

Sep 25, 2025, Board Meeting Written Comments
Received between Tuesday, Sep 23rd and Friday, Sep 26th Submitted via
Written Comments Form

1	<p>My name is Yexx Lajeune. I am both a parent of a student at Epic Academy and a CPS teacher with nearly 20 years of experience serving Chicago's children.</p> <p>I have witnessed the pain that comes when schools are closed. It disrupts families, destabilizes communities, and most importantly — it hurts children. Now, Epic Academy is facing closure, and I am deeply concerned for my daughter and all of the students who call Epic their home.</p> <p>My daughter absolutely loves her school. Epic has given her stability, encouragement, and hope. This school is not just a building to her — it is where she feels safe, supported, and motivated to learn. She has already been through more than any child should: rejection from loved ones, trauma from a sexual assault on public transportation, and the struggles of navigating that pain. Epic Academy became her place of healing and growth.</p> <p>If you close this school, my daughter has told me she will feel depressed and hopeless. As a father, hearing that breaks my heart. As an educator, I know we are failing our children if we strip away the very places that nurture them.</p> <p>I urge this Board: do not close Epic Academy. At the very least, extend the timeline and give families real options. But more than that, truly hear the voices of parents, students, and teachers who are begging you to let this community remain intact.</p> <p>Epic Academy has given my daughter hope. Please do not take that away.</p> <p>Thank you for listening.</p>
2	<p>I am urging the Board to do all it can to stem the cuts to custodial services. At our school, the custodians work extremely hard, but there are so few custodians that much of the building cannot be cleaned daily like it is supposed to. No substitute custodians are available when someone takes a vacation or a medical leave, exacerbating the problem. If trash doesn't get taken out daily, students are distracted by bad smells, and pests and rodents become a problem. Without clean bathrooms, hand hygiene takes a dive and illnesses spread. Custodial work is essential to the functioning of our schools, and our full custodial services must be restored.</p>
3	<p>"A short time ago in a school fairly close to here..."</p> <p>It is a period of civil war in the school. A brave alliance of underground freedom fighters, parents, teachers and administrators has challenged the tyranny and oppression of the awesome failure to communicate that exists on all fronts.</p> <p>Board member Zaccor, Years ago you served this district as a teacher, parent and LSC member. You intimately understand the balance between parents, teachers and administration. Now we beg you to help in the struggle at Inter-American, a school your chair represents. Communication has deteriorated between parents, teachers and administration. I know the parents from Inter-American you have heard from and they are good people. Principal Zayas is doing his best to navigate and lead the school in these challenging times and hasn't always been an effective communicator. Both have made missteps in recent months to the detriment of the student body and entire school community.</p> <p>Ana Martinez is our restorative justice coordinator and I believe she may hold the key to resolving the current conflict as well as past conflicts that have existed before the arrival of Dr. Zayas. Since my daughter's arrival at InterAmerican 10 years ago, there has been a revolving door of principals. Not all the weight can fall on the recent actions of Dr. Zayas.</p>

