

**June 20, 2023 and June 21, 2023 Budget Hearings Written Comments  
Received between Tuesday, June 13<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, June 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Submitted via Written Comments Form**

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1 My name is Walter Brzeski (Bres-key) and I'm a former CPS employee and lifelong Chicago resident.

This is now my 10th request, plus several emails, for the following information from the Board and CPS:

I've asked for the Board's, Mr. Del Valle's, and CEO Martinez' for their help to get CPS Law and FOIA Dept to release to me the 2011 redacted security video of a Steinmetz HS assistant principal choking and dragging a female student that resulted in the APs arrest and a \$10,000 settlement made to the student. CPS first denied the release of the video and then I filed a Request for Review with the IL Attorney General's Public Access Counselor (PAC) and they ruled in my favor for the release of the video. However, whereas CPS and the CPS FOIA Dept under Joseph Moriarty had refused to release the video month after month and its going on 16 months.

Here's the CPS FOIA Request for the 2011 security video: "The security video for CPS Event Detail Report #678534, submitted on Thursday, January 13, 2011 for an event on either Tuesday, January 11, 2011 or Wednesday January 12, 2011. More specifics are: A CPS Investigative Memorandum was created on March 14, 2011 for this event/incident with File #5134 and sent to James Ciesil from Michael Mahone with: Subject: Jaime Jaramillo, Type of Incident: Physical Abuse, School: Steinmetz High School, Region: 1, Area: 26. Please provide the video in a copy of the current form and available for pickup or mailing to or by myself or a representative OR electronically in a form suitable to be attached to an email response back to this FOIA Request or through the CPS FOIA Center."

Please have this video provided to me ASAP. The IL ATG PAC's letter will be attached to the written comments section.

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2 We have a comprehensive bilingual non generic books series and program that is culturally relevant that resonates with the youth and promotes student achievement. We offer an academic curriculum at NO COST to CPS that addresses social and emotional learning and helps the students with their critical thinking skills and bridges the educational gap.

The books "From the Barrio to the Board Room, graphic novel Mi Barrio and activity coloring books teaches our teens and at-risk youth that gang banging and violence is not a life style but a death style and that the ultimate weapon is not a loaded gun but an educated mind.

Given the current climate facing our youth and communities we ask that you take a hard and closer look into these teaching tools that are being taught in classrooms across the country and in over 25 other countries around the world.

The Barrio books and program was initially launched in 2008 and we have seen over the past 15 1/2 years that it is having a social impact on hundreds and thousands of students in real time and the qualitative data is unquestionable and undeniable.

We have nothing to lose and everything to gain by bringing this program into CPS so the we can provide teaching tools that are changing and saving lives!

The Barrio books are being taught in middle schools, high schools, colleges, higher education, libraries, youth detention centers, jails, prisons, police, probation, substance abuse programs, homeless shelters, battered women's shelters, mental, health, churches and a multiple of after school programs.

This entire book series and curriculum was self funded as an investment in our children's future, we respectfully ask that we have a conversation to discuss various ways we can collaborate.

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| 3 | I would like to propose that the Principals in each of our schools regain their authority over the cleaning and maintenance functions in our schools. Passing the authority to outside organizations such as Sudexo and Aramark and coordinating the cleaning through CPS central office has created a disservice to the cleanliness and sanitation of our schools. But don't just take my word for it. I suggest that POLLS be taken of the Principals, students, and Local School to get their input on this proposal. |
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OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
STATE OF ILLINOIS

KWAME RAOUL  
ATTORNEY GENERAL

April 19, 2022

*Via electronic mail*  
Mr. Walter Brzeski



*Via electronic mail*  
Ms. Annie Righi  
Freedom of Information Act Officer  
Chicago Public Schools  
42 West Madison, 3rd Floor  
Chicago, Illinois 60602  
arighi@cps.edu

RE: FOIA Request for Review – 2020 PAC 65306; CPS No. N008658-082520

Dear Mr. Brzeski and Ms. Righi:

This determination is issued pursuant to section 9.5(f) of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 ILCS 140/9.5(f) (West 2020)).

On August 25, 2020, Mr. Walter Brzeski submitted a FOIA request to Chicago Public Schools (CPS) seeking "[t]he security video for CPS Event Detail Report #678534, submitted on Thursday, January 13, 2011 for an event on either Tuesday, January 11, 2011 or Wednesday January 12, 2011."<sup>1</sup> On October 13, 2020, CPS denied his request pursuant to sections 7(1)(j)(iii)<sup>2</sup> and 7.5(r)<sup>3</sup> of FOIA. CPS' response to Mr. Brzeski asserted that the recording fell within the scope of those exemptions because, "[t]he video footage you seek

<sup>1</sup>Chicago Public Schools' online FOIA center FOIA request submitted by Walter Brzeski (August 25, 2020).

<sup>2</sup>5 ILCS 140/7(i)(j)(iii) (West 2020).

<sup>3</sup>5 ILCS 140/7.5(r) (West 2020).

