcome.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF: I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my notarial seal:

Allyson Pritchard

October 10, 2023

A				
a.m 33:17	23:2	45:9	11:20 12:16,23	42:15
ability 18:5	advance 16:12	allows 46:10	17:21 18:22	benefit 12:6
able 23:8 29:7	Advancing	Allyson 48:2,21	Asian-Americ...	best 5:20 9:16
38:12	11:16 12:18	alma 41:1	11:16 12:17	better 24:7,14
Academy 26:6	advantage 27:1	alongside 34:6	17:20	31:4,6,9 37:1
access 6:17 13:3	29:3	alternate 18:14	Asian-influen...	40:4 41:16
27:7	advantages	alternative	13:12	betterment 14:2
accessibility	30:12	40:19	asked 39:24	Bhimani 2:18
16:3	advocacy 9:3	alternatives	asking 18:11	19:7,9,11,12
accessible 16:7	15:15	42:22	29:12 41:11	bifurcated
accomplish	advocate 13:17	amateur 27:10	assembly 7:11	23:22
26:15	26:7	amidst 43:11	19:19 21:19	big 38:13
account 17:1	affairs 40:13	Amigos 26:9	22:11 23:19	bill 7:1 10:5
21:22 28:12	41:13	ample 16:5	assessed 8:2	bit 24:12 31:21
accountability	affixed 48:18	analysis 20:20	associated 26:10	34:15 36:11
9:11	affluent 34:4	answer 43:1	assure 6:17	black 5:22 6:17
accurately	aforesaid 48:12	anti-racism	asylum 13:4	7:18 11:23
12:22 14:6	48:14	29:24 30:4,15	Atlanta 41:2	14:11,14,21
acknowledge	African-Amer...	appear 48:6	attempt 17:15	20:23 21:11,12
18:3 43:13	5:22 20:14	APPEARAN...	attempting 21:7	22:23 28:16,19
acknowledging	23:3 40:12	2:1	attempts 16:21	31:11 32:21
26:13	41:13	appearing 9:1	29:15	33:9,14,24
acrimonious	African-Amer...	appoint 35:22	attends 21:12	42:3,10,15
21:3	34:10	36:2	attorney 15:10	43:21
Act 7:24 15:21	afternoon 26:2	appointed 5:16	48:12	blocks 21:17
19:21 20:16	32:6	7:5,6,8	audio/visual	38:20 43:19
21:15	age 20:24 26:24	appreciate 5:10	48:8	44:8,12
Action 32:13	agency 33:9	17:10,11,15	Austin 34:2	blue 41:10,11
actions 29:18	34:1	24:18,19,21	available 16:8	blueprint 18:20
add 9:24 19:16	ago 41:4	35:15		board 1:8 4:4
adding 24:12	agree 18:3 24:12	appropriate	B	5:7 7:1,6,12
additional 6:5	ah 40:10	22:9	back 9:21 14:5	8:12 9:13
8:1,17 12:6	ahead 41:7	approve 27:19	19:6 25:15	11:14 12:21
18:17 23:8	aim 19:15	approximately	29:5 31:8	14:5,6,17,20
31:14	Albany 12:24	7:14	44:12	15:24 16:24
address 17:10	13:12	Aquino 2:9 4:17	backpacks 26:8	18:2,18 20:2
17:16 35:12	alderman 17:7,8	4:18 15:6	Bakery 19:8,12	21:2,7 24:20
39:24 46:10	19:6,7 22:19	area 11:10 12:9	balance 6:7	26:1,12 27:21
addressed 17:23	22:20,22,23	12:14 37:6	ballots 39:3	28:1,6,9 31:4,8
18:13 29:14	24:23	44:7,16	based 7:13	32:8,16 39:2
34:5 35:14	aldermen 39:17	areas 39:6	10:13 14:17	39:18 40:13,22
adhere 20:5	40:3	arranged 36:24	basis 23:13	41:3,5,8,9,14
28:13	Alderwoman	Ashley 2:24	begins 7:4	41:21 44:19
adjourn 46:16	19:2	Asian 7:18 11:9	behalf 32:11	46:5 47:6
adjourned 47:6	allies 13:14	12:11 17:14,22	believe 12:18	body 17:10
adjustments	allow 17:24 18:6	42:5,17 43:24	18:16 23:2	19:23 20:10
	20:16 40:17	Asian-Americ...	24:4 31:3 42:7	25:8 27:22

30:9	cause 48:13,14 48:15	27:23 30:10 31:5,15	collaborate 40:3	42:8 43:23,23 44:17
Boone 12:2,9,13	Celina 2:6	chime 25:7	collaboration 39:16	community 9:4 9:7 11:6,9,20 12:23 13:16 15:14 16:16,20 18:1,22 23:4 33:16 38:16 42:4,4,5,17,18 46:21
borders 27:2	census 7:16 29:4	Chinatown 13:13 42:6	colleagues 5:10	community-b... 11:8
bound 39:21	center 11:3,7 38:11	choice 17:4 39:13	Collective 31:20 31:21	community-ce... 9:7
boundaries 17:13 24:5 37:18 38:7,18 39:19	centering 44:7	choices 19:15,18	college 26:6 41:2 41:2	compact 7:22
breaks 37:20	certainly 18:23	choose 21:15,20	color 27:23 28:3 30:13 43:24 44:17 45:21	compensation 25:10 32:22
Bridgeport 44:7	CERTIFICA... 48:1	chooses 22:11	colors 30:11	complaints 27:11
Brighton 32:12	certify 48:2,7,11	choosing 20:18	com 8:5	complete 31:13 48:4
bring 9:10 41:23	chair 4:21 8:16 8:20,24 9:20 10:1,17 15:6 22:21 24:17 43:6	chopped 31:20	combined 34:8	completely 37:21 38:11
brings 9:6	chairman 22:22	chosen 16:10	come 4:4 19:6 27:9 28:5 31:8 33:13 34:20 37:4 47:4	completes 42:22
Brottman 2:16 18:15 43:4,5	challenge 22:17	chronic 11:11 32:19	coming 25:6	complex 13:5
brown 6:17 32:21 33:9	challenging 26:15 36:21 37:1,12	citizen 20:23 26:24	comment 8:2 16:5 38:21	compliance 15:20
budget 43:12 44:24	change 34:16,17 40:5	City 7:17 13:21 13:24 14:15 17:12,14,21 18:24 22:2 23:16,19 24:10 27:18 32:18 38:22 42:9 46:2	comments 8:17	complies 21:20
Buenas 31:15	changing 40:14	City's 14:12,17	committee 1:7 5:3,6 8:10 10:5 14:4,22 15:7 15:22 16:4,9 19:18 20:3,4 22:21 26:2 27:15 29:18 30:17 32:7 40:13 41:12,14 43:7 47:5	Comply 20:6
build 20:6	Chicago 1:7 4:3 5:6 6:10 7:1,12 7:17 8:6,7,11 11:14 13:24 14:3,13,15 15:24 16:17,24 17:13,14 18:17 18:20,24 21:1 22:2,6,12,23 23:5,16,20 24:10 26:1,12 27:18 28:9 32:7,15 47:5	civic 41:18	committee's 16:15,19	comprised 7:14 7:15
building 38:20	Chicago's 7:13 9:17 14:5 30:12	civil 15:11 27:5	Committee@s... 8:7	concentrated 12:23
bullying 6:16	chicagoersbco... 47:2	classes 11:11	committees 26:9 41:9	concern 18:9 44:20 45:19
bureaucratic 13:6	chief 9:12	classroom 12:4	communities 8:14 9:18 11:19 14:8,23 15:19 16:23 18:21 23:10,12 23:21 24:4 28:8 31:5 33:4 34:2,4 37:21 37:22 38:22	concerned 16:16 25:12 32:16 33:7,19,24
business 5:1 41:19 47:4	children 6:17 18:10 21:22 22:2 26:5,7	classrooms 11:24		concerns 17:16 18:4,13 25:8 26:22 32:24 43:16,18
busy 43:12 44:23		clear 13:8 36:2		conduct 5:1
<hr/> C <hr/>		clearly 39:11		confident 22:12
C-H-I-C-A-G-... 8:8		clerk 2:24 4:5,6 4:8,10,12,14 4:17,19,21,23		configuration 37:12
acks 41:17		Clinton 12:3,8 12:12		conjunction 5:9
call 4:5 5:5 17:18		closely 14:12 40:21		
campaign 25:11		closer 9:6 25:17 40:21		
candidate 20:17 39:13		clusters 42:20		
candidates 17:4 39:2,3		Co-Chairs 15:6		
capital 8:6		coalition 5:24		
case 11:12		code 7:21		
Caucasian 6:1				
caucus 14:1,16 14:22 18:5 22:23				

