

February 22, 2024

APPROVE THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER RECOMMENDS:


That the Board approve the Chicago Public Schools Legislative Agenda to establish clear goals, rigorous standards, and effective policies that facilitate equitable access to a high-quality public education system for the children of Chicago by pursuing the following legislative priorities.

DESCRIPTION:

The Chief Executive Officer is requesting Board approval of the Chicago Public Schools Legislative Agenda. The legislative priorities overview below is detailed in Attachment A and is in alignment with Board Rule 2-21.

- Resources for Equitable Student Experiences
- Operational Excellence
- Daily Learning Experiences
- Adult Capacity and Continuous Learning

Approved as to Legal Form:

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Ruchi Verma
General Counsel

Approved:

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Pedro Martinez
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment A

Chicago Public Schools Legislative Agenda

As a District, we seek to establish clear goals, rigorous standards, and effective policies that facilitate equitable access to a high-quality public education system for the children of Chicago. We are committed to delivering results that align with the expectations of the citizens of Chicago. We seek to further our work by pursuing the following legislative priorities. The legislative priorities, detailed below, in alignment with Board Rule 2-21, are not exhaustive and may be pursued in multiple legislative sessions as the District responds to circumstances that affect the ability to advance this agenda.

RESOURCES FOR EQUITABLE STUDENT EXPERIENCES

The District strives to eliminate opportunity gaps for all of our students by providing the resources necessary for each of our students to reach our shared, universal goals. Reducing these gaps requires that we have the resources needed to create the learning environments for all students to thrive and be prepared for success in college, career, and civic life.

Adequate Funding

According to the state's most recent Evidence-Based Funding (EBF) formula, CPS received only 81% of what the formula determined the District needed to be adequately funded, which means that CPS was short nearly \$1.1 billion of the resources needed to best support schools and students. We believe that the state should move to more fully fund school districts to ensure they have the resources they need.

Pension Funding Parity

CPS is the only district in the state that is required to fund its own teacher pensions. The state provides only 32% of CPS' total cost, with Chicago taxpayers covering the remaining 68%, or \$700 million.

Municipal Employees and Annuities Benefit Fund (MEABF)

CPS has significant financial entanglements with the City, including the MEABF, per the 2021 independent analysis, [Analysis of CPS Finances and Entanglement](#). As the district transitions to an independently elected board, it is unclear what funds are supposed to cover the district's nearly 20,000 current members in MEABF.

Federal Funding

As federal pandemic relief revenues (ESSER III) expire later this year, the district aims to ensure there are no cuts to federal funding to ensure that the funding cliff can be managed responsibly. Ideally, we'd see an increase in federal funding for Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Title I, II and II program, and IDEA Part B.

21st Century Funding and After School Funding

Funding for out of school time programming is crucial as it provides a safe and enriching environment for students outside of regular school hours, offering opportunities for academic support, skill development, and social engagement, ultimately contributing to their overall growth and success.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Our goal is to provide students, school leaders, staff, and parents with seamless support structures that are high-quality, responsive, and equitable while bolstering the instructional core. In doing so, the District strives to create safe, warm, clean and dry buildings suitable for a 21st-century learning environment, and providing safe and timely transportation for all eligible students.

Capital Funding

CPS's facility portfolio currently includes 522 campuses and 803 buildings, and the average facility age is more than 84 years old. The total CPS ten year facility funding need is currently more than \$14 billion. The District currently relies on alternative bonds that are secured by Evidence-Based Funding (EBF), which are intended to be used to support curriculum and instruction, programmatic investments, and other operational expenses needed to fulfill our educational goals. Unfortunately, this dynamic means that, for every dollar CPS spends on alternate bond debt service, it has one less dollar to invest in its educational mission. With more than \$3 billion in critical, unfunded capital needs and over \$14 billion in overall need, the Board has no current alternative to issuing EBF-supported bonds.

Sustainability

In alignment with the State of Illinois's goal to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2050, the District strives to reduce electricity consumption and increase our waste diversion. Greening our schools is also necessary to reduce and limit our collective impact on the global climate crisis, but the District needs state support to create these clean, healthy, and modern schools.

Transportation

Nationwide, school districts have been experiencing issues in providing transportation to students. Despite continuous efforts across the District, we have run as low as about 54% of pre-pandemic staffing levels this school year. Further exacerbating the issue, CPS currently only receives 66% of claimed funding, leaving a \$44 million gap with our current transportation demands. We believe more funding and streamlining of permitting of drivers of small vehicles is necessary to address the current transportation issues.

DAILY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The foundation for our academic progress is our Instructional Core. Students must experience daily core instruction that is responsive to and sustaining of who they are and what they bring, and empowers them to connect, imagine, and act as ethical, critical actors that shape the world.

Career and Technical Education

We believe additional funding for CTE programs will continue to enhance the quality of instruction, provide up-to-date equipment and resources, and expand opportunities for students to gain real-world skills and experiences - which are all crucial components of preparing young people to reach their future career goals. Adding additional resources will make the transition to a new CTE formula, as ISBE has proposed, far easier to manage for non Tier 1 districts.

New Arrivals and Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS)

The District supports over 19,000 STLS students. With nearly 25,000 new arrivals in Chicago, many of them school-aged children along with a similar number of students in temporary living situations, CPS needs additional financial support from the state and federal government to ensure that these students have the adequate resources to thrive in school.

Early Childhood Funding

Additional funding continues to be needed to support the District's expansion of prekindergarten programs to ensure all families have access to high-quality early learning opportunities. This funding would support increasing the total number of programs and seats available, teacher training initiatives, and facility upgrades. The District currently still spends over \$100 million in local funds supplementing state funding to provide early childhood education.

Mental Health

Enhance cooperation and coordination between the state and school districts to optimize the distribution of current funding and supports for mental health prevention and early intervention, with the goal of extending the reach of school-based behavioral health services.

Student Nutrition

70.7% of all CPS students are considered "Economically Disadvantaged" (i.e. coming from families whose income is within 185 percent of the federal poverty line). We know that many of these students depend on meals they receive during the school day. We believe the Federal Government should continue to grant flexibility to school nutrition programs, to ensure the ongoing provision of free, nutritious meals to all children.

ADULT CAPACITY AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING

The success of our schools is built on talented and empowered educators. To that end, the District commits to providing support to develop the capacity of all educators, provide leadership development trajectories, and nurture the school-based adult cultures and structures that lead to academic progress.

Recruitment and Retention of Teachers

We support any efforts around teacher recruitment and retention that will help to address the teacher shortage. Maintaining investments in the teacher recruitment pipeline is essential to address the K-12 teacher shortage, as it ensures a stable and skilled educational workforce, capable of providing students with the consistent quality education they deserve.

High-Quality, Diverse Educators

High quality, diverse educators are crucial, as they enrich the learning environment, foster broader perspectives, and ensure that all students see themselves reflected in the adults in their school buildings. We support legislation that attracts high-quality, diverse educators. Expanding state support for candidates of color to gain scholarships to become future educators is a key component in making this a reality.

School Nurses

The District supports legislative initiatives that seek to develop and retain nurses within CPS, address the school nursing shortage, and streamline licensure requirements. We are working on proposals that would allow all categories of nurses the ability to support writing IEPs and completing additional requirements, so nurses can spend more time on providing necessary services to our students.