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contains images of students, and was likely used in student disciplinary proceedings."<sup>4</sup> On October 20, 2020, Mr. Brzeski submitted this Request for Review disputing CPS' denial of his request. In his Request for Review, Mr. Brzeski alleged that the video footage he seeks captures a physical altercation involving a then-assistant principal and a student, which led to the then-assistant principal being charged for assaulting the student.<sup>5</sup> He also asserted that the student received a \$10,000 settlement from CPS because of the incident in question.

On October 28, 2020, the Public Access Bureau sent a copy of the Request for Review to CPS and asked it to provide a copy of the responsive video footage, for this office's confidential review, along with a detailed explanation of the factual and legal bases for withholding the recording pursuant to the above-stated sections of FOIA. On December 10, 2020, CPS provided a written response that was submitted under a claim of confidentiality pursuant to section 9.5(d) of FOIA,<sup>6</sup> and a separate, non-confidential, response for this office to forward to Mr. Brzeski. On December 17, 2020, this office sent Mr. Brzeski a copy of the CPS's non-confidential response. On January 7, 2022, this office requested additional information from CPS. On March 3, 2022, CPS responded to this office's inquiry.

### DETERMINATION

"All records in the custody or possession of a public body are presumed to be open to inspection or copying." 5 ILCS 140/1.2 (West 2020); *see also Southern Illinoisan v. Illinois Dep't of Public Health*, 218 Ill. 2d 390, 415 (2006). A public body "has the burden of proving by clear and convincing evidence" that a record is exempt from disclosure. 5 ILCS 140/1.2 (West 2020). The exemptions from disclosure are to be narrowly construed. *Lieber v. Board of Trustees of Southern Illinois Univ.*, 176 Ill. 2d 401, 408 (1997).

### Section 7.5(r) of FOIA

Section 7.5(r) of FOIA exempts from inspection and copying "[i]nformation prohibited from being disclosed by the Illinois School Student Records Act [ISSRA]." Section

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<sup>4</sup>Letter from Annie Righi, Freedom of Information Act Officer, Chicago Public Schools, to Walter Brzeski (October 13, 2020).

<sup>5</sup>Mr. Brzeski also submitted with his Request for Review a copy of CPS' investigative memorandum concerning the underlying incident, which he appears to have obtained in response to a previous FOIA request. Identifiable student information has been redacted from this memorandum, but the un-redacted portion contains a very detailed description of the incident reflected in the responsive video footage.

<sup>6</sup>5 ILCS 140/9.5(d) (West 2020).

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6(a) of ISSRA<sup>7</sup> provides that "[n]o school student records or information contained therein may be released, transferred, disclosed or otherwise disseminated[.]" Section 2(d) of ISSRA<sup>8</sup> broadly defines "school student record" as "any writing or other recorded information concerning a student and by which a student may be **individually identified**, maintained by a school or at its direction or by an employee of a school, regardless of how or where the information is stored." (Emphasis added.)

It is undisputed that the recording in question captures former students in a hallway while those students were attending school. Some of the materials Mr. Brzeski filed with his Request for Review include Cook County Circuit Court records and settlement information naming a student who was involved in a civil suit concerning the underlying incident. Mr. Brzeski also submitted copies of police records which provide a physical description of a student involved in the incident and a CPS memorandum providing a detailed description of the video recording of the incident. When combined with this other information, the responsive recording could be used to individually identify at least one student captured on the footage.

An administrative rule implementing ISSRA, however, generally excludes from the "school student record" definition, "[v]ideo or other electronic recordings created and maintained \* \* \* for security or safety reasons or purposes, provided the information was **created at least in part for law enforcement or security or safety reasons or purposes[.]**"<sup>9</sup> The rule also provides:

The content of a video or other electronic recording may become part of a student's school student record to the extent school officials use and maintain this content for a particular reason (e.g., disciplinary action, compliance with a student's Individualized Education Program) regarding that specific student. Video or other electronic recordings that become part of a student's school record shall not be a public record and shall be released only in conformance with Section 6(a) of the Act and the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (citation omitted).<sup>[10]</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>105 ILCS 10/6(a)(West 2020).

<sup>8</sup>105 ILCS 10/2(d) (West 2020).

<sup>9</sup>23 Ill. Adm. Code §375.10 (2020), last amended at 44 Ill. Reg. 13364, effective July 28, 2020 (Emphasis added.)

<sup>10</sup>23 Ill. Adm. Code §375.10 (2020), last amended at 44 Ill. Reg. 13364, effective July 28, 2020.

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Based on the plain language of the above-quoted rule, if the requested recording has become a part of the former-student's educational record—because CPS used or maintained that recording for a particular reason regarding that student—then the recording would constitute a "school student record," pursuant to ISSRA, and would be exempt from disclosure pursuant to section 7.5(r) of FOIA. On January 7, 2022, this office asked CPS whether the responsive footage became part of any student's record. On March 3, 2022, CPS maintained that the video was exempt, but did not confirm that the footage had been made part of any student's record. In the absence of this information, the Public Access Bureau is unable to conclude that the recording constitutes a "school student record," and therefore, CPS did not sustain its burden of demonstrating by clear and convincing evidence that the recording is exempt in its entirety under section 7.5(r) of FOIA.

