

Written Testimony – Dr. King

U.S. House Committee on Education and Workforce

June 8, 2026

I am honored to speak about my background, the amazing strides we are making at Chicago Public Schools, and how we are serving the over 300,000 students in our district every day.

I did not come to this work through policy or politics. I came through the classroom. I spent twelve years teaching children in Chicago — learning their names, calling their families, showing up early and staying late, because that is what the work requires. The classroom is where I earned my National Board Certification and became a master teacher, mentoring the next generation of educators. I then spent fifteen years leading schools on both the North and South Sides of Chicago — standing at the door every morning, making the hard calls, being accountable for everything that happened inside those walls. Later, I had the honor of being recognized as a Cahn Fellow for Distinguished Principals.

As a former CPS student, teacher, principal, and parent — and now as Superintendent/CEO — I have seen this district from all sides, and I welcome this opportunity to share it with this Committee.

Before I do that, I want to address the fact that I am here under subpoena. I want you all to know that I respect Congress’s important oversight role. I know we had to work through some complicated scheduling issues and some underlying privacy concerns related to the student and staff situations we may discuss today, but I look forward to answering your questions, and to telling you more about the amazing hard work we are doing at CPS.

Chicago Public Schools serves more than 316,000 children across all 77 communities of Chicago — one of the largest and most diverse student populations in the United States. Their backgrounds, circumstances, and needs are as varied as the city itself. Chicago’s schools reflect the very best of our nation and our city—diverse, dynamic, and strengthened by people of different backgrounds, cultures, languages, and faiths. Our classrooms are not homogenous; they are vibrant communities where students learn alongside peers whose lived experiences may differ from their own. This diversity is one of our greatest strengths.

In Chicago Public Schools, we say: “Every Student, Every School, Every Community.” Fulfilling that commitment requires us to recognize and respond to the diversity of experiences, needs, and strengths that exist across our District. The only way to truly serve every student is to understand and embrace what makes each student and community unique. By recognizing and responding to those differences, we create schools where every student feels seen, valued, and supported.

We are committed to ensuring every student has a rigorous, joyful learning experience that prepares them for success in college, career, and civic life.

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In 2001, our high school graduation rate was around 42 percent. Today, it’s close to double that—over 82 percent—and our dropout rate is under 5 percent, a record low. More than two-thirds of our graduates enroll in college. And more than half of our graduates leave high school with more than just a diploma — they leave with college or career credentials that give them a head start on their postsecondary journey. For the Class of 2026, these credentials translate into millions in tuition savings for families. These include: college credits that reduce the time and cost of a degree; industry-recognized career credentials in high-demand fields such as healthcare and information technology; and certifications for completing JROTC, or our Police and Fire Training Academy, for students who want to serve our country and communities. We have much to be proud of watching our high school graduates cross the stage. But this journey of success starts much earlier.

Thanks to the expansion of early childhood education, every child in Chicago has access to free, full-day Pre-K in their neighborhood. As students progress through their educational journey, families can choose from a wide range of high-quality learning environments, including: strong neighborhood and charter schools; magnet schools with specialized programs in the arts; world languages, and STEM; and selective enrollment schools that offer enriched learning experiences for students seeking additional academic challenges and engagement. Together, these options support families choosing the learning environment that is right for their child.

To quote an August 2021 Washington Post op-ed: “The story of Chicago should give heart to those who believe that public schools can and should improve. The lessons of how to move forward are there.”

As we do this transformational work, CPS strives to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, and adheres to regulations and guidance from the Illinois State Board of Education.

All CPS policies are strengthened by family and community voice through our public comment process. At CPS, community engagement is structural. Local School Councils, Parent Advisory Councils, Bilingual Advisory Councils, and our Office of Family and Community Engagement exist precisely so that the families of our 316,000 students have a real voice in this district. These processes are not formalities; hearing from the communities we serve helps us improve the student experience, and fulfill our mission.