

Chicago Community Groups Condemn City's SRO "Reforms", Demand IGA Not Be Renewed and Dollars Invested Back into Local Schools

Mayor Lori Lightfoot
Sybil Madison, Deputy Mayor of Education
The Members of the Chicago Board of Education
Janice Jackson, Chief Executive Officer of Chicago Public Schools
Jadine Chou, Chief of Safety and Security

We are concerned stakeholders of Chicago Public Schools (CPS): students, teachers, parents and caregivers, alum, Local School Council (LSC) members and community for police free schools. We call on the Mayor of Chicago and the Chicago Board of Education to not renew the contract with the Chicago Police Department School Resource Officers.

"The problem with the consent decree implementation has not been the consent decree, which was crafted after years of investigation, advocacy, negotiations and community involvement. The problem is the defendant, the city of Chicago.

*So yes, we agree with the mayor that the process of implementing the consent decree has been slow. Slower than the consent decree demands.
The mayor and the city have the power to change that."*

-Shareese Pryor, chief of the civil rights bureau of the Illinois attorney general's office, June 2020

We call on Board of Education members to unequivocally reject any new contract with the Chicago Police Department. This week, the Chicago Board of Education will vote on an amended intergovernmental agreement, defended by the Mayor and Chicago Public Schools chief Janice Jackson with claims of reforms to come. Enough is enough. We can wait no longer on illusory promises of reform, when we have spent nearly 10 years attempting to work with the District to reform a system that refuses to acknowledge its failures.

We are clear that 100% of Chicago's schools should be free of School Resource Officers (SROs) immediately.

Amid COVID-19, a global health pandemic that has patently altered our lives in Chicago, we implore decision-makers to invest in the dire needs of students and families, schools and communities--- especially as the city and school district are facing massive uncertainty about federal and state funding this fiscal year. **We believe all police funding: \$33M in SY19-20 and recently announced \$12M must be reallocated to provide every child in CPS an equitable and quality education, cultivating safety with trauma-informed supports.**

We know that the safest schools and communities are fully resourced and immersed with localized power. This call for investment and inclusion will be used to empower LSCs, administrations and community engagement to develop their unique alternative school safety plans. **Additionally and most**

importantly, school campuses can be resourced with conflict-resolution, mentors, ambassadors, peacekeepers, violence interrupters, and community-inclusive transformative justice practices and adequate training in conflict resolution and de-escalation. We believe this work must be inclusive and led by directly-impacted people and BIPOC organizations.

Unfortunately, CPD police officers have been used to fill the gaps in Chicago's most under-resourced schools, particularly in the South and West sides. On the recent LSC calls, we heard councils that serve predominantly Black, diverse learners and low income students, detail how they use police officers to fill roles traditionally held by teachers, deans and counselors. We listened as principals said: "we can't afford to lose these two bodies" and "we can't get rid of these resources without getting the money for an alternative." And others admitted they use CPD SROs for roles outside of the parameters in the CPD SRO policy.

As of August 18, 55 CPS schools serving our most vulnerable children, will remain policed by CPD. According to CPS data and [Chicago Sun-Times](#) reporting, these students remain over-represented, targeted and disproportionately subjected to over-policing resulting in the school-to-prison pipeline. On a recent call with the Office of Diverse Learners Supports and Services, the district essentially admitted there is an unequal system of punishment and arrest in CPS, particularly among Black and diverse learner students.

On Wednesday, August 19, CPS released: [Chicago Public Schools Proposes Progressive Reforms to School Resource Officer \(SRO\) Program Based on Feedback](#). The reform areas are: Significant Decreases in Arrests of Student Arrests on School Property, Critical Improvements to the IGA, New Partnerships to Help Strengthen the District's Holistic Approach to School Safety and Reduction in Funding for SROs and Elimination of Mobile Officer Units.

Categorically, we reject the proposed reforms as they do not meet the moment or burdens. In fact, it raises more concern.

Of significant concern is the new reform to formally bar CPD SROs from accessing the CPD Gang Database and collaborating with ICE. For years and in recent months, we expressed concern over CPD's access to CPS student records and information, as many families report police presence in schools make them less safe.

Over and over again, we have been met with denials around CPD SRO access to and placement of youth in the flawed CPD Gang Database. In April 2019, the city of Chicago Office of Inspector General report on the Gang Database calls to question its accuracy and potential life altering impact on individuals, particularly young Black and Latinx men. We need to understand the scope of how this practice may have impacted youth as CPS accounts for the third highest rate of inquiries, nearly 88,000 transmissions. It is no surprise that many individuals have been added to the database before turning 18. In fact, some have been added when they were 11 and 12 years old.

Over the past decade, there are documented cases of harm to Chicago's children in CPS schools by police, resulting in drop-outs, prolonged trauma and millions of dollars in lawsuits. For years, the City Office of Inspector General has called for substantive reforms but time and time again CPS and CPD have failed to meet these requirements.

This is particularly concerning given the unfortunate historical and current state of policing in our city. The legacy of unconstitutional policing by the Chicago Police Department is well documented in recent lawsuits and Department of Justice investigations dating back to 2017 and before. As a result, in March 2019, the city of Chicago and CPD entered into a federal reform agreement or consent decree. The decree has *21 compliance areas* pertaining to policing youth in schools and in the community. **To date, the majority of these reforms have not been met and more than a year later, CPD remains significantly behind in making even minimal progress.**

In recent months, CPS youth, alum, college students and allied citizens have taken to the streets to exercise their constitutionally protected right to freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. Instead, they've been beat, sprayed at close range with unknown chemical weapons, kettled and arrested. This, as youth have repeatedly said, police do not make them feel safe in school.

Finally, and above all, in order to give every child access to an equitable quality education, the Chicago Board of Education has a moral, research-based obligation to vote to terminate the contract of fear, oppression, civil rights violations and school to prison pipeline impacting today's youth. We stand ready to work with the city and district to develop safety protocols and resources that do not involve police officers.

We, the undersigned, plea for the termination of the Intergovernmental Agreement with Chicago Public Schools and Chicago Police Department School Resource Officers in its entirety. In its place, CPS must undertake robust community engagement processes to develop alternative school safety plans, and provide school campuses with the resources they need to address conflicts and keep students safe. CPS must also institute antiracist policies and procedures and provide training for teachers, staff, and administrators to understand race/racism and its impact on teaching, learning, and knowledge transmission, recognize differences between antiracism and multiculturalism in pedagogy, curriculum, and educational advocacy.

Organizational Sign On:

- Action Now & Action Now Institute
- Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
- Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
- Chicago Teachers Union
- Chicago United for Equity
- Chicago Veterans for Peace
- CPS Alumni for Abolition
- Illinois Families for Public Schools
- Northside Action 4 Justice
- Pilsen Alliance
- Raise Your Hand For Illinois Public Education
- United Working Families

Attachments:

[Current CPS Youth-led Coalition for Police Free Schools](#)

[CPS Alumni Testimonials: End the CPS-CPD Contract](#)

[CPS Alumni Letter to the Mayor and CPS Leadership](#)

[CPD Consent Decree Non-Compliance Areas Regarding Policing Youth](#)

[Review Of The Chicago Police Department's Management Of School Resource Officers, Follow-up City OIG Investigation into Chicago Police Department's Gang Database](#)
[Expansive and Focused Surveillance - New Findings on Chicago's Gang Database](#)