#### Section 7(1)(j)(iii) of FOIA

CPS also withheld the recording under section 7(1)(j)(iii), which exempts from disclosure "information concerning a school or university's **adjudication** of student disciplinary cases, but only to the extent that disclosure would unavoidably reveal the identity of the student[.]" (Emphasis added.) *Black's Law Dictionary* defines "adjudication" as meaning "[t]he legal process of resolving a dispute; the process of judicially deciding a case." *Black's Law Dictionary* 47 (9th ed. 2020). Similarly, an "adjudication hearing" is defined as an "[a]gency proceeding in which a person's rights and duties are decided after notice and an opportunity to be heard." *Black's Law Dictionary* 788 (9th ed. 2009).

Based on the plain language of the exemption, the Public Access Bureau has previously determined that "to apply [s]ection 7(1)(j)(iii), a school's adjudication of a disciplinary matter should include, at the very least, the commencement of some type of formal hearing to determine the rights of the students." Ill. Att'y Gen. PAC Req. Rev. Ltr. 11072, issued February 9, 2011, at 2. Here, CPS has not demonstrated that any formal hearing was held to determine the rights of a student. Accordingly, this office concludes that CPS has not sustained its burden of demonstrating that the records are exempt from disclosure under section 7(1)(j)(iii) of FOIA.

#### Section 7(1)(c) of FOIA

Section 7(1)(c) of FOIA<sup>11</sup> exempts from disclosure "[p]ersonal information contained within public records, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy." Section 7(1)(c) defines "unwarranted invasion of personal

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<sup>11</sup>5 ILCS 140/7(1)(c) (West 2020), as amended by Public Acts 102-038, effective June 25, 2021; 102-558, effective August 20, 2021.

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privacy" as "the disclosure of information that is highly personal or objectionable to a reasonable person and in which the subject's right to privacy outweighs any legitimate public interest in obtaining the information." Section 7(1)(c) further provides that "disclosure of information that **bears on the public duties of public employees and officials** shall not be considered an invasion of personal privacy." (Emphasis added.)

A public body's assertion that the release of information would constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy is evaluated on a case-by-case basis. *Chicago Journeymen Plumbers' Local Union 130, U.A. v. Department of Public Health*, 327 Ill. App. 3d 192, 196 (1st Dist. 2001). The phrase "clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy" evinces a strict standard to claim the exemption, and the burden is on the public body having charge of the record to prove that standard has been met. *Schessler v. Department of Conservation*, 256 Ill. App. 3d 198, 202 (4th Dist. 1994).

Because the video footage involves a public employee's actions while he was performing his public duties as an assistant principal, the recording unequivocally bears on the performance of that employee, and therefore, the disclosure of the footage would not constitute an unwarranted invasion of the assistant principal's personal privacy. See Ill. Att'y Gen. Pub. Acc. Op. No. 18-018, issued December 31, 2018, at 6 (complaints or allegations of misconduct against public employees are generally not exempt from disclosure in whole under section 7(1)(c) because such information bears on the performance of the employees' public duties).

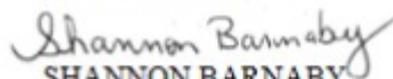
Further, there is a strong public interest in monitoring how public employees perform their public duties, including disclosure of records concerning a public employee's alleged misconduct. See Ill. Att'y Gen. Pub. Acc. Op. No. 21-007, issued July 27, 2021, at 7 (noting a "broad public interest in monitoring the affairs of local government to hold public officials accountable."). However, images that identify the former student, as well as any other students that happened to be captured in the footage, are highly personal by their very nature, and their disclosure would be objectionable to a reasonable person. These students' right to privacy outweighs any legitimate public interest in disclosure of their images on those recordings.

Therefore, this office concludes that CPS has not sustained its burden of demonstrating that the recoding is exempt in its entirety pursuant to section 7(1)(c) of FOIA. Accordingly, this office requests that CPS provide Mr. Brzeski with a copy of the responsive recoding, with the students' images redacted.

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The Public Access Counselor has determined that resolution of this matter does not require the issuance of a binding opinion. This file is closed. If you have any questions, my e-mail address is [Shannon.Barnaby@ilag.gov](mailto:Shannon.Barnaby@ilag.gov).

Very truly yours,

  
SHANNON BARNABY  
Assistant Attorney General  
Public Access Bureau

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# FROM THE BARRIO

*“This book has taught me that even though I’m small, I can hold a big place in this world. Also I have learned that there are no shortcuts on the road of life and if I take a wrong turn there is always a way to get back on track. I love this book and plan to read it again and again!”*

**—Sarah Bailey**  
11 years old

“Robert Renteria carved an innovative path by trying to eliminate—with high intensity—gangs, drug activities and other crimes among our youth. His unselfish approach of presenting his life story through his books (*From the Barrio to the Boardroom* and *Mi Barrio* in English and Spanish), and challenging workshops and lectures, has exploded with tremendous accolades in schools, churches and youth detention centers throughout the nation! It’s no surprise that Robert was chosen as the “2010 Latino Professional of the Year” by the Chicago Latino Network (Over 45,000 members.) Robert’s life parallels mine in areas where he broke the barrier and became the pioneer in reaching his dreams of being a team player in the boardroom! Read the book.”

