

327 Capitol Building
Springfield IL 62706

29 May 2018

Dear Senate President Cullerton,

We are concerned that you do not grasp the urgency with which Chicago parents, teachers and students need radical, democratic change in the Chicago Public Schools, in the form of an elected school board. So we are enclosing a copy of the report issued by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) documenting widespread, systemic violations of special education law that have harmed our most vulnerable children.

The ISBE report should put to rest any question as to whether the current, mayoral-appointed and controlled board is serving the interests of Chicago children, families and teachers. It is not.

As you know, the elected school board bill, HB1774, passed with overwhelming support last year in both the Senate and the House, and with two days left in session, the legislature has failed to iron out amendments and get it to the Governor's desk. The public mandate for this initiative couldn't be clearer, and nearly 90% of voters have expressed support for this on ballot referenda.

As you know, the Senate made amendments to HB1774 last year that were not acceptable to the House. In response, Sen. Kwame Raoul filed SB3592, which resolves some of those issues around who would draw the maps for the districts, but you have refused to assign this bill to any committee.

These are fragile times in our nation, and the question of whether we still have a functioning democracy plague many of us. You are not helping this matter by ignoring the wishes of the masses on this important issue, and asserting near-monolithic power to repress the voices of your constituents and the many voters in Chicago who have spoken on this issue.

The recent state take over of a major CPS program serving 50,000 students should nullify any objections to an elected school board for Chicago. The state-documented abuses are horrific, but they are just the latest round of failed policies that the appointed school board did not properly vet.

A recent study found that students from the 2013 mass school closings did not make the promised academic gains, and CPS has failed to present an iota of evidence that the policy saved any money. The mayor is on his fourth CEO of CPS, with one in jail and another run out of the district in an ethics scandal.

The people of Chicago, whom you represent as Senate President, have spoken. They want and deserve the same right to elect the people who run their schools that voters in every other Illinois city have.

We call on you to do your job and pass SB3592, the elected school board bill, today.

Thank you.

Cassie Creswell and Wendy Katten
Co-directors
Raise Your Hand Action

Erica Clark
Executive director
Parents 4 Teachers

