

July 24, 2025, Board Meeting Written Comments
Received between Tuesday, July 22nd and Friday, July 25th Submitted via
Written Comments Form

1	<p>Good evening, members of the Board,</p> <p>Im a parent of two students and I'm here to address a matter of deep concern regarding policy violations at DePriest Elementary School related to the absence of an active Local School Council (LSC).</p> <p>Under Illinois School Code 105 ILCS 5/34-2.2, each CPS school is required to have an active and fully seated LSC. The LSC holds the legal authority to approve the school's budget, Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP), school policies such as uniforms or dress code, and critically, the selection or removal of the principal.</p> <p>DePriest currently lacks a functioning LSC with quorum. Despite this, the administration has closed budget meetings (June 10 2025) proceeded with major school-wide decisions—including the sudden implementation of a mandatory school uniform policy and the removal of Mr. Heard from his leadership position. These actions are not only procedurally flawed—they are unlawful.</p> <p>Per CPS Board Rule 6-11, any school uniform policy must be approved by the LSC. Without that approval—or a formal declaration of CEO designee intervention under Rule 6-31—these decisions cannot stand.</p> <p>What's particularly troubling is that principal Thomas had the capacity to send out "surveys" to families regarding uniform preferences, yet no similar outreach was made to inform the community that our LSC is inactive or that members are needed. Families have not been given a fair opportunity to participate in the governance process or step into these critical roles. This lack of transparency and selective communication contradicts the district's commitment to equity and community voice.</p> <p>Furthermore, to remove or reassign an AP without the LSC's involvement directly violates state law and strips the community of its lawful governance role.</p> <p>If CPS allows schools like DePriest to function without a valid LSC while still executing top-down policy and leadership changes, it dismantles the very framework meant to protect local input and shared accountability.</p> <p>So I ask: * Why has DePriest Elementary been allowed to implement a uniform policy without an active LSC? * Why was no effort made to alert the community to the absence of an LSC or to recruit members?</p> <p>Families deserve transparency. They deserve truth. And most importantly, they deserve to be included in decisions that affect their children and their school.</p> <p>I urge this Board to intervene at Oscar DePriest Elementary school and uphold the legal processes our communities rely on.</p> <p>Thank you for your time</p>
2	<p>Good morning! Thank you for taking the time to review and post my comments. We are all living through trying times. It is more imperative than ever that we embrace and empower democracy and investment in our children while rejecting authoritarianism and austerity. There is a long history of the State of Illinois dipping into education funding for pet projects while claiming to bring fiscal stability. That usually translates to austerity for our children in response to manufactured</p>

crises. We cannot afford any shell games like when the state promised to use lottery money for education, only to cut the education budget by the amount brought in by the lottery or like when new selective schools were built with money meant for our public employee pension funds. These manipulations which brought us to today's crisis cannot be repeated. As a parent and teacher in Chicago Public Schools, I expect my representatives to demand that the State of Illinois fully fund our schools. While long term revenue solutions are vital to equitable, sustainable education for all of our learners, the current state budget must address short term needs as well. However, the budget has the funding if the legislature stays true to the values of those they serve. For some reason, they are willing to dedicate close to a billion dollars for the empty Stateville Prison. Yet they are unable to find a billion dollars to fully fund their own budget formula for public education? That choice is not aligned with the needs and values of Illinoisans. Again, it is the responsibility of this Board of Education, as our elected representatives, to demand that the State of Illinois revise its budget in a manner that legitimizes its own commitment and properly reflects the values of the children and families they are sworn to serve. In these times, our greatest defense against the authoritarianism, austerity and kleptocracy bearing down on us from the federal level is to demonstrate our resolve to empower a responsive democracy that invests in those endeavors designed to elevate future generations of Chicagoans and all Illinoisans. Furthermore, we must fully commit to empower Local School Councils in this call for resources. All too often across this city Local School Councils are not empowered as the equal partners in this work that they were intended to be. This board must enlist these democratic institutions with more intimate connection to their constituents than any other elected body in serving this city in the push for more resources and revenue. They must be granted full transparency and input with regard with their schools' spending. Their PPLCs must be equally empowered to properly advise them. Again, if we fail to uplift and empower our most intimate democratic institutions, we will have lost all moral high ground to combat authoritarianism, austerity and kleptocracy at the federal level. Additionally, please conduct a thorough investigation of the ACT and Pre-ACT testing of the 2024-2025 academic year. Given the amount of funding received by this standardized testing company, we should be assured that the tests are properly calibrated and accurately reflect the skill growth of our students. From the data I have analyzed for my own students and the reports I am hearing from friends across the district, these exams were not properly written and implemented. The random swings in growth and decline, particularly in reading, between December and April do not make statistical sense. At the very least, the State of Illinois deserves a refund and every junior and senior who tested in the Spring of 2025 deserves a make up test. I recently heard from a friend who's junior in high school scored a 13 in April, but 23 on the retake. Clearly, something was wrong with the April test. Let's get compensation for that negligence as well. The children and families of Chicago deserve and are owed better.