**—Guillermo “Bill” Perez**  
2009 Latino Professional of the Year



*“Mi Barrio is not only an eye opener, but is geared to everyone, for most of us are not born with a silver spoon in our mouth. It’s about life experiences and how to overcome any defeat by having strength and faith. Mi Barrio should be read by all teens to let them know that we have choices in our lives and can make no excuses for our failures.”*

**—Sonia Varela**  
Hispanic Liaison,  
Illinois Secretary of State



**QUOTES FROM STUDENTS AT PATHWAYS ACADEMY IN AURORA AFTER READING THE BOOK, *FROM THE BARRIO TO THE BOARD ROOM*, WORKING THE CURRICULUM, AND HEARING A PRESENTATION BY ROBERT ON FEB. 8, 2011**

- » “Now I realize gang banging is pointless in life and can give you an easy ticket to jail or a graveyard. I think you are a strong man and you came so far. I went through so much too but now I know that if I set my mind to it then I can accomplish. I hope you have a good life and thank you.”
- » “I read your book. I could relate to it a lot. I think that just because I read your book it’s a lot of things that I could change now before it get to bad. When you came to the school I was excited to actually meet you. I really enjoyed you so I want to thank you for everything and for sharing your life story.”
- » “Thank you for presenting to the class and giving us more reasons to thank God for letting us see another day in life. The part that had me shocked was when you said you almost got shot, but it didn’t hit you. And after that you changed your life around. You inspired me to change my life around and I thank you for that. May God Bless You.” (teenage girl)
- » “You have inspired me in many ways. The Barrio was the main gateway to that inspiration. The interview you gave was excellent. You have spoken the truth in gang life. Thank you.”
- » “Thank you for coming by and sharing your life story with me. I really heard and thought about the things you said. You went through a lot, and I’m trying to not go through that so I am making a change.”
- » “We’re all glad you came out, we learned much about how to get into the business life successfully.”
- » “I think now I know you turned out pretty successful and I’m very proud of you. You are a Role Model I will always remember you, cherish your book! Shooting for the stars.”
- » “I give all thanks to you for coming to our school and sharing your life story. I’m encouraged to succeed with my life and be successful.”
- » “I can tell you worked hard to get to where your are, and it’s hard right now to keep on going and trying to be successful. But it gives me hope seeing people that survived and succeeded has made me open my eyes & realize.”
- » “I just wanna thank you for the presentation for sharing your life with us. I really like your book, it’s real interesting and is a good example for all the youngest people so we can do so much better and go to college. That’s why I wanna thank you for the presentation.”

**GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS.** The first time I ever opened a Mi Barrio book was at a meeting for a friend of mine who was running for Cook County sheriff. I was sitting in Mr. Rentria's office. Before I could get through the first chapter I saw something special. Needless to say, we didn't get a chance to talk politics that day, our conversation was about Mi Barrio, where I'm from and how children, not just Chicago, but around the world can relate to Robert's story. The deal was sealed for me later that evening when I got home and gave the book to my daughter, a fourteen year old freshman in Chicago Public Schools. She started reading it that night and I still haven't gotten my book back. Any book that disappears in my house is a good thing -- especially when she could be doing so many other things.

—**Kory Bilbro**  
Prevention Specialist, Chicago



“[The book] made me feel that anything is possible, that if you put your mind to it anything is possible.”

—**Joe Marmendoza**  
Boys to Men Fraternity

“There is a special quote that Robert's mom always told him. That you can achieve anything if you have a corazon. That really caught my attention because I'm always striving forward and trying to do my best. He shows me how I can achieve anything.

—**Gilberto Chaidez**  
Boys to Men Fraternity

“Thanks to Robert. He went through hard times and now he is a role model for us.”

—**Senor Maravilla**  
Aurora Youth Center

“Thank you for what you are doing for these children and for me. You're an inspiration to all of us.”

—**Vanessa Saenz**  
Student, Columbia College

“You're an inspiration to all of the people here, young and old, to come back and give to the community. To stand up and speak out and to be a vision of what it is to be a successful Latino.”

—**Alexis Cervantes**

“I'm inspired by your story. It reminds me of my Dad who crossed the border to America to help out his family. He wanted to become something greater and for his kids to be great.”

—**Luis Solario, Aurora Christian High School**

“Your book is inspiring. I work with children. I work with teachers. Believe me—this book is going to be in everyone's hands.”

—**Teacher**  
Aurora School District



see these kids in court and it hurts me to see them separated from their families because of wrong choices. Mi Barrio can and will help these kids make the right choices. I believe that these kids are only misunderstood. Both of these books covers the ages of all that need guidance. We need to use any and all educational tools to shape and mold them to be successful in life. I am glad to be part of this movement. Education is no longer a choice, it's a necessity!

**—Eve Gomez, Single Mother**

Robert's rags to riches biography is the quintessential American story, but from the Latino perspective. He is a testament to the Latino values of hard work, family and dedication to community. Robert grew up in East Los Angeles, had a rocky childhood, straightened himself up through service to his country in the military and then made it in Corporate America without a college degree. Robert faced conditions that many of our youths face today, but he ultimately took the right fork in the road after some trials and tribulations. Ultimately, the book impacted me because it has been a great teaching tool for my own kids. They are growing up under conditions different from Robert's. However, the book provides good guidelines for dealing with challenges that all American kids face. I have read the book with my two oldest daughters, and it has been a great vehicle for dialogue among us. Now, Robert is selflessly taking that message to the Latino and other communities through his book which has become a movement. I have personally seen the impact Robert has had on Latino and other youths in speaking to them. He gets right down to their level and goes right to their hearts and minds.

