

**November 14, 2024 Special Board Meeting Written Comments  
Received between Tuesday, November 12<sup>th</sup> and Friday, November 15<sup>th</sup>  
Submitted via Written Comments Form**

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Dear members of the CPS Board, I am Luis Delgado, and I stand before you today as a proud alumnus of Esmeralda Santiago, one of the Acero schools that, regrettably, is set to close its doors for good. I am currently in the 10th grade at Northside College Prep.

When I first arrived in Santiago, I was a shy student, struggling to express myself amidst the challenges of the academic environment. The coursework often felt overwhelming, leaving me isolated and disconnected from my peers. However, through persistent effort and unwavering support from my remarkable teachers, the dedicated principal, and my loving family, I have gradually transformed into a more confident individual. Their belief in me enabled me to overcome my struggles and has empowered me to stand here and share my story, even as I pursue my dream of continuing my education at a prestigious high school.

Today, I am not just representing myself; I am here as a voice for my fellow alumni, the Santiago family, and over 2,000 students who are grappling with the heartbreaking news of their school's closure. In my role as student council president in 8th grade, I made a solemn promise to my classmates: "I will always advocate for your voice until the very end. No matter the hurdles we face, we will overcome them together." I am dedicated to honoring that commitment.

I refuse to stand by and watch as my beloved community, along with countless others, is dismantled by individuals who have never set foot in our vibrant classrooms. I refuse to let my mother, my teachers, and my friends endure any more heartbreak and tears over the loss of the schools that have been like a second home to us. I vehemently reject the notion that I or anyone else lacks the right to engage in this fight because I believe wholeheartedly that we all have a stake in preserving the incredible community that has shaped our identities and aspirations.

Therefore, I am here today to implore you—no, to passionately plead—that CPS helps all seven of the Acero schools that are slated for closure to remain open. We, as a united community, will not rest nor relent until this vital change takes place. I promise you that I will continue to fight, advocate, and speak out until our calls for justice are heard and acted upon. Thank you for your time, and I wish you a wonderful day.

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I am a bilingual preschool teacher within this district.

I am speaking to the importance of settling a contract with the CTU in order to ascertain that our students, especially those who have historically been the most vulnerable, remain protected, secure, and educated with dignity and access to the education they deserve.

On November 5th, our next president was elected. With this, our country is facing right-wing ideologies that are dangerous for all of our students. The party that is about to take control of our government has made no secret of their plans to decimate the public education system. It is plainly written in Project 2025. The Republican Administration has

stated their intention to destroy the Department of Education, with it taking away the rights of our students.

This plan will affect a large group of our public school students including supports for our language learners and newcomers with threats of mass deportations; the disappearance of special education and access for students with special needs; denial of life-saving supports for our LGBTQIA students; and, the dissolution of any sort of equity and representation for our Black student population. Even early childhood education is at risk; no student is without risk. Further, this upcoming administration ignores the threats to our climate and environment. This is not all, but the tip of the iceberg.

As such, I urge you to ensure that our contract is settled with much haste as this contract will enshrine protection and security for the student groups I just mentioned. We have language around our green schools; we offer supports to our families and communities through the sustainable community schools; we expand educator autonomy and culturally relevant curricula; we elevate the necessity of bilingual supports. Early childhood has educator and family-facing proposals.

Last Wednesday, I received an email from CEO Pedro Martinez as both a parent and educator where it clearly states that, “[The] entire CPS team will continue working closely with every school to ensure that our students and staff have the support needed to thrive.” As such, I request that you remain faithful to ensuring our contract is settled so that we may work together to protect all of our students.

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3 Why would Acero Charter Schools close schools that are doing well? That is the question that my colleagues and I are asking each other. Tamayo school is successful by every school metric we know of- students are thriving! My name is Shannon Phillips and I have been the STEM teach at Tamayo for 6 years. Many of my colleagues have been here twice as long as me.

One of the aspects that my colleagues and I are especially proud of is that families want to bring their students to our school because we have a reputation for meeting our students where they are and helping them improve their skills. We have new students transferring in every year that benefit from our academic intervention and diverse learners programs. Families want to be part of a school that is providing students with their legal and ethical rights to differentiated instruction.

I am worried about our students when our school closes this year. I have seen firsthand the impact that our diverse learner teachers have on supporting some of our neediest students. We have students that go from crawling on the floor and running out of the class during kindergarten to leading science experiments in 3rd grade. I've seen new to us middle school students go from being non-readers to engaging in scientific discussions using grade-appropriate vocabulary. These successes are a direct result of the supports that students receive in small group, personalized instruction provided by caring, qualified teachers.

I can not imagine why Acero schools is choosing to close a school that supports some of our city's neediest students. I stand with the schools, teachers and students affected by these closures. I want our school community to continue being a place that provides students with what they need to be successful.

- 4 | Please consider advocating for Senn Arts High School students to continue to receive waivers for graduation requirements in PE and in computer science. Senn Arts students THRIVE as a result of the education, peer connection, and community engagement two arts classes per year for four years provides them. A recent proposed change in the curriculum at Senn is limiting the art classes to one per year for these students who have made the choice to make Senn Arts their home. This art education is crucial for these incredible students! Please support the Arts and our students and help us fight this change!
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