	<p>I regret that I am unable to present this request in person, but the fates were not upon my lottery, and now I'm afraid my mission to bring peace to Inter-American has failed. I have placed information vital to the survival of the school into the written comments section for public participation.</p> <p>Help us Karen Zaccor, you're our only hope!</p> <p>(end with a couple of seconds of Star Wars theme music)</p>
4	<p>I want the board to answer how they are going to handle the Epic Academy situation. My kids are freaking out thinking their PUBLIC charter school is closing next week and the board has been silent</p>
5	<p>Subject: Loss of AFJROTC in Chicago & Call for Restoration of Access</p> <p>Members of the Board,</p> <p>I am writing as a former JROTC instructor who taught at this school for 14 years. I would like to express my deep concern about the deactivation of the Air Force JROTC program at Air Force Academy High School — a decision that has left Chicago, the nation's third-largest city, without a single AFJROTC program. It is the erasure of an entire pathway for students who aspire to careers in the Air Force, Space Force, aviation, and STEM fields. For decades, AFJROTC has provided students with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flight Academy scholarships leading to a private pilot's license. • J-100 scholarships providing full, four-year college tuition to pursue a commission in the Air Force or Space Force. • AFROTC High School Scholarships and advanced enlistment opportunities. • Leadership development, community service, and mentorship that have changed lives. <p>These opportunities cannot be replicated by an Army JROTC or NDCC program. Representation matters — and right now, Chicago students have no Air Force representation.</p> <p>I urge CPS leadership and the Board to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore restoring AFJROTC access in Chicago — a city with over 40 Army JROTC units and multiple academies for every other branch — so students regain an Air Force pathway. • Provide transparency on the status of the NDCC application at AFAHS, including funding and staffing plans, and communicate clearly with families and stakeholders about what is actually approved versus what is simply "in process." • Ensure accountability for how this transition was handled, as parents, students, and staff were not informed of the deactivation until after it occurred. <p>Chicago students deserve choice, transparency, and equitable access to opportunities across all military branches. I ask that this Board make restoring Air Force representation in Chicago a priority.</p> <p>Respectfully, Daniel Castaneda</p>
6	<p>I'm at The Chicago Academy High school and my principle Ryan Leonard (rpleonard@cps.edu) he NEVER responds to email I or my mom sends him. This has been a problem for years even if its a serious matter he will still naver respond, I recently tried to change my classes and emailed him no response and sent a follow up and no response and now that grades are in I cant change so I then has my mom send a email and still no response. This is a joke and needs to be addressed.</p>
7	<p>I am the parent of a preschooler at Haugan Elementary. As a veteran teacher of 16 years, I have been impressed by the dedication of the faculty and the determination of the principal to get the students in the school the support and tools they needed to thrive. Imagine just for a moment if people approach their neighborhood schools here in the city the way they do in the suburbs, with a calm confidence that their child is getting the best education available. Haugan is a model for other CPS schools to follow.</p> <p>Due to the school success and the growth of the neighborhood community, the school is packed to the gills. There are students staff and parent volunteers everywhere, crammed into closets that have been turned into offices, the school library, the hallway.</p>

Because of this, Haugan is in the process of applying to collocate part of the student body in another building. We were told that one of the possibilities was moving the preschool out of the main building and over to the second site.

In my own experience teaching first and second generation immigrants, I know that they need a lot of additional support in their early years in order to thrive in junior high and high school. Keeping all the younger grades in one building allows the school to more easily provide that necessary support for those younger children. They would also have the psychological benefit (that I've experienced with my own child) of going to "big school," looking up to older students.

As an educator, I believe a better choice would be to move the middle school students to a different site, keeping the younger students in the current building. Moving the middle school students would allow staff to create an environment more tailored to the needs of preteens. This is the option the school community prefers.

Haugan is currently a successful neighborhood school. The question is, will CPS acknowledge their success and support them in a way they know will help them achieve their greatest potential?

8 Good evening members of the Chicago Public Schools Board of Education,

I am writing today to raise urgent concerns regarding the current Chief of Special Education-- Joshua Long. There are multiple reports and ongoing concerns that he has engaged in discriminatory hiring and firing practices that disproportionately impact African American women. These patterns are deeply troubling, especially given the numerous EEOC complaints filed against him--both during his time as a principal and now in his current role as Chief.

The evidence is clear: under his leadership, many Black women have been targeted and terminated at alarming rates. This is not only a violation of CPS's stated values of equity and inclusion, but it also exposes the district to significant legal and financial risk. Multiple lawsuits could be filed, and CPS simply cannot afford to spend scarce resources on preventable litigation that stems from discriminatory practices.

I urge this Board to ask directly: What action will you take to hold this leader accountable, and to ensure that African American women who were wrongfully terminated are made whole before costly lawsuits are filed?

Our district cannot champion equity on paper while permitting racial discrimination in practice. Accountability is not optional—it is necessary. The Board must take swift and transparent action to protect both our educators and our students from the harm caused by unchecked bias at the highest levels of leadership.

Thank you.