**—Rob Lang, Partner, Holland & Knight Chicago**



**I JUST READ MI BARRIO, COULDN'T PUT IT DOWN.** The Comic was recommended to me by State Rep. Linda Chapa-Lavia. My background isn't a Latino, or from poverty, or a one parent household, or from friends with drugs, or from gangs, or a background where I had to kill someone to be part of the group, BUT, I had an alcoholic Dad and his life doesn't have to be mine. Not accepting obstacles is VITALLY IMPORTANT FOR ALL OF US. For me, being an unavailable parent isn't OK. Who am I? The comic book got me thinking: I've been unemployed a long time. Is it OK to give up? It's not. Robert's life and book is inspirational, for all.

—Michael Flynn

Thank you so much for coordinating Robert's visit. I know that his message was very meaningful to my students, and we are so appreciative that he took the time to come and share his experiences with us. Thanks again for everything!

—Lynn, 7th Grade Teacher  
Washington Middle School

Having been around Cheryl and Robert for the last couple of years and knowing first hand how much they and the Foundation are committed to

getting the word out, I happened to ride along on a classroom presentation at Darwin Elementary School in Chicago. Every one of the 8th grade students that were in the auditorium were enthralled during Robert's speech and so many were enthusiastic about asking questions. The one moment that was so poignantly moving to me was when one of the female students went up to Robert, while he was shaking hands and talking to others, just to touch his arm and move on. What a gift to witness such a profound response to a moving message.

—Karen J.  
Business Owner and Mother

From the Barrio to the Boardroom had a profound effect on me. It showed a strong message of hope and encouragement. The scene is very real and it depicts exactly the same issues that our youth are struggling with today. There are choices that these teenagers make every single day and to many there is no light at the end of the tunnel. From the Barrio gives them that light, it shows them that they can make it out of the hellacious environment that they are in and become a contributing member of society. That they can own their own business and they can become anyone that they want to become. That they can follow their dream!

—Tami Principe  
Founder of Womens Recreation, Inc.





Many times the downtrodden living in the ghetto assume their life's path is locked in stone and that there is no escape from their predicament. The main thing about Robert's book is that it furnishes hope! Hope to achieve. Hope to succeed via hard work and tenacity. Hope for the future. Hope for a better life. Hope for happiness. Hope for an education. Hope to live life like the privileged. Hope that everyone can be equal no matter from what station in life they were born to. Robert's book provides impetus and direction.

—Ben Haney  
**Justice of the Peace**

Dear Mr. Renteria,

I want to tell you I really appreciated your encouragement tonight at Mutual Ground. A lot of what you said hit home to me, and especially when you told me I need to talk about my issues so I can grow as a better woman for myself and my kids. I felt one in a million when you gave me your book today. I know what I want out of life and I know things in life don't come easy, and I have no choice but to make it happen (take it one step at a time). You are a great inspiration to me! I'm trying to surround myself with nothing but POSITIVE. Always progress towards something to better yourself is what I'm teaching my kids and learning for myself.

**Always, Tasha**

Hi, my name is Maricela, and I am 22 years old. I just really wanted to reach out to you. I just got released from jail for the 3rd time since 2008 today. I really wanted to reach out to you because I read your book while in custody and I feel it's a message I needed to hear. My parents have the same work ethic you and your mother had and I too did until I started using heroin. Heroin took everything from me, my car, home, belongings, health and family. I got so bad that I was beginning to lose hope and just live for the drug. All I could think about while in my cell was the day I got out I was going to cash my check and go straight to city and get as high as I could but reading your book has given me a different feeling inside. A feeling that makes me want to start over and really make my parents proud. (My sister and I both got arrested on the 29th of January and both are addicted to heroin, I don't know where we picked up that habit.) I guess I just wanted to thank you for uplifting my spirits a bit, I read your book straight through the end. It's going to be a really rough road ahead but it's worth a try.

**Maricela**

In a world of instant celebrities, it's refreshing to read a book about an everyday person, doing everyday work, achieving the American dream. From the Barrio to the Board Room is one such book. Robert Renteria's life from the barrios of L.A. to ownership of his own business shows that life is not a one try shot at the top, but the hard work and dedication of one man towards his lifelong dream. This book depicts the real world and the real struggles of a young Hispanic man facing life on life's terms. Encountering a difficult family life,

discrimination, substance abuse, gang activity, and everyday life difficulties, the book is real. The book is real because it shows that life is not a fairy tale of instant glamour and fame, but one of perseverance and hard work towards a goal. This book was refreshing to me and my students because it took out the formula of luck and situation for success, and re-formulated it based on hard work, dedication. In a world where a lucky few people claim instant success, it's important to know that hard work and dedication is a more realistic way to achieve the American dream. As a teacher I found it important to show to my students that it's not only the latest pop culture stars reaching the American dream, but the everyday person fighting and holding to his or her dreams. As for my students, they were generally interested in the story and the everyday struggles depicted in the book, since these struggles seemed more relevant to their lives. Thank you very much for writing such a wonderful book.