consensus 18:8	counsel 48:11	Dan 2:5	differences 44:5	28:14,16,17,23
consequences 30:6,7	count 29:4	dark 41:10	different 12:12	29:5 30:19
consider 5:13 20:21 26:24 29:12 40:14 45:5	couple 37:5 42:13 46:24	data 16:7 35:14	13:3 20:19	31:10,11 37:17
consideration 24:16	coupled 36:5,9	date 8:10	24:2 39:10	38:14 39:4,9
considered 19:21 22:16	coups 21:7	days 41:4	46:1	40:9 44:1,11
considering 22:2	courage 30:19	de 26:9	dig 41:6	districting 8:11
consistent 7:23	courts 19:23	deadline 7:11	dilute 14:23	districts 5:15,17
consists 5:14	CPS 9:11 12:2,8	decades 33:4	16:22	5:20,21,22,23
constitutional 28:13	18:9,10 19:21	decision 16:10	diminish 6:8	5:23 6:1,3 7:12
contain 20:7 21:23 22:8	21:12 26:5,10	27:21 30:10	direction 48:10	7:14,15 8:12
contained 8:12 37:19	26:22 27:4,9	deck 40:1	director 13:21	12:16 13:9,12
contains 20:13 21:8	28:3,6,11 29:7	decreasing 44:18	13:23 32:9	13:15 14:10,11
context 19:16	29:16 31:4,9	dedication 46:20	disappointed 16:9 34:15	14:11 15:24
contiguous 7:22 37:6	33:12,22 45:22	deep 18:8 33:3	disconcerting 17:23	16:17 17:1
continuation 6:19	45:23	deeply 32:17	discrimination 16:21 17:2	20:7,7,12,14
continue 32:15 32:23 33:23	cracks 39:22	Defense 15:10	discussion 18:7	20:15,15 21:24
continued 33:15	create 14:16,22	defer 19:23 21:4	discussions 19:17	22:7,16 23:6,9
continues 33:20	20:7,16 23:13	deliberately 29:10	disease 11:11	24:2,7 25:14
continuing 9:15	40:12	deliver 31:6	disingenuous 29:10	26:23 27:4
control 32:17 33:10 48:10	created 9:13	delivering 28:1	dismantle 30:3	28:16,20,24
conversation 9:16	14:1 30:20	demands 20:16	30:16	30:18,21 32:16
conversations 42:3	31:12	21:15	disparities 29:12	33:8,14,20
core 45:19	creates 14:20	Demma 2:19	disproportion... 33:23	34:3,7 35:8,10
correct 48:4	creating 14:4	25:1,2,4	disproportion... 14:9 30:10	35:17,18,20,24
Corrina 2:19 24:24	22:7 24:19	demographic 20:20	32:21	36:3,4,5,7,8,14
cost 33:13	27:13 28:21	demographics 12:14 14:17	disregard 16:10	36:15,17,23
Council 13:21 13:24 14:15 17:21 32:12	30:8	29:12 33:12	37:21	37:13,19,23
	creation 28:14	describes 7:19	disregarding 29:17	38:1,4,21 39:2
	credentialed 5:2	deserve 18:16	disrespected 29:19	40:6,16,23
	criteria 27:13	designated 23:10,15	distributed 38:3	42:10,10,13,14
	critical 28:23	designed 12:16	district 5:24	43:19,21,21
	crucial 18:20	45:8	7:21 11:15	44:7,15
	cultural 42:19	desires 6:7	16:18 20:22,23	diverse 15:19
	culturally 39:9	despite 29:8	21:8,12,14	diversity 28:11
	culture 39:12	destruction 32:19	22:4,7 24:1	31:4
	current 5:15,19	develop 14:6	26:19 27:14,16	divest 22:11
	11:14 14:9	15:19	27:19 28:10,12	divided 16:16
	17:24 22:1	deviation 22:5		doing 10:15
	23:10 24:5	device 48:8		dot 8:5
	35:5 37:11	difference 38:13		Dr 11:4,5 13:19
	41:8			draft 5:9,11 6:2
	currently 12:2			9:6 14:9 25:16
	26:5			26:17 27:12
	cynical 27:11			28:18,24 29:19
				33:6 34:6
				37:14
				draw 7:11 23:8