3 I'm writing to voice my concern regarding the proposed changes to the CPS grade acceleration policy being considered at the July 24th School Board meeting. As currently written, the policy would exclude students in selective enrollment schools from eligibility for grade acceleration. While the goal of expanding access to more students is commendable, this change risks unintentionally harming a group of advanced learners.

Selective enrollment elementary schools, though accelerated by design, often do not fully meet the needs of all their students. There is diversity within this population, and not all children learn at the same pace. Eliminating the option for further acceleration disproportionately impacts students from lower-income families who attend these schools. Without access to outside academic support, these students are left without a meaningful path to reach their full potential.

It's also important to note that acceleration need not be costly. Many of these students are self-motivated and simply need access to more advanced materials and the flexibility to move ahead. We should be encouraging them to grow—not placing arbitrary limits on their learning.

By barring selective enrollment students from grade acceleration, CPS risks deepening educational inequities. All students—regardless of school type or socioeconomic status—deserve access to opportunities that allow them to thrive. I urge you to reconsider this policy and ensure that selective enrollment students remain eligible for acceleration.

4 I am writing with concerns about the proposed changes to the grade acceleration policy in Chicago Public Schools, which you will vote on at the July 24th School Board meeting. Under the new policy, it appears that students in selective enrollment elementary schools would no longer be eligible for grade acceleration. While I fully support the goal of expanding access to acceleration for more students, I strongly urge you not to exclude selective enrollment students from this opportunity.

Although classical schools are already one year ahead of the standard CPS curriculum, that pace is still not sufficient for many high-achieving students. Removing the option for further acceleration unfairly penalizes bright students—particularly those from low-income families—who rely on the public school system to meet their academic needs.

Wealthier families can turn to costly outside enrichment programs like Art of Problem Solving (AoPS), Russian School of Math, or private tutors to supplement their child’s education. However, not all families have that option. Denying grade acceleration to students in selective schools will only widen the achievement and opportunity gap between students who can afford external support and those who cannot.

Excellence should be supported and nurtured at all CPS schools, including selective enrollment schools. I urge you to reconsider this policy and ensure that all students, regardless of school type or socioeconomic background, have access to the academic pathways they need to thrive.