—Tim St.Clair, East Aurora  
High School, Pride Supervisor

**"I FOUND ROBERT TO BE INSPIRING AND COLLABORATIVE.** His story builds practical but powerful connections for students, many who are facing circumstances similar to those he shares in the memoir. Robert's life story reinforces the value of hard work, but also focuses on the power of helping others. It's important to provide mentoring relationships with students and Robert brings the value of positive adult relationships to life on the pages of his memoir."

—Nancy Bartosz  
Assistant Principal, Westmont High School, Westmont, IL

Dear Mr. Renteria

Though I am only half way through your book I wanted to say thank you. In the first few chapters hearing how you grew up made me go back in time and relive a lot of memories of what I call my old life. By the age of 12 I left my house due to my stepfather and a mom that worked two jobs every day. I never really saw her, but when I did there was no love in her eyes only pain. I ran through the streets with my gang, sold weed and coke, and in time abused them both. I was not expected to make it past my 16th birthday and in those 4 years I witnessed a lot of death. I broke down around my 15th birthday. Another gang was gunning for me and I ran to Mexico to save my life...well not much changed. Within 6 months I needed to run from Mexico so I came back home and, well, best way to say it is that the s\*\*t hit the fan. I wanted out so I went to military school (Lincoln's Challenge) and walked out with a G.E.D. I worked at Best Buy installing car stereos and alarms (I taught myself). I met my wife and 13 years later am still living an honorable life, but I am haunted by my ghost and have forced myself into a dead end job. But my hunger has been reignited by your book. I am spiffing up my resume to start a new job search. Your story so far has touched my heart and showed me that I am not alone. Where I was afraid to push in life, I now feel in my heart I need to be pushed. My ghost nearly ruined my marriage. I have 2 great boys and I want to be the kind of father they can be proud of. You helped me find my way again. Your book is great. I hope it reaches more people who can benefit from its message.

—Rafael Rojas



April 28th, 2023

Chicago Board of Education Members,

Bottom line first. The rollout of the Chicago Public Schools FY2024 budget process timeline fails to acknowledge the most integral piece to develop, approve and monitor school budgets: the Local School Council (LSC). Amid the ongoing global health pandemic and the crisis of need schools are experiencing; where our students and their families need a stimulus of equitable educational, trauma and social emotional support, **we request the district extend the budget timeline from May 4 to May 24, 2023.**

There is a 30-year precedent set for the most localized democracy and participatory school governance in the nation; the LSCs primary role is to support the school process by examining the school budget and improvement planning. The LSC holds the vital role to examine the proposed school budget to ensure that the projections made by CPS and the principal are comprehensive and realistic, aligned with the local school's specialized needs outlined in the Continuous Improvement Work Plan or CIWP. This is also outlined in state law, Illinois School Code, CPS policy and supported by consortium research and best practices.

Many LSC councilmembers are reporting they have not received the required CIWP presentation this school year. We know CIWP presentations to the school community must be done to ensure student and school priorities align with the proposed budget. LSC members have highlighted these constraints to the Office of Local School Council Relations and are being told to hold special meetings. We are deeply concerned by the lack of time considerations for the current pandemic, diverse needs and trauma our youth and schools are experiencing, that should be diligently reflected in the school budget.

We understand the importance of the required collaborative budget process timeline. We believe this request to extend the deadline aligns with the requirements outlined in state law and CPS policy, to allow councils adequate time to examine, collaborate and present their proposed budgets, prior to submitting them to the district. **And so we categorically believe the limitation of time LSCs have with the FY2024 proposed budget, does not align with responsibilities and fiduciary duties outlined in state law, district policy and LSC training.**

The district budget timeline is having a chaotic effect on councils; causing them to scramble to hold emergency special meetings to consider their budgets, receive adequate awareness of the school's CIWP and ensure the collaborative process where school priorities are set based on the needs of students and families.