D

40:6 drawing 14:6 28:12 31:8 drawn 17:13 23:21,23 25:13 33:8 35:8 36:18,23 38:18 39:14 drew 30:18 duty 22:15	12:21 14:5,16 17:21 18:18 21:16 23:20,20 26:1,12 27:24 28:9 32:7,16 39:17,18 46:4 47:6 election 21:2,4 34:7 36:1 40:17 elections 21:2,8 36:5 electoral 15:24 16:24 39:2 elementary 12:3 12:19 Elgie 2:7 Eli 2:16 18:15 43:4 46:14,15 email 8:6 47:2 emphasize 45:18 empower 6:10 enable 45:4 enacted 11:18 46:11 encourage 39:16 endowment 41:5 engage 21:19 33:2 English 12:5,10 enroll 29:6 entail 13:1 enthusiastic 11:13 entire 48:4 entirely 23:24 entirety 23:18 equal 7:22 9:16 14:1 17:3 28:17 equitable 9:17 34:10 equitably 42:16 equity 29:9 erased 34:4	error 29:4 Ervin 19:6 22:19,20,22 ESL 11:11 especially 18:5,9 45:21 Espinoza 2:20 25:24 26:2,4 31:18 essential 12:18 essentially 28:24 evening 8:19 10:20 11:3,4 17:8,19 19:10 19:11 43:5 everybody 34:13 everybody's 17:15 exacerbated 32:18 exactly 45:20 example 20:21 28:11 29:13 39:1 Excellence 25:1 exception 44:4 exciting 9:9 executive 13:21 13:23 20:3 32:8 exercise 37:8 exist 30:4 existed 27:17 existing 37:21 41:11 exists 30:1 expand 40:22 expect 37:17 expected 10:2 33:5 expecting 36:10 36:16,17 expense 30:13 experience 9:8 21:4 experienced	16:21 experiences 28:7 41:22 expertise 27:5 expires 7:9 express 11:13 expressed 13:14 eye 39:21 eyes 27:10 37:10	21:18 25:16,24 26:11 27:12 28:9 35:5 37:14 five 5:22,24 24:2 27:3 30:20,23 40:6 43:20 flatten 20:20 flaws 35:12 focus 10:24 19:13 focuses 41:12 FOIA 19:8,12 folks 33:22 follow 35:6 following 5:2 food 6:15 forces 23:19 foregoing 48:3 Forgive 31:20 forth 6:4 29:14 forward 9:15 10:3,14,21 25:9 fought 6:14 9:4 18:19 found 37:9,14 37:23 four 12:19 13:11 41:9 42:12 four-year 7:4,10 fractures 44:17 free 43:1 fruition 34:21 fulfill 35:7 fully 7:2 8:11 18:13 37:18 Fund 15:11 further 29:20 38:21 45:10 47:4 48:7,11 Furthermore 23:5 future 13:17 18:20
<hr/> F <hr/>				
E 28:23 E-R-S-B 8:6 easy 6:6 edits 43:11 education 6:10 6:13,18 7:2 9:7 11:6 15:15,24 16:24 19:14 26:8,10 32:10 40:13 Educational 15:11 educators 25:1 46:20 effective 20:12 20:14 21:24 22:13 23:11,12 effectively 36:6 effectiveness 16:22 effects 17:2 effort 24:17 efforts 6:20 9:3 24:19 eight 4:23,24 12:4 20:13 28:15 31:9 39:15 elect 6:11 17:3 35:19 39:13 40:8 44:15 elected 1:7 4:3 5:6,16 7:1,2,4 7:9,10 8:11 9:13 11:14				
<hr/> G <hr/>				

Garfield 34:1	12:17	8:21 10:21	I	increase 40:19
gather 5:8 6:4 45:4	graduated 41:4	16:11,12 29:11	I-L-S-E-N-A-...	increased 26:18
gathering 10:9 10:15	granted 5:4	43:17 45:12,13	8:5	INDEX 3:1
general 7:11 19:19 21:1,13 21:19 22:10 23:19	gravity 38:11	46:3 48:3	IAC 11:8,20	indicate 35:16
generate 20:10 24:14	great 44:20	hearings 9:15	IAFFR 23:9	indicated 37:22
generated 21:18	greater 9:5 23:21 24:3	16:2,6 28:5 34:14 45:10	idea 10:6 29:24 40:4	individuals 13:4
geographies 33:1	Groth 31:19	heartening 46:19	ideal 22:5	Indo-American 11:3,7
getting 24:13	ground 41:21	heck 41:7	Ideally 37:17	inequalities 27:17
give 14:7 18:17 27:1 34:23 36:7	grounds 6:16	Hello 25:2	identified 12:5	inequities 30:16 32:18
given 18:8,12 36:22,23,23 39:13 45:9 48:5	group 19:13	help 9:8 11:22 24:14	Illinois 7:23 15:16 19:1 23:18 32:9,13 34:10	inequity 27:12
gives 31:13	groups 9:4 12:1 21:7 26:10 28:22 38:10 41:18,18 46:21	hereunto 48:17	imbalance 27:17	influence 5:23
glad 13:16	growing 14:7 18:24	Hi 19:9 25:3 34:11 43:5	immediately 26:17	information 10:10,13,15 34:6
go 8:16 14:5 18:10 24:21 31:8 37:5	guess 8:23 34:16 39:23 42:11	hide 29:15	immigrant 11:9 11:24	initial 17:16
goal 6:21 20:5	guidance 5:18 5:19	high 10:23 12:19 13:4	immigrants 11:10	input 8:1 16:3 16:14 29:21 33:15 46:6,22
goals 34:19	guiding 28:13	Hispanic 5:22 5:23 7:18 20:15	immigration 13:3	instances 37:23 38:1
going 9:2,10 10:2 35:17,19 35:22 37:12 38:17 40:1,5 43:12 44:6,9 44:12,14	guys 24:11 37:7 42:23	historically 16:20 32:17 33:10	impact 32:21 34:19	intended 26:21 35:6
Gonzalez 26:5,9	H	history 27:8	implementation 10:24	intent 36:20
good 5:5 8:19 11:3,4 15:5 17:8 19:10,11 26:2 29:24 32:6 37:10 43:5 47:3	half 46:9	hold 36:4	implemented 44:22	intentional 30:7 30:11
govern 14:21	hand 10:24 24:11 31:23,24 32:9,12 48:18	holding 29:19 34:14	importance 16:2	interest 8:14 11:19,20 16:17 16:23 23:10,13 23:22 37:22 43:23
governing 30:9	hands 40:1	hope 22:10	important 18:23 31:3 40:2	interested 48:14
government 45:21	happen 39:7	hopeful 21:19	improved 38:8	intervention 11:12
Grace 11:16	happened 23:2	hops 31:22	improvements 33:6 43:14	invest 27:22
	happens 38:15 39:6	hour 33:16	improving 6:13	inviting 25:5
	happy 46:13	hours 12:4 16:12	inaudible 23:4 26:8 44:15 45:2,15,16	involved 15:16 21:6
	hard 19:24 45:14	hours' 36:22	include 30:20 37:24 41:16	issue 35:5,16 37:20 39:15
	harmed 33:10	house 5:10 6:24 6:24 20:3 33:17 45:14	included 34:2	issues 13:2,9 25:18 32:24 34:5 35:13
	head 37:2	How's 34:12	includes 29:5	it'd 37:1
	hear 6:21 10:5 19:5,7,9 24:24 45:24	Hunter 2:8 4:15 4:16	including 29:8 31:9 42:5 43:19 45:6	iteration 41:24
	heard 25:8 26:22 29:23 46:22	hybrid 7:3	income 12:9	
	hearing 1:11	hyper-segrega... 21:8		