****ATTACHMENTS****

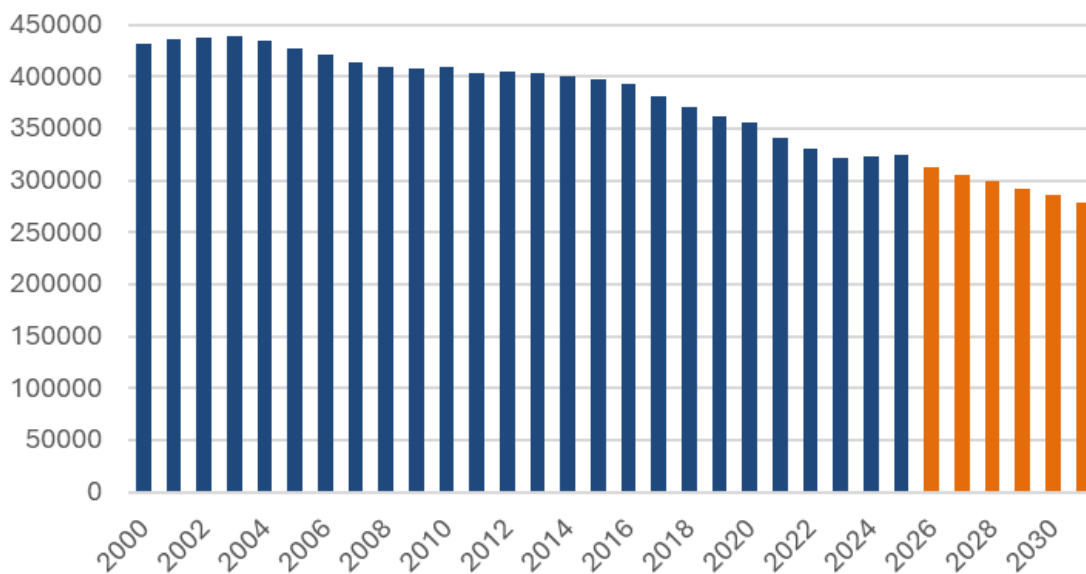
Dr. Angel Alvarez, CPS Board Written Public Comments Meeting 9/25/2025

Dear CPS Board Members:

I want to address three issues: our budget, opportunities for accelerated instruction, and services for students with disabilities.

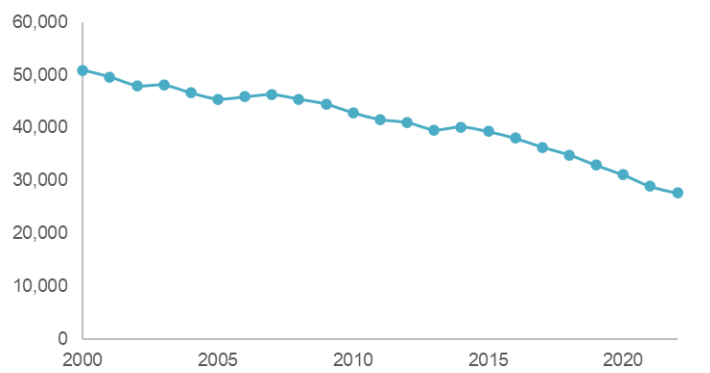
Budget: As challenging as the last budget vote was, I assure you that the future will be even more difficult. We will face another decade of declining enrollment. I've included simple projections using the trend from CPS enrollment data since 2000.

CPS Enrollment and Projections 2000-2031

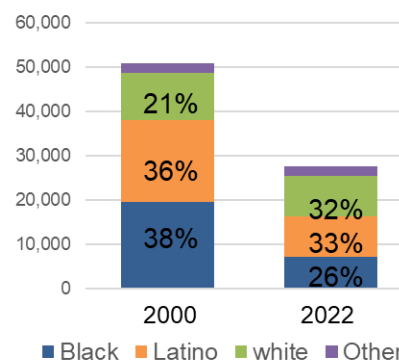


This trend is driven by falling birth rates, particularly in Black families, as my analysis of State data shows. Given the segregation of Chicago, this will exacerbate under-enrollment in most of our South and Westside schools.

