



Executive Summary

- 1. Most Chicagoans still don't know a fully elected school board is coming in 2027.**
 - Only 32% of respondents were aware that CPS will transition to a fully elected 21-member Board of Education in 2027.
 - 2 in 3 (66%) said they were not aware of the shift.
 - Awareness skews older and whiter: adults 60+ and White, non-Hispanic respondents are significantly more likely than younger and Latine respondents to know this change is coming.
- 2. Nearly nine in ten residents cannot name their own school board representative.**
 - Only 1 in 10 respondents (10%) report that they can name their current Board of Education representative—even as the system moves to a fully elected body in January 2027.
 - CPS parents are more informed: 18% can name their Board representative, compared to just 7% of non-parents.
- 3. Chicagoans want the State of Illinois to shoulder more of the K-12 funding load.**
 - When told Illinois school districts rely more on local than state dollars for K-12 education support, 66% say the State should provide more money for public schools, 26% say the State should provide about the same, and only 7% want to reduce state support.
 - Support for progressive state revenue options is very strong among those who want more state funding:
 - 79% support closing corporate tax loopholes.
 - 75% support raising the corporate income tax.
 - 74% support raising income tax rates on individuals/households earning above \$250,000.
 - Only 28% support expanding the sales tax to more services, while 52% oppose it.
- 4. Chicagoans also want the City to do more for CPS—but favor taxing corporations and high-end real estate, not services.**
 - A solid majority of respondents (about six in ten) believe the City of Chicago should provide more money to CPS.
 - Support for increased City funding is higher among CPS parents (67%) than non-parents (58%).
 - These respondents were then asked which city-level options they would support:
 - 74% support increasing taxes on large corporations based in Chicago.
 - 56% support starting or increasing taxes on real estate transactions over \$500,000.
 - 53% support creating a new local income tax on individuals earning above \$100,000.
 - 48% support increasing tourism-related taxes such as hotel or rental car taxes.
 - 45% support closing certain TIF districts early and sending the maximum legally allowable unused TIF funds to CPS, while a striking 43% are unsure about this option.

It's possible that this uncertainty is due to a gap in knowledge around what TIF districts are and/or what the full impact of sunsetting districts early would be.

5. Chicagoans prefer long-term State and City solutions over layoffs and borrowing to close CPS's budget gap.

- When asked how CPS should prioritize closing its \$500+ million budget deficit, respondents consistently favor bringing in more State and City money and tackling the pension inequity over cuts or borrowing:
 - 43% say CPS should treat “advocating for more money from the State” as a high priority, while only 18% say it should be a low priority.
 - 34% say it should be a high priority to “advocate for the State to take on the full cost of the Chicago Teachers’ Pension Fund (CTPF) and combine it with the Teacher Retirement System (TRS)”, with only 16% calling it a low priority.
 - 33% see “advocating for more money from the City” as a high priority (versus 23% low).
 - By contrast, staff layoffs and borrowing are clearly unpopular tools: only 19% say layoffs should be a high priority while 50% say they should be low priority; just 8% say borrowing should be a high priority, compared with 53% who say it should be low priority.

6. Governor J.B. Pritzker commands the highest public confidence in acting in the best interests of CPS students; Mayor Brandon Johnson, CTU, and CPS leadership lag behind.

- Governor J.B. Pritzker is the only actor with a strong positive confidence balance:
 - 63% of respondents have a great deal or some confidence in him to act in the best interests of CPS students, while 27% have not much or no confidence (net +36).
- Confidence is more mixed for local players:
 - Chicago Teachers Union (CTU): 46% great deal/some confidence vs. 39% not much/no confidence (net +7).
 - CPS parents are more likely to report a great deal/some confidence (54%) compared to non-parents (44%).
 - Chicago Board of Education: 43% great deal/some vs. 37% not much/no (net +6), with 19% unsure.
 - Confidence in the Board is higher among CPS parents (54% vs. 39%), and knowledge matters: 65% of those who can name their Board member express confidence, compared to 41% of those who cannot.
 - Mayor Brandon Johnson: 35% great deal/some vs 55% not much/no (net -20).
 - Interim CPS CEO / Superintendent Macquiline King: 30% great deal/some vs. 33% not much/no, with a notably large 36% unsure.
 - CPS parents show less uncertainty about the interim CEO/Superintendent (22% vs. 40% of non-parents), though most parents still fall in the middle range of confidence (57% not much/some vs. 40% of non-parents).

Detailed Findings and Analysis

Governance Awareness: Elected School Board Transition and Representation

Key findings

- **Awareness of the 2027 fully elected board is limited.**
 - Only **32%** of respondents knew before the survey that CPS will move to a **fully elected 21-member board in 2027**, while **66%** did not.
- **Very few respondents can name their school board representative.**
 - Only about **10%** of adults can identify their current Board of Education member.
 - There is a significant association between parent/non-parent status and being able to name their Board representative; CPS parents¹ were more likely to know their school board representative relative to non-parents; **18% of parents** report that they can name their Board member compared to **7% of non-parents**.
- Awareness skews older and whiter.
 - Adults **60+** and **White, non-Hispanic** respondents are significantly more likely to be aware of the 2027 transition than younger adults and Latine respondents.
 - Latine respondents and adults **18–29** are among the least informed.