iterations 13:18 42:1	42:17,19,21,21 43:10 44:20,22	29:22	long 9:4 18:19 27:18	map 5:9,12,21 6:2 9:6 10:4,11 11:15,15,18 12:17 13:16 14:4,6,9,17,20 14:22 16:7,11 16:15,16,19 17:16,24 18:19 19:19 20:2,13 20:22 21:20 22:1,11,15 25:13,20 26:17 28:2 29:9 31:8 33:11 34:6,21 35:8,11,16 36:13 37:20 38:5,6,24 42:1 42:2,8 43:3,14 43:15,16 44:3 44:6 45:24 46:7
<hr/> J <hr/>	knowingly 30:15	leaves 38:24	long-time 26:7	map-making 8:21 9:1 46:18
J 16:18	<hr/> L <hr/>	led 41:14	look 9:15 10:21 20:22 21:15 34:19 36:9 41:1	mapper 37:11
Jamie 31:19,21	lack 18:8 36:24 41:15 45:20	Lee 17:7,8	looked 35:5 36:10	maps 8:11,13 15:19 16:6 18:14 19:22 20:10,11,16 21:18,21,23 22:13,24 23:14 23:21,23 24:3 27:16,19 28:10 28:15,18 30:19 36:14 43:10 44:4 45:3,5,7 45:17 46:11
January 7:3	land 37:16 39:4	left 38:10	looks 27:10	margin 29:4
Jason 22:19,21	language 12:5 13:3	legislation 9:13 24:20	losing 33:14	margins 26:24 28:19 31:10
Jenkins 2:24	languages 12:13 13:2	legislators 26:13 33:2	lot 31:2 39:24 41:7	Martin 2:14 15:3,9
Jewish 42:18	large 7:9	legislature's 22:3	lots 45:7	Martwick 2:10 4:19,20 8:16 8:18,19 9:23 15:6
Jianan 2:15 31:24 32:1,4,8	largely 44:4	Leonard 2:21 34:10,12	love 10:10 25:20	mass 37:16 39:4
job 26:14	larger 25:18 38:13 39:8	let's 6:20 20:21	low 12:9 22:4	match 37:7
join 10:20	late 26:17 45:2 46:21	Lewis 2:4 4:6,7	lunch 11:11	
July 7:11 31:13 46:11	latest 8:21 28:18 28:23	light 41:11	<hr/> M <hr/>	
jump 25:19	Latina 11:24 26:19 27:4 28:15,19 29:1 29:6 30:22 31:1,10	Lightford 2:3 4:3,21,22,24 9:22 10:8,18 13:19 15:1,6 17:5 19:2,10 22:18 24:23 25:3,23 31:17 31:19 32:2,4 34:9 43:2 46:14	Madame 8:19 8:24 9:20 10:1 10:17 15:5 22:21 24:17 31:17 43:6	
June 45:2 46:9	Latino 5:22,23 13:21 14:3,8 14:11,15,15,21 16:16,20 18:5 33:13,21 42:4 42:14,15 43:20	limited 12:10	maintain 28:18	
Justice 11:16 12:18 32:13	Latinos 15:14	Lindblom 26:5	maintaining 27:12 31:11	
<hr/> K <hr/>	law 5:15,19 15:12 21:21 25:14,21 31:13 35:6,9,21 40:5 40:15	line 25:20	major 42:8	
Karla 2:20 25:24	Lawmakers 5:18	lines 39:14	major- 42:12	
keep 11:18 12:18 13:11 40:16,18 42:19	laws 20:6	lingering 17:2	majorities 33:22 43:22	
kept 13:16 16:18 16:23	leaders 6:11 41:19	listened 42:17	majority 5:24 6:3 14:10,10 14:11,20 17:14 17:22 22:6,7 33:14 42:9,10 42:12 43:20,21	
kids 22:8 25:24 26:11 28:9	leading 24:17	listening 17:18 43:7	making 19:16 24:5	
Kimberly 2:3	learned 9:14	litigation 15:15	MALDEF 15:4 15:11,13	
kind 34:23	learners 12:5	little 24:12,13 31:21 34:15 36:11 45:15	manage 11:22	
kitchen 25:6	leave 5:2,4	live 19:17 21:22 22:2 24:15 39:6	management 11:12	
Klein 2:14 15:3 15:5,9		lived 41:22	manager 11:6	
know 7:24 8:15 8:21 10:22 18:14 19:4 23:21 24:6,11 25:7 27:13 31:2 34:15 35:1,4,21 36:6 36:11,13 37:2 37:7,10,16 38:5,9,11,16 38:20,22 39:19 40:9 41:20,22		local 12:21 32:20	maneuver 27:11	
		locally 23:20	manner 48:14	