****ATTACHMENTS****

Dr. Angel Alvarez, CPS Board Written Public Comments July 24, 2025

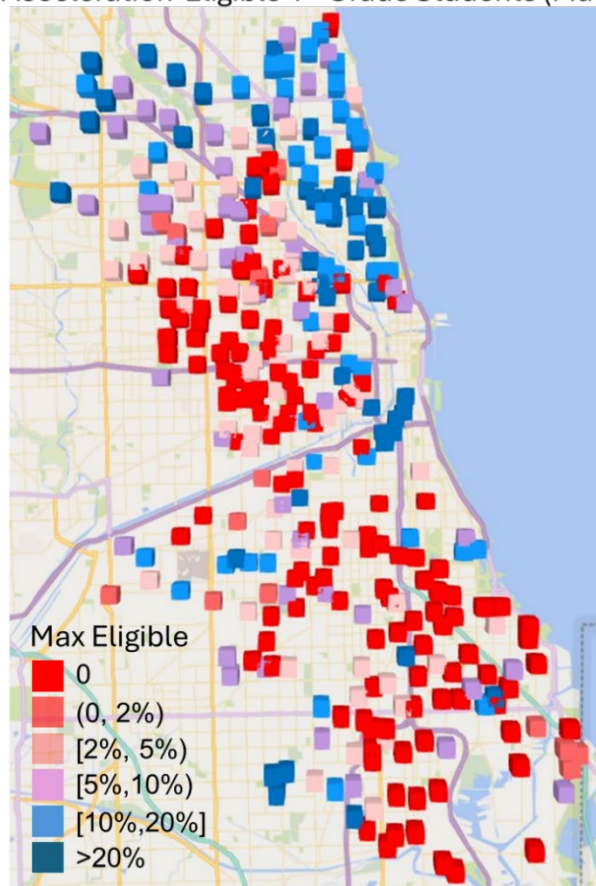
Re: CPS Accelerated Placement Policy and the CPS Budget

Dear CPS Board Members:

The proposed Accelerated Placement Policy (23-0628-PO4) should be tabled and revised. The policy aligns itself with CPS's Equity Framework and "seeks to ensure that all students—particularly those furthest from opportunity—have equitable access to accelerated learning pathways that affirm their strengths and potential." However, it will perpetuate well-established inequities because it keeps most of the barriers in place that limit advancement for students furthest from opportunity.

The policy allows students "within the highest decile of their grade level at their school" to apply. This will undoubtedly expand the number of students who can apply, but the vast majority will be rejected because they fail to meet the other criteria. For example, "the student must perform in the 95-99 percentile for two (2) consecutive district assessment tests in the subject in which acceleration is sought" and "a 3.75 grade point average for the past year in the subject(s) in which acceleration is sought." Those sound reasonable but fail to take into account that criteria will eliminate the opportunity for

Acceleration-Eligible 4th Grade Students (Math)



virtually all students in 40% of our schools. That is why I previously recommended a local norming approach.

I analyzed the students that scored in the top 5% of the STAR360 district assessments and showed that this policy will exclude low-income students of color attending schools on the South and West sides. The chart of 4th grade student test results reveals that 40% of schools have no students that are eligible in mathematics- these are concentrated on the Southside and Westside. The same pattern is observed using other grades. Analysis of reading scores show even worse outcomes with 50% of schools failing to have any students in a grade scoring in the top 5% on the STAR360 exam. CPS's new policy will allow the top 10% of students in these schools to apply, only to reject them all.

Given the fact that CPS requires two consecutive assessments, a 3.75 GPA, advanced registration for another above grade level exam, and the use of biased and subjective assessments unnecessary limits eligibility and explains why Black and Latino students were >2.5x less likely to receive acceleration in CPS when they applied in the past.

I have raised these concerns and shared my recommendations for school and local normed criteria to produce more equitable outcomes and save the district money. Many others have shared their critical feedback asking the policy to be revised during the public comment period. Despite these efforts, those recommendations were ignored and a policy that will suffer the same problems was proposed. I hope you consider the many public comments that are critical of this policy and table voting until a more effective and equitable policy can be implemented. I remain willing to share my expertise and recommendations so we can empower our students to reach their potential.

Be well,

Dr. Angel Alvarez

Re: CPS Budget

I appreciate the seriousness that the Board is giving the growing budget deficits, but need to provided important context that has been missing from the conversation regarding how we serve students with disabilities and how we arrived at the current level of deficits.