These findings point to a major information gap at the same time that CPS is undergoing the most significant change in governance in decades. Two out of three adults do not know that a fully elected board is coming, and roughly nine out of ten cannot name their current representative. Yet **43%** of respondents say they have a **great deal or some confidence** in the Board, and **37%** say they have **not much or no confidence**, with another **19%** unsure. Notably, confidence is higher for those who report being able to name their Board representative. **65%** of respondents who reported knowing their Board member's name expressed having some or a great deal of confidence, compared to **41%** of those who did not know their Board member's name.

Overall, this combination—**low awareness of who the Board members are, but clear opinions about whether they can be trusted**—suggests that many Chicagoans are evaluating the Board based on broader impressions of CPS or city government, rather than direct knowledge of individual members. It also highlights an urgent need for **plain-language, bilingual outreach** explaining what the elected board is, when elections will happen, and what powers board members hold.

The State's Role: Funding Expectations and Preferred Revenue Options

Key findings

- **Chicagoans want the State of Illinois to do more for K-12 education.**
 - After learning that Illinois school districts rely more on local than state dollars for K-12 education, **66%** say the state should **provide more money**, **26%** say the state should provide **about the same**, and just **7%** want the state to **reduce** its contribution.
 - CPS parents and non-parents are aligned; there is no significant association between parent status and support for the State providing more money given to K-12 education.
- **Progressive state tax options draw broad support among those who want more state funding.**
Among respondents who believe the state should provide more money:

¹ "CPS parents" are defined as respondents who reported "Yes" to the question, "Are you a parent or guardian of a student currently enrolled in Chicago Public Schools (CPS)?" "Non-parents" are defined as those who responded "No" to this question.

- **79%** support **closing corporate tax loopholes**.
- **75%** support **increasing the corporate income tax**.
- **74%** support **increasing the state income tax rate on individuals/households earning above \$250,000**.
- **Expanding the sales tax to more services is unpopular.**
 - Only **28%** support **expanding the sales tax to certain services (excluding essentials)**, while **52%** oppose it; **18%** are unsure.

Chicagoans clearly expect the State of Illinois to play a larger role in funding public education, and they overwhelmingly prefer **progressive** revenue options to regressive ones. Support for **closing corporate tax loopholes (79%)**, **raising corporate income taxes (75%)**, and **raising personal income taxes on high earners (74%)** is both broad and durable, with relatively low opposition (8–13% “No” for these options).

By contrast, **expanding the sales tax to additional services** is the only state option that produces more opposition than support: **52% “No”**, just **28% “Yes”**, and **18% “Unsure”**. This pattern suggests that Chicagoans distinguish between **taxes that fall on corporations and high-income households** and **taxes that could more easily reach everyday Chicagoans**.

These opinions sit alongside very high confidence in **Governor J.B. Pritzker** on CPS: **63%** of Chicagoans report a great deal or some confidence in him to act in the best interests of CPS students, compared to **27%** who have not much or no confidence. That net +36 confidence gap is the strongest among all actors tested. Taken together, the data suggest that Chicagoans **expect** the state to take on a larger share of K-12 funding and see the governor as a **credible leader** to advance those changes—including **CPS teacher pension equity**—as a way to increase state support.

The City’s Role: Support for New City Revenue for CPS

Key findings

- **A majority want the City to provide more money for CPS.**
 - Roughly **six in ten** Chicago adults say the **City of Chicago should provide more money to CPS**, forming the base for the City revenue questions.
 - There is a significant association between parent/non-parent status and belief that the City should provide more money to CPS; **67%** of CPS parents believe the City should provide more money, compared to **58%** of non-parents.
- Among those who believe the City should provide more funding, support is strongest for **corporate and high-end real estate taxes**:
 - **74%** support **increasing taxes on large corporations based in Chicago**.
 - **56%** support **starting or increasing taxes on real estate transactions for homes priced above \$500,000**.
 - **53%** support **creating a new local income tax for individuals making above \$100,000 per year**.
- **Support for tourism taxes and TIF reforms is more mixed or uncertain.**
 - **48%** support **increasing certain tourism taxes** (hotel, car rental); **32%** oppose; **20%** are unsure.
 - **45%** support **closing certain TIF districts early and moving the maximum legally allowable unused TIF funds to CPS**, **11%** oppose, and a large **43%** are unsure.

On the city side, Chicagoans who want more CPS funding gravitate toward **taxes on wealth and corporate activity**, not toward broad, everyday taxes. Increasing taxes on large corporations (74% support) and on high-value real estate transactions (56%) are clearly acceptable trade-offs for respondents who believe the City should step up.

The **new local income tax on individuals making above \$100,000** also commands majority support (53%), but with more opposition (23%) and uncertainty (18%) than the corporate option. Tourism-related taxes generate nearly even support and opposition, with a substantial share unsure; this suggests that these tools may be more politically challenging or less understood.