<p>mater 41:1 Mather 12:19 matter 10:3 16:1 30:11 matters 28:2 Mattie 2:8 maximizes 33:8 mayor 5:16 7:5 7:7,8 35:22 36:2 40:11 mayoral 21:1,3 32:17 33:10 McConchie 2:5 4:8,9 9:23 10:1 10:16 meaning 27:3 39:17 means 30:5 meant 30:24 media 5:2 meet 24:6 meeting 33:17 member 5:15,16 7:10 12:21 members 4:23 4:24 7:4,5,9 14:3 15:7 22:21 23:18 26:3 30:17 32:6 40:18,22 41:3,6,9,15 42:3,4,5 45:9 membership 41:16 mentioned 17:15 43:15 mentor 11:23 mentors 12:3 merely 27:9 met 5:8 metrics 20:20 metro 11:10 Mexican-Ame... 15:10 Michaela 2:17 13:20,23 microphone</p>	<p>11:3 mildly 22:8 miles 44:13 mind 11:2 34:20 mine 18:10 24:1 minorities 22:12 minority 5:24 6:3 15:20 17:3 20:11,13,17 21:24 22:6,13 22:16 28:22 30:21 minute 6:22 29:22 Miriam 2:18 19:7,8,12 22:18 mirrors 33:11 mismanageme... 32:19 misrepresenta... 29:9 misrepresented 29:2 Mm-hmm 31:18 model 15:19 modeling 27:8 Monday 23:12 monitor 15:20 Morgan 34:1 morning 15:5 45:13 morph 35:10 mothers 11:24 move 10:14 moving 25:9 much-needed 9:10 multiple 39:2 multitudes 13:1</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <hr/> <p>naked 39:21 name 11:5 13:23 15:9 19:11 26:4 32:8 national 15:11</p>	<p>navigating 13:5 nearly 44:13 necessary 24:6 need 13:11 17:1 33:11,12 34:5 40:1 45:23 needs 12:20,22 13:1 31:5 33:15 neighborhood 11:7 32:12,20 neighborhoods 6:12 33:21 neighbors 40:21 nested 36:13 40:7 new 20:13,22 26:16 34:21 44:3,6 newly 17:13 Nicole 17:7 night 26:17 45:13 47:3 non-citizen 25:10 32:23 non-citizens 29:7 north 32:12 42:6 43:15,19 44:5 44:8,8,9,11,12 44:16 Northwest 33:7 44:5 notarial 48:18 notice 33:16 45:9,15 noticed 26:18 number 3:3 20:8 22:5 24:18 26:18 35:16 37:20 38:24 39:15 40:22 numbers 23:7 35:15 numerous 26:9 nutritious 6:15</p>	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">O</p> <hr/> <p>observed 42:18 occupy 13:4 October 48:22 odds 44:18 offer 17:2 offered 46:17 officials 21:16 23:20 39:17 Oh 32:2 okay 5:4 10:16 10:19 19:5,6 19:11 24:24 31:22,24 34:13 34:21,24 35:1 35:1 Omar 2:9 one-on-one 12:1 open 40:18 opportunities 8:2 opportunity 13:22 15:8,23 16:5 17:3,10 19:24 26:3 28:21 30:17 39:12 43:8 order 4:4 5:7 organization 11:8 15:15 27:6,8 organizations 32:14 33:2 41:18 outcome 6:9 14:21 48:15 outlined 40:9 overall 6:2 14:18 23:3 overcome 17:1 overrepresent... 30:9 oversight 25:11</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">P</p> <hr/> <p>P 28:23 29:5 packs 41:17</p>	<p>PAGE 3:3 Pai 11:16 12:17 pair 5:20 pairing 36:9 37:4 paper 29:3 parent 11:23 12:3 41:18 parents 9:3 12:20 19:13 21:6 26:22 27:4,9 28:6 29:11,16 32:15 46:20 Park 12:24 13:12 32:12 34:1,1 part 11:17 participants 48:5 participate 25:5 participation 16:14 particular 23:15 particularly 11:19 15:21 43:23 parties 48:12,13 partner 15:18 pass 44:24 passed 6:24 24:9 passion 46:19 passions 10:22 Paul 20:24 people 7:16 24:10 25:18 30:13 35:19,22 36:3,4 40:20 41:17,17,21 44:14,15 45:14 45:20,21 46:1 percent 6:2 7:17 7:17,18,18,19 12:9,10,11 14:14,14,15 20:23 21:10 22:5 27:22</p>
--	--	--	--	--

<p>28:19 29:3,3 30:23,24 37:15 43:22 percentage 13:4 23:7 percentages 29:8 perfect 42:7 period 7:3 permanent 41:11 perpetrate 27:16 perpetrating 30:12 person 35:23 personally 36:16 persons 7:15 perspectives 6:7 46:17 phase 10:9 photos 5:3 piece 44:6,7 place 40:14 places 37:5 plan 10:2,7 please 4:5 10:23 22:16 31:14 pleased 26:16 pluralities 33:21 42:11,13 plurality 12:16 26:18 27:20 28:19,24 29:2 30:21 44:1 pockets 38:9 point 6:23 10:6 23:24 28:19 39:22 points 13:2 37:5 policies 30:2,5 32:20 33:12 policy 27:21 30:4,15 political 27:8 politically 39:9</p>	<p>population 7:13 7:23 14:12,14 14:18 20:24 21:13 23:4 27:1 28:17 29:1,8 30:9,13 31:1 populations 42:16 positive 41:22 possibility 19:20 29:20 possible 42:20 possibly 44:16 posted 26:17 45:12,14 postponed 18:11 potential 5:14 potentially 24:13 25:17 power 14:24 21:16 27:17 powerholders 19:15 practice 30:14 Practicing 30:4 precinct 39:5 prefer 28:6 preparing 27:15 present 2:23 4:18,20,23 5:1 48:5 presentation 42:23 presentations 42:18 presented 23:1 24:9 president 7:6 35:23 pretty 44:9 prevent 6:16 previous 46:3 previously 25:8 26:19 32:22 primarily 27:3 28:15,16 31:10</p>	<p>31:11 principles 20:5 20:9 Pritchard 48:2 48:21 privy 38:19 probably 27:1 34:14 problem 29:15 problems 39:24 proceed 5:1 PROCEEDING 4:1 PROCEEDIN... 3:4 process 6:19 8:21 9:1 14:4 16:3 18:6 19:20 24:14 25:6,9 29:17 34:7 36:12 45:16 46:18 processes 13:10 produce 21:20 22:11,13 30:6 45:7 46:7 product 24:14 profiles 12:8 program 11:6 11:11,23 20:10 24:5 programs 11:22 progressive 33:11 promise 28:2 promised 27:24 proposal 5:12 5:14 6:4 22:3 23:9 29:14 31:7 35:5,11 39:16 46:5 proposals 45:24 proposed 5:21 11:14,18 13:11 13:15 14:19 16:6,15,19 18:15 20:13</p>	<p>22:1 43:17 proposes 14:10 protect 14:23 15:14 protected 28:22 proud 9:12 provide 7:24 8:2 9:16 15:23 16:4 20:1 22:15 provided 16:1 20:10 42:1 44:21 provides 35:21 providing 15:22 public 5:13 14:13 16:3,4,8 16:13 18:20 19:13,16 21:5 22:6 29:21 32:9,14,15 45:5,10 purely 41:12 put 6:4 9:8 22:8 24:19 29:14 37:13</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Q</p> <hr/> <p>qualified 6:15 question 10:9 questions 39:1 42:24 46:13 quiet 27:11 quite 44:16 quorum 5:2</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">R</p> <hr/> <p>R 2:7 race 38:15 39:11 races 7:20 racial 20:19 21:17 29:9 32:18 33:12 racism 30:1 racist 30:1,6,14 raise 31:23,24 32:9,11 raised 35:12,13</p>	<p>raising 25:18 ran 37:2,5 range 23:8 really 9:12 25:12 34:20 37:5 38:12 40:2 41:6,6 45:18 reason 45:1 reasonably 29:13 reasons 46:8 received 8:10,13 record 48:6 recorded 48:8 recording 47:8 48:6,8 recruits 11:23 rectified 44:3 redistricting 13:10 15:16 34:11 36:12 redraw 17:15 reflect 6:11 14:7 28:7 reflects 5:21 6:2 31:4,9 refugees 13:5 regardless 30:6 38:15,16 39:11 39:11 region 18:24 registered 46:15 regularly 15:18 relate 13:9 related 48:13 relates 22:24 relationship 39:20 relationships 33:3 release 16:11 released 5:9 19:19,22 remain 5:19 remaining 40:18 remains 6:8</p>
---	--	---	--	--