I attended five of the CPS Community Feedback Sessions, so I wanted to thank Interim Superintendent/CEO King, board members, and elected officials that attended. At each session, we raised concerns over how to support students furthest from opportunity, had lengthy discussions about cuts to special education, and asked about how we arrived at our current situation.

The presentation made by CBO Sitowski did not adequately convey the scope of the problem nor did it offer an accurate explanation of our growing deficit. The presentation includes a slide, "What's Driving the Deficit?" where CPS lists serving students with disabilities as the first of three reasons for the "significant growth in the cost of our obligations." They explain "additional staff required to meet the needs of our growing population of students with disabilities costs CPS \$450 million more than 2019 staffing levels." (slide 11) What is not included is how CPS was not properly meeting the needs of students with disabilities for years but still allowed its finances to deteriorate.

Moreover, an increase of \$450 million to support students with disabilities is far less than the more than \$4 billion increase in CPS's budget since 2019. Leaving those three

“facts” to explain our funding situation tacitly blames students with disabilities for a problem they did not cause. There have been cuts to SECAs and CPS should be transparent about this and explain how it will protect students with disabilities. I want to thank board member Gutierrez for attending the Back of the Yards event and sharing that concern and appreciate board members Custer and Lopez for communicating the message during the board meeting. Moreover, I am thankful for board member Thotakura for calling for greater transparency, additional details on budget cuts, and contingency planning.

The board should know that the presentation failed to explain internal decisions CPS has made to exacerbate the problems with our unsustainable budget. In 2013, after the horrible disaster that we were placed into, CPS’s Office of Finance projected debt serving of approximately \$450 million annually, but by 2034, we would pay approximately \$125 million. They wrote, “no significant increase in debt service is expected once CPS approaches these payment dates.” (p136, Proposed Budget 2012-2013).

In 2019, our debt payments were approximately \$600 million, far more than what was shared with the public previously. CPS’s Office of Finance then shared that debt service funding schedule was going to be over \$700 million for the next 10 years and in 2034 will be approximately \$475 million.

In the recent budget projection, CPS’s Office of Finance is now projecting over \$800 million in annual debt payments. The pattern is rather obvious; CPS does not provide accurate or transparent information regarding the current funding situation and long-term debt obligations. This must be provided so we can provide the best opportunity for our students. The presentation includes a reference to the fact that the State is not funding CPS at the recommended level according to its Evidence-Based Funding model. However, that is not a requirement and hundreds of school districts in Illinois are even further from that percentage than CPS. Although I believe we need to seek out more revenue that does not grow long-term deficits, without proper accountability and fiscal responsibility, we will rob our children of their future.

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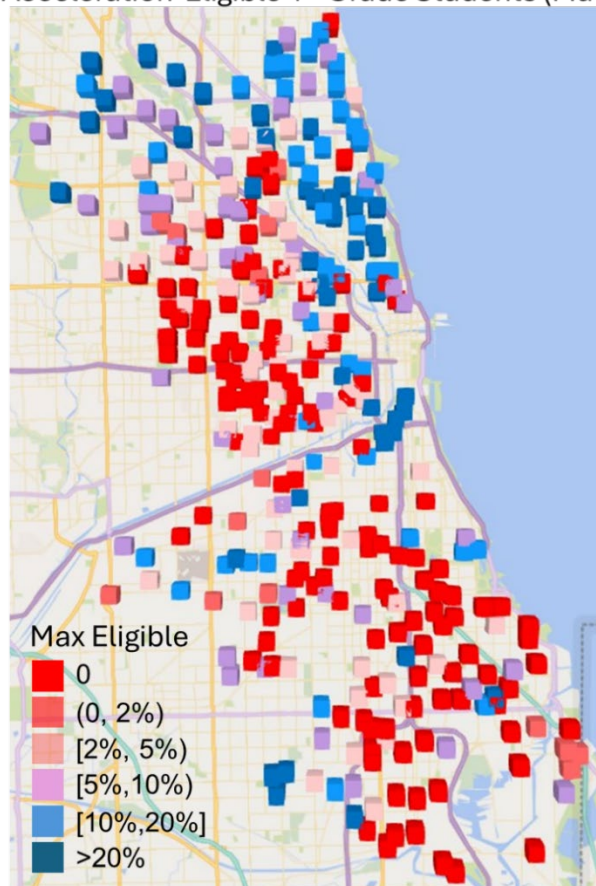
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Be well,