**Signed by:**

1. Rakhee Dodia, Parent representative, PEIRCE
2. Jacoby Warren, Parent representative, MCCUTCHEON
3. Tim Lacy, Parent representative, SWIFT
4. Alexa Lee-Hassan, Parent representative, MITCHELL
5. Moises Moreno, Community representative, JUAREZ HS
6. Anders Ruhwald, Community representative, SKINNER
7. Jason Evans, Parent representative, RAY
8. Irene Robinson, Parent representative, DYETT ARTS HS
9. Michael Montagano, Parent representative, ENGLEWOOD STEM HS
10. Patrick Brosnan, Community representative, POE and BROOKS HS
11. Kevin Robinson, Parent representative, HOLDEN
12. Amanda Paz, Community representative, BUDLONG
13. Annie Heitman, Parent representative, LINCOLN
14. Joy Clendenning, Community representative, KENWOOD HS
15. Vicki Tran, Parent representative, FARNSWORTH
16. Leonardo Quintero, Parent representative, COOPER
17. Kiersten Solis, Parent representative, VOLTA
18. Bonnie Kennedy, Parent representative, EDGEBROOK
19. Jamie DeCaria, Parent representative, MITCHELL
20. Veena Villivalam, Parent representative, SUDER
21. Kathleen Hayes, Parent representative, PEIRCE
22. Miguel Bautista, Parent representative, GALILEO
23. Jacqueline Martinez, Parent representative, OGDEN ES and OGDEN HS
24. Maria Luisa Ugarte, Parent representative, INTER-AMERICAN and WESTINGHOUSE HS
25. Rousemary Vega, Parent representative, CLEMENTE HS
26. Brenda Guzman, Parent representative, INTER-AMERICAN
27. Violeta Jimenez, Parent representative, INTER-AMERICAN
28. Naoma Nagahawatte, Community representative, SKINNER
29. Kathleen Murphy, Parent representative, LASALLE II
30. Victoria Tolbert, Parent representative, LASALLE II
31. Christina Rivero, Community representative, MCPHERSON
32. Michael E. Brunson, Community representative, HARLAN HS
33. Michelle Bautista, Parent representative, GALILEO
34. Marguerite Baran, Parent representative, TAFT HS
35. Robert Pincham, Community representative, HARLAN HS
36. Robert Pincham, Community representative, HARLAN HS
37. Lisa Myers, Parent representative, MCPHERSON
38. Leidy Melendez, Parent representative, FUNSTON



39. Dawne Moon, Parent representative, KILMER
40. Christine O'Laughlin, Teacher representative, SUTHERLAND
41. Xochitl Esparza, Community representative, JUAREZ HS
42. Tricia Fitzgerald, Community representative, VICK
43. Xochitl Esparza, Community representative, JUAREZ HS
44. Andrea Crudder, Parent representative, MITCHELL
45. Calvin Clark, Teacher representative, SULLIVAN HS
46. LaTasha Upshaw, Parent representative, ARIEL
47. Chamika Jones, Parent representative, SUDER
48. Patricia Islas, Community representative, VOLTA
49. Meredith Taylor, Parent representative, CLEVELAND
50. Julianna Perez, Parent representative, SULLIVAN HS
51. Jin-Soo Huh, Community representative, INTER-AMERICAN
52. Herb Lentz, Parent representative, SUTHERLAND
53. Catherine Jones, Community representative, DOUGLASS HS
54. Maria Aguilar, Parent representative, LOZANO
55. Jenny Dale, Parent representative, INTER-AMERICAN
56. Stephen Couper, Parent representative, SAUGANASH
57. Theophilus Tines, Teacher representative, HARLAN HS
58. Wilma Pittman, Community representative, MCCUTCHEON
59. Sabrina Jackson, Parent representative, BASS
60. Latonya Brown, Community representative, BASS
61. Johnnie Walls, Community representative, BASS
62. Rikkita Baisten, Parent representative, BASS
63. Bridget Morrell, Parent representative, SOR JUANA
64. Helen Ho Supanich, Parent representative, MITCHELL
65. Daniel Taylor, Parent representative, CLARK ES
66. Carolyn Leonard, Parent representative, HARLAN HS
67. Ingrid Moorehouse, Teacher representative, YATES
68. Lindsey Dugue, Parent representative, KILMER
69. Jessica Mann, Teacher representative, INTER-AMERICAN
70. Lucy Barraza, Teacher representative, INTER-AMERICAN
71. Lillian Osborne, Community representative, MONROE
72. Cesar Pina, Community representative, FARNSWORTH
73. Alma Nikezic, Non-teaching staff representative, FARNSWORTH
74. Jessica Keirns, Parent representative, FOREMAN HS
75. Maggie Cullerton Hooper, Parent representative, HIBBARD
76. Elizabeth Chandran, Parent representative, WATERS
77. John Cyriac Mathew, Teacher representative, SULLIVAN HS
78. Erin Drain, Community representative, SAYRE
79. Dan Morris, Parent representative, WATERS



80. Jesus Estrada, Teacher representative, SAYRE
81. Julia Goetten, Community representative, MCPHERSON
82. Mark Williams, Non-teaching staff representative, WATERS
83. Jess Mahoney, Parent representative, BOONE
84. Sarah Colella, Parent representative, PETERSON
85. Ayana Rhodes-Morton, Parent representative, STONE
86. Carrie Manion, Parent representative, DRUMMOND
87. Miriam Zamora, Parent representative, SOR JUANA
88. Maxwell Fritz, Community representative, HOLDEN
89. Emily Nevius, Parent representative, HOLDEN
90. Juanita García, Parent representative, CLEMENTE HS
91. Bianca Magallanes, Parent representative, CAMRAS
92. Marie Snyder, Community representative, YATES
93. Claudia Peralta, Parent representative, VON LINNE
94. Cheryl Conner, Parent representative, SABIN
95. Amanda Torres, Parent representative, SABIN
96. Theodria Constanopolis, Community representative, RANDOLPH
97. Jo Etta Harris, Parent representative, SHOESMITH
98. Victoria Parker, Parent representative, EBINGER
99. Evelia Zavala, Parent representative, VON LINNE
100. Katy Maher, Parent representative, EBINGER
101. Brenda Reyes, Parent representative, JUAREZ HS
102. Beian Stockmaster, Parent representative, WATERS
103. Kristina Kielbasa, Parent representative, FARNSWORTH
104. david vance, Community representative, BOWEN HS and THORP J
105. Micaela Bates, Parent representative, SUDER
106. Joanna Su, Parent representative, GALE
107. Tracey Starkovich, Parent representative, BOONE
108. Darris Lewis, Community representative, AVALON PARK, BOGAN HS, and BRONZEVILLE HS
109. Miriam Santiago, Parent representative, DORE and HANCOCK HS
110. Whitney Norris, Parent representative, SULLIVAN HS
111. Joy Coombes, Parent representative, AMUNDSEN HS
112. Karen Soto, Teacher representative, WATERS
113. Lisset Gonzalez, Parent representative, NIGHTINGALE
114. Kristen Luttery, Parent representative, SAYRE
115. Lisa Miranda, Parent representative, BELL
116. Joe Kurstin, Parent representative, HARTE
117. Shantá Robinson, Parent representative, RAY
118. Andy Carter, Community representative, RAY
119. Dori Lehman, Parent representative, PEIRCE