remapped 23:11	resources 27:22	11:14 12:8,19	4:17,18,19,20	shows 38:5
remember 6:20	respect 10:4	12:21 14:5,13	4:22,24 8:16	shutting 29:20
remind 6:22	respective 23:4	14:16,20 18:2	8:18,19 9:22	side 22:4 23:5
reminder 46:22	respectively	18:18 20:2	9:22,23 10:1,8	32:13 33:7
repeatedly 28:6	12:11	21:2,7,12	10:8,16,18	42:6 43:15
29:11	respond 26:21	24:20 26:1,12	11:4 13:19	44:10
report 48:4	responsible 22:9	27:21,22 28:1	15:1 17:5 19:2	Sides 44:5
represent 17:12	rest 39:7	28:9 31:3 32:7	19:10 22:18	significant 33:5
23:17,19 24:8	result 31:6 42:2	32:15,16 39:9	24:23 25:3,23	34:16 43:16
30:24 32:14	return 31:22	39:18 46:4	31:17,19 32:2	significantly
representation	review 16:5	47:6	32:4 34:9 43:2	44:17
9:17 14:2,7	34:23	schools 6:15 9:5	46:14	similar 12:14
17:17 22:14	revised 10:3	12:2,14,19,21	Senators 2:2	20:8
23:3 28:2,22	revisions 33:5	18:11,21 21:5	senior 11:11	Similarly 44:11
33:13 34:1	rhyme 38:3,3	21:9,10 22:6	sense 37:4	simple 21:17
40:20	Ridge 11:7,9,21	32:14,20 39:23	separated 38:23	simply 46:5
representative	12:20,23 13:12	40:2	39:7	Sims 2:7 4:14
1:8 27:24 28:3	right 21:7 25:12	screen 34:22	seriously 6:14	sit 35:24
36:15 39:18	26:14 31:15	seal 48:18	19:21	situation 38:7
40:8,10,10	35:1,3,4,10	Searle 31:19	serve 18:21	six 14:11 20:14
42:8 44:14	40:20 45:22	season 43:12	32:15	26:20 35:13
45:8 46:4,6,7	rights 7:24	seats 40:18	served 21:14	37:20
representatives	15:11,14,21,21	second 21:21	26:8 33:3	size 25:13
4:4 5:7 23:16	19:21 20:16	33:6 46:9	service 20:9	slide 38:5
24:9 32:7 47:6	21:15 25:10	secret 29:19	39:21	slight 27:1
represented	27:5	section 39:8	services 11:10	slightly 43:22
42:16 44:18	rise 22:16	see 23:1 25:20	serving 11:8	slip 39:21
representing	River 44:9,11,16	34:15 36:12	session 44:24	slow 14:4 18:5,6
15:19 26:11	Robert 2:10	38:7 39:3	45:2 46:9	small 12:1 38:10
represents	robust 16:13	41:10 43:14	set 28:10 48:17	39:8
12:22 18:19	roll 4:5	46:19	Seth 2:4	social 39:24
request 35:14	Rousemary	seeing 5:4 21:6	setting 27:20	society 39:22
requests 16:10	31:23,24	29:13	seven 5:21 14:10	solid 31:10
39:21	run 9:5 10:22	seek 5:2	14:10 26:19	solutions 41:23
required 25:14	37:8	seekers 13:5	28:16 31:11	solving 25:17
25:21	rush 29:21	seeking 5:18	37:24,24 38:24	somebody 43:15
requirements		seen 32:19 33:6	41:9	soon 25:20
28:13	S	select 20:17	shapes 36:23	sorry 17:9 19:4
requires 5:15	S 16:18 20:22	selected 40:10	share 28:7 34:21	31:2 32:2 34:9
7:1,21	21:8,12	Senate 1:7,11	35:4	42:12
researchers	saw 26:16 44:7	6:24 22:1 32:6	shared 10:14	south 11:9 43:20
19:13	schedule 16:11	36:13,13 47:5	32:24	44:8,9,13
resemble 14:12	45:11	senatedem.IL...	sharing 43:3	southeast 16:17
reservations	scheduled 45:1	8:9	Shi 2:15 31:24	Southwest 31:20
13:15	school 1:8 4:4	Senator 4:3,6,7	32:1,1,3,4,5,8	31:21 33:19
residents 14:3	5:7 6:16 7:12	4:8,9,10,11,12	show 35:18	44:10
18:17	7:21 8:11 9:13	4:13,14,14,16	showing 29:13	space 25:5