The **TIF question stands out for its high uncertainty**. Even among respondents who want more City money for CPS, **43%** say they are unsure whether closing TIF districts early and moving surplus funds to CPS is a good idea. Only **45%** support the concept, and **11%** oppose. This pattern likely reflects a **widespread lack of public understanding of how TIF works**, rather than firm opposition to reallocating TIF dollars to schools.

Closing the CPS Budget Gap: Preferred Strategies and Red Lines

Key findings

When asked how CPS should prioritize closing a **\$569 million budget deficit**, respondents rated five options as high, medium, or low priority.

- **High-priority actions**
 - **Advocate for more money from the State:**
 - **43%** high
 - **27%** medium
 - **18%** low
 - **Advocate for the State to take on the full cost of Chicago Teachers' Pension Fund and combine it with the statewide Teachers' Retirement System:**
 - **34%** high
 - **27%** medium
 - **16%** low
 - **Advocate for more money from the City:**
 - **33%** high
 - **30%** medium
 - **23%** low
- **Low-priority actions**
 - **Staff layoffs:**
 - **19%** high
 - **18%** medium
 - **50%** low
 - **Borrow money:**
 - **8%** high
 - **19%** medium
 - **53%** low

The budget-gap question reinforces a clear pattern: **Chicagoans favor structural funding solutions over cuts and short-term borrowing.**

The most popular approach is to **push the State to invest more** in CPS, both through general funding (**43%** high priority) and through **pension equity** (34% high priority). Asking more from the City is also widely viewed as important (**33%** high priority), though slightly behind state-level solutions.

By contrast, **staff layoffs** and **borrowing** are the two options that the public wants CPS to lean on the least. A full **50%** rate layoffs as a **low priority**, and **53%** say the same about borrowing—both far exceeding the shares calling them high priority. This indicates that large majorities of residents **do not want CPS to close the budget gap on the backs of school staff or by taking on new debt.**

Confidence in Key Actors to Act in CPS Students' Best Interests

Key findings

Overall confidence levels (great deal/some vs not much/none):

- **Governor J.B. Pritzker**
 - **63%** have a great deal or some confidence.
 - **27%** have not much or no confidence.
 - Net: **+36.**
- **Chicago Teachers Union (CTU)**
 - **46%** have a great deal or some confidence.
 - **39%** have not much or no confidence.
 - Net: **+7.**
 - CPS parents are more likely to report a great deal/some confidence (**54%**) compared to non-parents (**44%**).
- **Members of the Chicago Board of Education**
 - **43%** have a great deal or some confidence.
 - **37%** have not much or no confidence.
 - **19%** are unsure.
 - CPS parents have more confidence (**54%** great deal/some) in the Board than do non-parents (**39%** great deal/some)
 - CPS parents have less uncertainty (**12%**) than non-parents (**21%**)
- **Mayor Brandon Johnson**
 - **35%** have a great deal or some confidence.
 - **55%** have not much or no confidence.
 - Net: **-20.**
- **Interim CPS CEO / Superintendent Macqueline King**
 - **30%** have a great deal or some confidence.
 - **33%** have not much or no confidence.
 - **36%** are unsure.
 - **40%** of non-parents report uncertainty, compared to **22%** of CPS parents.
 - Most parents (**57%**) report not much / some confidence, compared to non-parents (**40%**)

Confidence in leaders on CPS issues is **uneven and stratified:**

- The **Governor** is clearly the most trusted figure tested. His strong positive net confidence is consistent with the public's desire for more **state-level action** on K-12 funding and pension equity.
- **CTU** and the **Board of Education** occupy a **middle tier**. More Chicagoans trust them than distrust them, but the margins are modest, and there is substantial uncertainty for the Board, where nearly one in five respondents are unsure.

- **Mayor Johnson** faces a **significant trust deficit** on CPS: a clear majority (**55%**) say they have not much or no confidence, compared to **35%** with a great deal or some confidence.
- **Interim CEO King** has relatively low name recognition or public familiarity; the largest single group is **“Unsure” (36%)**. Her net confidence (30% vs. 33%) is close to even, suggesting an **open question** in the public’s mind. However, CPS parents seem more divided than unsure, with **36%** of parents reporting a great deal / some confidence, **41%** reporting no confidence at all / not much confidence, and **22%** reporting “Unsure”.

These results matter in the context of the governance findings above. Very few residents know who represents them on the Board, but **their trust is still higher for the Board and CTU than for the Mayor or CPS CEO**. At the same time, the **state-level leader is viewed most favorably**—and Chicagoans overwhelmingly want the state government to do more.

Survey Overview and Methodology

- **Study target population:** Adults age 18+ living in the City of Chicago.
- **Completed interviews: 1,361**
- **Sample units:** 2,887
- **Eligibility:** Expected 100%; observed 100%.
- **Field period: September 16–29, 2025**
- **Median survey duration:** 15 minutes
- **Margin of error: ±3.73 percentage points**, with a **design effect of 1.97**.

The survey was conducted using a probability-based sample and weighted to be representative of Chicago’s adult population by age, race/ethnicity, gender, and geography. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

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