Chicago Births 2000-2022



Births by Race

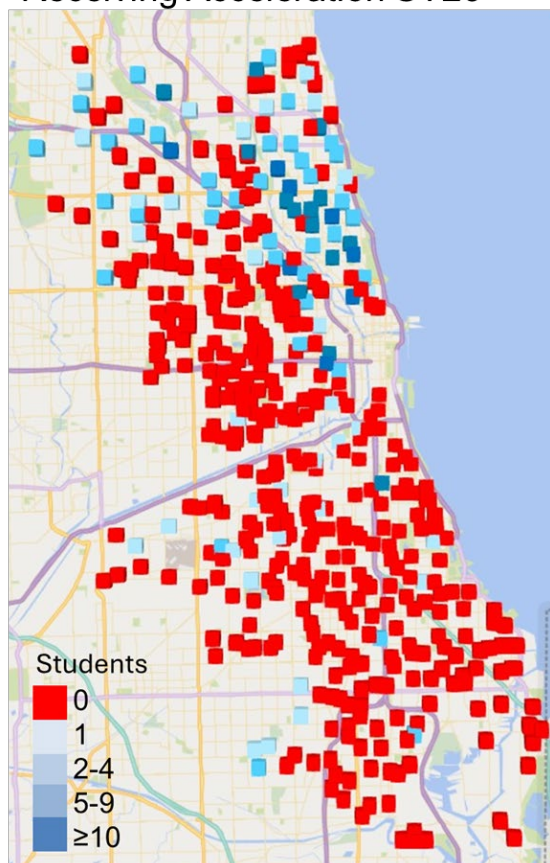


Meanwhile, costs for student support, facilities, and utilities continue to rise faster than inflation, and our deficit will only grow without decisive action.

I have consistently called for school-level budget reporting, and I urge this board to demand full transparency. The issues we have seen with Acero and EPIC schools are not isolated, they reflect systemic failures in financial accountability within CPS and there the result of past boards failing to address long-standing problems.

Opportunities for Acceleration: Beyond the budget, we must address the lack of opportunities for advanced instruction. My analysis of data from the past six years reveals only one in four elementary schools had any students placed in accelerated programs.

Total CPS Elementary Students
Receiving Acceleration SY26



Although there has been an increase in the students receiving accelerated instruction, these opportunities are limited to a few hundred students districtwide. Moreover, despite equity initiatives, while the number of total applicants is up, the success rate of Black applicants receiving accelerated instruction is lower now than before these initiatives. This is unacceptable.

Support for Students with Disabilities: There have been improvements in supporting students with disabilities. However, systemic issues persist. We need clarity on cluster programs, transportation, SECA positions and placement. We need stronger oversight of IEP compliance, and transparent reporting of the data so improvements can be made. As the newly-elected President of the CPS Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) Family Advisory Board (FAB), I will continue to advocate for reform. At our next meeting on October 16th at 6 p.m., I will present concerns regarding OSD operations, with a focus on

serving students with autism. I hope you will join us.

If we are serious about building a stronger, more equitable school system, we must start with transparency and accountability. That means providing school-level budget reports for the past 10 years, along with clear three-year projections, so that families, educators, and this board can make informed decisions.

We must also expand opportunities for accelerated placement, as I previously proposed, so that every student, regardless of background, has access to challenging, high-quality instruction that matches their potential.

And finally, we need greater reporting and oversight for services for students with disabilities. Families deserve to know that Individualized Education Programs are being implemented with fidelity and that resources like SECA positions are allocated fairly and effectively. Please work with me and the Family Advisory Board to support our students.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues.

Be well,

Dr. Angel Alvarez

Subject: Loss of AFJROTC in Chicago & Call for Restoration of Access

Members of the Board,

I am writing as a stakeholder and advocate for Chicago's students to express my deep concern about the deactivation of the Air Force JROTC program at Air Force Academy High School — a decision that has left Chicago, the nation's third-largest city, without a single AFJROTC program. This is more than a “branch swap.” It is the erasure of an entire pathway for students who aspire to careers in the Air Force, Space Force, aviation, and STEM fields. For decades, AFJROTC has provided students with:

- **Flight Academy scholarships** leading to a private pilot's license.
- **J-100 scholarships** providing full, four-year college tuition to pursue a commission in the Air Force or Space Force.
- **AFROTC High School Scholarships** and advanced enlistment opportunities.
- Leadership development, community service, and mentorship that have changed lives.

These opportunities cannot be replicated by an Army JROTC or NDCC program. Representation matters — and right now, Chicago students have no Air Force representation.

I urge CPS leadership and the Board to:

- **Explore restoring AFJROTC access in Chicago** — a city with over 40 Army JROTC units and multiple academies for every other branch — so students regain an Air Force pathway.
- Provide transparency on the status of the NDCC application at AFAHS, including funding and staffing plans, and communicate clearly with families and stakeholders about what is actually approved versus what is simply “in process.”
- Ensure accountability for how this transition was handled, as parents, students, and staff were not informed of the deactivation until after it occurred.

Chicago students deserve choice, transparency, and equitable access to opportunities across all military branches. I ask that this Board make restoring Air Force representation in Chicago a priority.

Respectfully,

Malakia K. Thomas, Maj, USAF (Ret.)