



**KIDS FIRST
CHICAGO**

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Statement Attributable to Jessica Cañas, Director of Programs and Partnerships at Kids First Chicago, on the Illinois Senate's deliberations on SB3757:

Kids First Chicago appreciates the Illinois Senate's deliberation on Senate Bill 3757 (SB3757), marking a pivotal moment in the process of establishing Chicago's first-ever elected school board. This historic change in governance signifies a monumental step forward and a new era of educational leadership in our city.

“As we stand on the brink of this significant transformation, we are filled with a sense of excitement and anticipation for the future,” said Jessica Cañas, Director of Programs and Partnerships at Kids First Chicago. “The move towards an elected school board promises to bring about a more democratic and inclusive approach to governing our public schools, one that more accurately reflects the voices and needs of our city’s diverse communities and families.”

However, amidst our optimism, several aspects of the bill's implementation give us pause for concern. We hope that the following concerns are addressed to ensure the elected board truly reflects the diversity and needs of our students.

Concerns with Senate Bill 3757:

- **District Representation:** Despite the opportunity to create districts that mirror our district's rich diversity, the legislature has passed a map delineating 10 districts for the 2024 elections. With 4 predominantly White, 3 Black, and 3 Latine districts, the map fails to adequately represent a school district where 90% of the students are children of color. Such a configuration likely will not ensure the reflective representation CPS families deserve.
- **Newly Added Undemocratic Barriers to Equitable Participation:** The bill's stipulations regarding petition signatures—both increasing the number required for candidacy and imposing a cap on the number that can be submitted—will likely disproportionately hinder grassroots candidates. Parents and community members, the very individuals who are most invested in the success of our schools, may find themselves sidelined by these requirements. The petition requirements introduced in the last few days favor candidates with political connections, interest group support, and the financial means to navigate these stringent criteria.
- **Inclusivity in Participation:** We urge the legislature to amend school board election regulations to allow any Chicago parent, regardless of immigration status, to serve on the school board and participate in elections. The existing noncitizen advisory council falls dramatically short.
- **Limiting Monetary Influence:** The absence of provisions to curb the influence of money in Chicago school board elections is deeply troubling. Without such measures, the electoral

process may become skewed in favor of well-funded and well-organized campaigns, further diluting the voice of our community.

- **Compensation for Service:** Recognizing the dedication of parents willing to serve on the school board, it is imperative to offer some form of compensation or stipend. Serving on the school board is akin to a part-time job, and recognizing this commitment financially will make participation more feasible for parents and community members.

Moreover, should SB3757 pass, it will be incumbent upon Mayor Brandon Johnson to leverage his appointments to ensure the elected school board reflects our student body's diversity in 2025. This is a crucial step to guarantee that parents and everyday residents can bring their invaluable perspectives to the table.

Kids First Chicago calls for action on these issues to ensure the transition to an elected school board truly embodies the principles of equity, inclusivity, and democracy. We remain committed to working alongside our state legislators, Mayor Brandon Johnson, and all stakeholders to refine this process.

Our goal is unwavering: to create an educational governance model that empowers all Chicago parents, reflects the diversity of CPS students, and uplifts Chicago's communities.

CPS parents are available for questions or comment; please contact Jessica Cañas at 773-403-4832 or jcanas@kidsfirstchicago.org.

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ABOUT KIDS FIRST CHICAGO

Kids First Chicago's mission is to dramatically improve education for Chicago's children by ensuring their families are the respected authorities on what their kids need and decision-makers in their kids' education. We do this by partnering with families to support them in gaining the resources, access, and voice they need to achieve their vision for their children. K1C provides transparent and rigorous education analysis to families, educators, and policymakers alike to inform data-driven and inclusive decision-making about the future of Chicago's public schools. For more information, visit kidsfirstchicago.org.