Dr. Alvarez

Dear CPS Board of Education,

I hope you are well. I am the founder of Sacred Ground Ministries. I'm writing to request your assistance in reinstating the fee waiver that has supported our free summer enrichment program at Emil G. Hirsch Metropolitan High School for the past eight years.

Each summer, Sacred Ground Ministries offers full-day, no-cost programming—culinary-arts classes, academic mentoring, and violence-prevention workshops—to eighteen at-risk students whose families rely on our services for safe, structured childcare and growth opportunities. Over those eight summers, both the current and previous principal of Hirsch Highschool repeatedly assured us (first by email and then on Facilitron, the Chicago Public Schools facility-management platform) that no rental fees would apply.

On May 19, 2025, a \$2,000 charge appeared in Facilitron without prior notice or a Local School Council vote. Because no formal vote has occurred—and our principals' written approvals created an established fee waiver—we kindly ask that you:

- 1. **Retroactively remove the \$2,000 charge** in Facilitron, restoring our longstanding waiver.*
- 2. **Confirm in writing** that our summer program will continue to incur no facility-use fees.*

*We are grateful for the partnership we have come to depend on with Emil G. Hirsch Metro and with Chicago Public Schools. Sacred Ground Ministries is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization offering **completely free** programming that enriches students' lives and builds community resilience. Our mission is to serve vulnerable youth, and we rely entirely on community collaboration and goodwill—never tuition—to keep our doors open. Displacing our students mid-summer breaks the trust we have built with families and with Chicago Public Schools over nearly a decade—and it harms the very community and service CPS seeks to support.*

Thank you sincerely for considering our request. Your help will allow our students to return immediately to the safe, enriching environment they deserve. Please let me know if you need any further documentation or if you would like to meet—at your convenience—to ensure this is resolved swiftly.

With gratitude and respect,

Hello President Harden, members of the Chicago Public Schools Board, and Interim Superintendent King.

I want to thank the staff of Chicago Public Schools for hosting the budget Community Engagement Sessions. I had the opportunity to attend Monday's virtual meeting, and I want to begin by highlighting a key theme that emerged from our small group discussion: **every single budget decision must be student-centered**. This message was clear and urgent, primarily as the group discussed our most at-risk students, those who require specialized services or multilingual support. That concern deeply resonates with what we're experiencing at Noble Schools as well.

Like every school in the district, no school can perfectly predict what unique support our students may need when they walk through the door on the first day of school. As a public school that is part of our GO CPS system, we serve all students who enter our doors. Once they arrive, we assess, we listen, learn, and we adapt. This may result in the need to hire additional special education teachers, paraprofessionals, or other support staff, based entirely on student needs.

In previous years, CPS provided a separate revenue category specifically for supporting students with special education needs. This year, that has changed: special education funding has been combined with general education funding into one lump sum. While we appreciate the transparency of the PCTC calculation this year, this change creates significant challenges once the school year begins.

Why does this matter? In the past, having separate funding allowed us to directly allocate resources to special education students without compromising the support for general education students, who also have essential needs. Now, with all funding in a single pot, schools are forced to make difficult decisions.

For example, if a school identifies the need for an additional learning specialist after the first day of school, the new, significantly higher threshold for appealing for additional funds—twice what it was last year—makes it harder to obtain the necessary resources from CPS, as we have in the past.

We urge CPS to reconsider the current special education appeal process. Every budget decision should be student-centered. That means ensuring all schools—including charter schools—have the resources they need to serve every student who walks through their doors. If you have questions or would like to learn more about what this looks like in practice, please don't hesitate to reach out. Thank you.