

February 11, 2020

To Mayor Lightfoot and the Chicago Board of Education,

One week ago, Chicago Public Schools Inspector General Nicholas Schuler resigned, facing allegations of inappropriate behavior. The Inspector General's post represents the highest position tasked with identifying fraud, abuse, and corruption in our public school system.

In such moments, it is often the response to move quickly in appointing permanent new leadership. We call on you to do the opposite, to build a stronger school system by engaging our communities in a critical moment of reflection.

Today, we have more elected officials than ever committed to building an ethical and equitable government in Chicago, affirming that a 'good government' must ensure that race does not predict our life outcomes. Yet despite this progress, the CPS Office of the Inspector General currently lacks the express authority to investigate racial inequities in our public schools.

In a city where our schools are persistently seen by the public as the most visible symbols of racial inequity,<sup>1</sup> we call on you to expand the CPS Inspector General's authority to serve as an independent force for public accountability to racial equity. This will support the District's commitment to racial equity and the Office of Equity's robust equity framework and upcoming training efforts. The hard work of transformation requires connecting proactive supports to an independent accountability force.

This restructuring will better align our District with national peers<sup>2</sup> that have used such authority to pursue strategies such as:

1. Developing a secure public process to report school-based inequities
2. Studying trends in public requests, developing policy recommendations to address root causes
3. Publishing an annual Equity Audit, including key indicators on how resources, access, and power are distributed in our school system, to track progress over time

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<sup>1</sup> In the 2019 citywide Vote Equity Project, Chicagoans voted on resident-submitted policy proposals on how to build a city that works for all of us. With 52,271 votes ranking the 186 unique policy proposals, 7 out of the top 10 voted ideas were education reforms. See full results and methodology at [www.voteequity.org/issues](http://www.voteequity.org/issues).

<sup>2</sup> See also: Boston Public Schools, which was one of the country's first large public systems to develop an equity framework. This framework includes an independent office to investigate issues raised by families, analyzing long-term trends in these issues, and using such analyses to develop policy recommendations.

While we have many national examples to draw on for inspiration, Chicago's model for the investigation and review of racially inequitable policies should be uniquely tailored to our city. We can do this by appointing an interim director during a six-month delay, before seeking a permanent, 4-year appointment for the Inspector General's post. During this delay, we seek to engage a working group of members from the Board of Education, communities impacted by these issues, and government reformers to develop a framework for expanding the Inspector General's office to serve as an accountability force for racial equity in our schools.

In this moment, you have a historic opportunity to construct a new path forward for students, parents, and families who regularly experience racial inequity in our public schools. We call on you to support students and families who are most vulnerable to our systemic inequities by increasing oversight and accountability in our public schools.

Signed,

AFIRE

Asian Americans Advancing Justice

Borderless Studio

Brighton Park Neighborhood Council

CHANGE IL

Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights

Chicago United for Equity

Common Cause

Education Law and Policy Institute at Loyola  
University School of Law

Educators 4 Excellence

Equiticity

Dr. Eve L. Ewing

The Field Foundation of Illinois

Grow Greater Englewood

Liz Dozier

Logan Square Neighborhood Association

Lugenia Burns Hope Center

National Public Housing Museum

Northside Action 4 Justice

Pilsen Alliance

Raise Your Hand

Reform for Illinois

SPEAK UP Chicago

Woods Fund Chicago

Working Family Solidarity