<p>span 43:19 spans 44:12 speak 12:12,13 13:23 26:3 speaker 15:3 46:15 speaking 13:8 13:10 32:11 special 1:7 5:6 32:6 46:9 47:5 specific 33:1 Spelman 41:1 split 24:1 splits 24:6 spoken 13:2 32:22 sponsor 9:12 Springfield 14:19 29:22 stability 20:1 staff 15:9 41:15 stage 27:20 stakeholders 15:18 18:12 standing 40:12 41:12 stands 14:19 start 26:12 35:9 43:9 starting 7:3 44:8 state 6:13 14:16 19:1 20:6 23:17 36:12 state's 15:20 statement 25:22 42:24 statuses 13:3 statute 46:10 stay 34:18 stays 13:17 stick 10:23 strong 30:21 46:4 stronger 28:21 strongly 25:15 28:6 structural 35:12</p>	<p>structure 41:8 structures 13:6 30:2 student 14:13,17 26:6 30:24 students 6:14 9:3,8 12:1,5,6 12:10,11,12,13 14:21 19:22 20:8 21:11,12 21:13 22:4 28:3,7 31:6 33:22 45:23 46:20 subdivided 36:18 subject 10:3 16:1 27:5 submitted 10:12 11:17 12:17 20:2 21:21 28:10 45:6 46:1 subpar 43:24 substantially 7:22 20:7 28:17 successful 10:24 sufficient 18:1 33:16 sunlight 24:13 Sunny 2:13 11:2 11:5 superimposed 38:6 support 11:13 11:15 12:7,15 13:14 24:18,22 supporter 46:4 supporting 12:4 sure 6:14 29:23 35:1,3 37:8 41:20 42:23 system 6:10 30:8 systemic 30:12 30:16,16 systems 13:6</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">T</p> <p>table 41:23 take 5:3 6:13,22 17:1 21:22 28:11 31:14 46:6,13 taken 45:7 talking 25:9 tardes 31:16 targeted 23:7 task 6:7 24:11 26:15 31:14 Taskforce 26:12 28:10 teachers 6:15 teeny 41:2 tell 21:2 27:9 39:20 ten 5:17,20 7:4,5 7:9,13 8:12 20:11 21:23 24:15 25:14,16 35:9,19,19,24 35:24 36:2,3,3 36:4,7,17 37:3 40:6 term 7:7,8,10 29:23 terms 7:5,6 testament 8:22 9:2 tested 24:8 testified 43:18 testify 9:1 15:8 45:11,15 testimony 10:21 11:17 15:2,23 16:1 17:6 20:3 43:3 48:4,7,17 thank 8:14,20 8:23,24 9:19 9:20,22,23 10:1,8,16,18 10:19 11:4 13:18,19,22 14:24 15:1,5,7 15:22 17:4,5,8</p>	<p>19:1,2 22:18 22:20,20 24:16 24:16,22,23 25:2,4,22,23 26:3 31:15,17 34:8,12,13 43:2,6,6,13 46:12,14,16 47:3,7 thanking 43:9 thin 26:23 thing 38:19 things 34:17 44:2 46:10 think 23:14 24:2 36:20 37:1,11 38:16 40:2,24 thorough 19:20 thoughts 34:24 three 20:5 35:16 38:2 41:4 42:2 42:9,10,12,14 tighter 24:3 time 5:11 8:15 10:20 16:5 17:4 18:17 19:1,18 24:12 31:14 36:22 39:23 44:23 45:3,7,9,10,11 45:23 46:6,11 46:12 47:1 times 37:3 46:24 tiny 41:2 today 5:12 8:1 25:22 26:4,11 32:11 45:12 told 27:14 28:5 tomorrow 29:22 45:1,13 tonight 8:15 10:11,14 12:15 17:6 31:24 43:7 46:12,16 tonight's 10:21 topic 10:23 26:23</p>	<p>total 21:11 42:9 tough 26:14 transcribed 48:9 transcript 48:3 transformation 6:9 transition 9:9 11:1 transitioned 35:17,20 translates 21:16 transparency 9:11 16:2 18:7 45:16,19,20 transparent 16:13 tried 37:3 tripled 41:5 Trivedi 2:13 11:2,4,5 13:19 true 6:8 48:3 truly 9:7 46:7 trust 45:21 try 34:24 42:19 trying 44:24 turn 35:2 turnout 20:21 Twenty-eight 21:10 Twenty-four 33:16 two 5:23 7:19 12:2 19:22 20:15 23:6 24:7 26:4,23 36:8,14,18 37:13 40:23 41:14 42:21 two-year 7:3,6,7 type 45:19 typewriting 48:9 typically 36:11</p>
<hr/>				
U				
Ugh 31:2				

ultimate 6:9	various 6:7	17:22 22:22	42:12	0:01:25 5:14
unanswered 38:24	43:18	24:5 38:6 39:4	whiter 33:20	0:01:38 5:17
unclear 25:13	Vega 31:23	wards 23:8,11	34:4	0:02:11 6:1
unconscionable 31:1	version 10:4	23:24 24:1	wing 21:7	0:02:25 6:5
uncouple 36:7	17:24 44:3	37:15,15,18,22	witnesses 2:12	0:02:48 6:12
underlying 16:7	versus 38:6	37:24 38:3,12	6:21 10:23	0:03:08 6:18
underreprese... 18:4	vice 8:16	39:8,10 40:6	43:18	0:03:25 6:23
underreprese... 33:1	vice-versa 38:4	40:23	woefully 23:22	0:03:59 7:7
understand 19:15 26:13	Villanueva 2:6	way 5:20 9:16	word 37:1 41:16	0:04:18 7:12
28:8 31:4	4:10,11	23:14 26:16	work 11:24 12:3	0:04:55 7:20
understandably 29:16	Villivalam 4:12	33:8 36:22	17:11 19:16	0:05:24 8:3
unfairly 14:23	4:13	38:17 39:14	20:1 30:3,15	0:05:58 8:9
unfortunately 44:2	violence 6:16	ways 30:5 40:5	32:23 40:20	0:06:09 8:12
unmute 8:23	voice 12:20	we'll 19:6 31:22	41:6,7 43:10	0:06:28 8:17
34:11	13:16 17:19,20	32:23	45:3,23	0:06:41 8:22
unmuting 17:9	18:1 33:23	we're 5:5 9:2	worked 15:13	0:07:15 9:5
unnoticed 24:21	46:21	10:9,14 12:15	working 6:3,20	0:07:26 9:9
unrelated 39:19	voiced 17:19	16:9 33:24	26:10	0:07:36 9:13
unwieldy 41:1	18:4	39:22 40:1	worries 32:5,5	0:07:47 9:18
updated 5:12,21	voices 29:17	41:11	wouldn't 38:12	0:08:00 9:24
Uptown 13:13	34:3	we've 9:14 32:22	written 20:2	0:08:20 10:7
urge 10:23 14:3	vote 18:11 27:15	41:24 42:1,17	42:24	0:08:39 10:12
19:22 31:7	27:19 29:7,21	weak 43:22	wrote 20:9	0:08:48 10:15
45:2	30:20 31:7	wealthier 33:20	www.illinoisse...	0:09:09 10:21
urged 16:4 33:2	39:1	website 46:23	8:3	0:09:22 11:1
urges 14:16,22	voter 20:21	week 12:4 20:2	www.ilsenater...	0:09:43 11:7
use 27:13 40:16	39:12	29:20 35:12,13	47:1	0:09:58 11:12
utilizing 23:13	voters 17:3	43:17	<hr/> X <hr/>	0:10:11 11:17
<hr/> V <hr/>	20:17 21:15	weigh 5:11	<hr/> Y <hr/>	0:10:30 12:1
vacancies 36:3	38:10	welcome 11:2	Yards 29:6	0:10:44 12:7
Valerie 2:21	votes 16:22 21:1	13:20	44:12	0:10:58 12:11
34:9,11,11	voting 7:23	well-being 14:2	yeah 25:21	0:11:06 12:14
43:3	15:14,20,21	well-designed	years 15:13 21:4	0:11:32 12:24
Vallas 20:24	16:21 19:21	20:1	24:15,18 36:8	0:11:48 13:7
Vanessa 2:20	20:15,24 21:15	well-informed	yield 9:20	0:12:02 13:13
25:24 26:4	25:10 26:24	41:21	<hr/> Z <hr/>	0:12:13 13:18
Vargas 2:17	27:7 32:23	went 25:15,16	<hr/> 0 <hr/>	0:12:38 13:24
13:21,22,23	<hr/> W <hr/>	West 11:7,9,20	0:00:06 4:5	0:13:07 14:8
15:2	want 6:21 13:17	12:20,23 13:12	0:00:19 4:10	0:13:22 14:12
	18:3 27:9	23:5	0:00:28 4:15	0:13:43 14:18
	34:13,23 41:20	WHEREOF	0:00:34 4:19	0:14:02 14:24
	43:9,13 45:18	48:17	0:00:41 4:23	0:14:25 15:8
	45:22 46:16	white 5:24 7:17	0:00:52 5:3	0:14:35 15:12
	wanted 25:7	14:10,14,20	0:01:03 5:7	0:14:49 15:17
	wants 7:24	21:14 22:7		0:15:01 15:21
	ward 17:7,12,14	27:2,20 28:24		0:15:19 16:3
		30:8,12 42:10		0:15:36 16:8