120. Dennis Acosta, Teacher representative, CLEMENTE HS
121. Richard Ranallo, Community representative, MCCLELLAN
122. Sandra Heidt, Community representative, ASHBURN
123. Christian Campos, Non-teaching staff representative, SUDER
124. Debra Hass, Community representative, RAY
125. Rodica Trifan, Parent representative, WATERS
126. Cynthia DeLira, Parent representative, LASALLE II
127. Judy Deering, Parent representative, BOONE
128. Jenny Conlon, Parent representative, BEAUBIEN
129. Kate Jablonski, Parent representative, NEW FIELD
130. Luis Concepcion, Parent representative, BELL
131. Susan DeCostanza, Parent representative, SAYRE
132. Mark Donlin, Teacher representative, BOONE
133. Alexandra Davila, Parent representative, TAFT HS
134. Paola Mena Sanchez, Parent representative, CLEMENTE HS
135. Paul Connolly, Parent representative, HITCH and TAFT HS
136. Margarita Rosa, Community representative, INTER-AMERICAN
137. Lissette Martinez, Parent representative, SUDER
138. Jessica Nixon, Community representative, SAYRE
139. Scott Plencner, Teacher representative, TAFT HS
140. Patricia Johnson, Community representative, DULLES
141. Kendra Snow, Parent representative, HARVARD
142. Aiko Kojima Hibino, Community representative, HARTE
143. Jack Bouman, Non-teaching staff representative, NEW FIELD
144. Melanie Lopez, Teacher representative, FOREMAN HS
145. Marc Kaplan, Community representative, UPLIFT HS
146. Rebecca wells, Parent representative, OGDEN HS
147. Christina Tassone, Parent representative, SAUGANASH
148. Maria R Owens, Community representative, HIRSCH HS
149. Cara Chae, Parent representative, BEAUBIEN
150. Guadalupe Ojeda, Parent representative, INTER-AMERICAN
151. Genevieve Misfeldt, Parent representative, MAYER
152. Gabriel Gillett, Parent representative, MAYER
153. Edith Tovar, Community representative, FARRAGUT HS
154. Patrick Chi, Non-teaching staff representative, BOONE
155. Kristen Quinn, Community representative, WATERS
156. Josefina Nava, Teacher representative, HEDGES
157. Letty Zuniga, Teacher representative, HEDGES
158. Mary Ellen Dairyko, Community representative, SHOESMITH
159. Lori Petersen, Community representative, EDISON
160. Kevin Kasiborski, Parent representative, HAMILTON



161. Jennifer Edmonds, Community representative, BELL
162. Jane Eloise Grant, Teacher representative, HAMILTON
163. Peter Barash, Teacher representative, BELL
164. JC Aevaliotis, Parent representative, BELL
165. Amanda Hughes, Parent representative, HAMILTON
166. Erin Bassett, Parent representative, HAMILTON
167. Denise Pfeifer, Non-teaching staff representative, HAMILTON
168. Robin Johnson, Parent representative, UPLIFT HS
169. Patrick Meenan, Parent representative, HAMILTON
170. Deborah Cousino, Parent representative, UPLIFT HS
171. Holly Kohli, Community representative, HAMILTON
172. Matthew Capozzoli, Parent representative, THORP O
173. Carmen Holiday, Parent representative, ASHBURN
174. Tenile Richardson, Parent representative, ASHBURN
175. Reynonda Townsend, Parent representative, BRONZEVILLE CLASSICAL
176. Kimberly Walls Kirk, Teacher representative, FULTON
177. Lindsay Smith, Community representative, COURTENAY
178. Brandon Lee, Community representative, MCCUTCHEON
179. Tim Noonan, Parent representative, KELLOGG
180. Margaret Waugh, Parent representative, BELL
181. Erin Briggs, Parent representative, COURTENAY
182. Marcus Ward, Parent representative, BLAINE
183. Janet Fernandez, Parent representative, NORWOOD PARK
184. Princesa Miranda, Student representative, NORWOOD PARK