

My two elementary children attend the low-income Chicago neighborhood school where I also work. Daily, I bear witness to the inequities of our system. The barriers to a quality education in Chicago are deeply rooted in hundreds of years of intentionally exploitative policies and by many metrics, Black families endure the greatest impact of unrelenting injustice.

Black communities must be entrusted with their own educational liberation and all our communities will subsequently benefit from the rising tide. As a white teacher and north-side mom of Latino kids who is deeply invested in the strength of our schools, I can confidently say we need you to demonstrate the political courage required to draw the maps in a way that ensures the most Black representation as possible.

The purpose of a school board is to provide local citizen control over public education so that the priorities and aspirations of the district are reflective of the communities it serves. For this reason alone, any voices platformed by special interest groups outside of CPS communities should be dismissed. I implore you to pay no heed to the lobbying from billionaire-backed organizations like Kids First and Advance Illinois, as they work to reduce the impact of community voice and maintain mayoral control of our board—the antithesis of the purpose of a Board of Education.

While Chicago has gained population, it has lost 85,000 Black people, the highest number after Detroit. An office of equity cannot tackle the issues forcing out the backbone of our schools alone, we need to have the priorities of our Board aligned with the priorities of the Black community in Chicago. As such, any trailer bills that are considered should likewise mandate and fund a board committee focused on advancing Black student achievement.

When our district aligns its priorities with the needs and strengths of our Black students, all our community groups will benefit from the growth. Thank you for your time and attention.

Halle Quezada

Sent from iPhone