0:15:54 16:14	0:28:18 26:6	0:41:57 36:1	0:56:29 46:7	29.2 7:18
0:16:12 16:19	0:28:35 26:10	0:42:11 36:5	0:56:45 46:11	29.8 7:17
0:16:23 16:23	0:28:49 26:14	0:42:27 36:9	0:57:08 46:18	2908 7:1
0:16:38 17:4	0:29:09 26:20	0:42:46 36:15	0:57:28 46:23	<hr/>
0:16:52 17:7	0:29:30 27:2	0:43:01 36:19	<hr/>	3
0:17:03 17:11	0:29:43 27:6	0:43:28 37:1	1	30 12:13
0:17:17 17:17	0:29:54 27:9	0:43:45 37:5	1 7:11 29:2 38:6	300,000 28:3
0:17:46 18:2	0:30:14 27:14	0:43:55 37:9	1,000 20:11	35.9 7:17
0:18:04 18:7	0:30:29 27:18	0:44:07 37:13	21:18,21	36 12:10 14:14
0:18:20 18:13	0:30:46 27:23	0:44:29 37:19	10 40:17 48:22	<hr/>
0:18:31 18:17	0:31:04 28:4	0:44:49 37:24	10:00 45:12	4
0:18:40 18:21	0:31:20 28:8	0:45:03 38:4	11 7:19 14:14	4 3:4
0:18:51 19:1	0:31:41 28:14	0:45:18 38:8	35:22 37:15	40 37:17
0:19:07 19:5	0:32:02 28:20	0:45:36 38:14	11th 17:7,12	45 12:12
0:19:22 19:8	0:32:20 28:24	0:45:47 38:18	12 21:11	46 12:10
0:19:25 19:10	0:32:33 29:4	0:46:02 38:23	137,301 7:16	47 14:15 30:24
0:19:35 19:14	0:32:58 29:10	0:46:22 39:5	15 28:18	<hr/>
0:19:51 19:19	0:33:15 29:15	0:46:35 39:10	15th 7:3	5
0:20:04 19:23	0:33:42 29:22	0:46:51 39:14	17th 22:3	5,000 21:1
0:20:18 20:4	0:33:59 30:2	0:47:03 39:18	18 1:13 8:13	50 15:13 23:7,7
0:20:31 20:8	0:34:19 30:7	0:47:25 39:24	12:3	37:15,18 43:22
0:20:44 20:12	0:34:41 30:13	0:47:34 40:3	1980s 15:17	<hr/>
0:21:01 20:18	0:34:53 30:16	0:47:50 40:7	1st 31:13 46:11	6
0:21:15 20:22	0:35:11 30:22	0:48:04 40:11	<hr/>	60 12:9
0:21:38 21:5	0:35:24 31:1	0:48:13 40:15	2	65 20:23
0:21:50 21:9	0:35:44 31:6	0:48:46 40:23	2 29:3 38:6	<hr/>
0:22:01 21:12	0:36:04 31:12	0:48:58 41:3	2,000 22:4	7
0:22:16 21:17	0:36:16 31:16	0:49:14 41:7	20 5:14,20 7:15	7 7:18
0:22:33 21:22	0:36:41 31:22	0:49:36 41:13	8:12 20:6 21:4	70 43:19
0:22:46 22:2	0:37:00 32:4	0:49:56 41:19	25:14 30:23	71 44:8,12
0:22:59 22:5	0:37:11 32:10	0:50:11 41:23	35:8,10,17,18	75 6:2
0:23:12 22:9	0:37:26 32:16	0:50:37 42:6	35:20 36:5,19	<hr/>
0:23:27 22:14	0:37:39 32:21	0:51:09 42:14	37:19 40:19	8
0:23:39 22:18	0:37:57 33:4	0:51:35 42:20	2021 6:24	8:30 33:17
0:23:55 22:23	0:38:12 33:10	0:51:55 43:2	2023 1:13 7:11	87 22:5
0:24:16 23:4	0:38:23 33:14	0:52:16 43:8	22:3 48:22	<hr/>
0:24:56 23:16	0:38:31 33:18	0:52:34 43:13	2024 36:5 40:16	9
0:25:16 23:23	0:38:45 33:23	0:53:12 44:1	2025 7:3	9 44:13
0:25:50 24:10	0:38:59 34:4	0:53:24 44:5	2026 35:10	90 12:9 21:10
0:26:05 24:15	0:39:08 34:8	0:53:40 44:10	40:17	27:22
0:26:19 24:20	0:39:56 34:18	0:54:16 44:19	2027 7:2,8	
0:26:26 24:23	0:40:09 34:22	0:54:30 44:23	20th 22:22	
0:26:36 25:3	0:40:29 35:2	0:54:46 45:3	22 37:15	
0:26:46 25:6	0:40:47 35:7	0:55:17 45:11	24 16:11 36:22	
0:27:06 25:11	0:41:02 35:10	0:55:38 45:17	24/7 46:22	
0:27:32 25:18	0:41:20 35:15	0:55:54 45:21	25 30:23 40:22	
0:27:49 25:22	0:41:39 35:20	0:56:11 46:2	40:23 41:2,5	
			274,601 7:14	