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## **CPS Announces Five-Year Moratorium on Facility Closures Starting in Fall 2013**

*CEO Outlines Vision for District at City Club Luncheon*

**Chicago** – Chicago Public Schools (CPS) CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett today made a public commitment to implement a five-year moratorium on CPS facility closures starting in fall 2013, should CPS be granted the extension to announce proposed school actions that it has requested from the Illinois General Assembly.

The moratorium would provide long-term stability to students, parents and school communities after CPS develops and enacts a comprehensive plan to right-size the District, which currently has space for 500,000 students, but only has 400,000 enrolled. CEO Byrd-Bennett announced the moratorium during a City Club of Chicago luncheon, where she presented her vision for the District and highlighted efforts to launch an open and transparent engagement plan to ensure that communities are involved at the front end of the school actions process.

“Mayor Emanuel recognizes that for many years CPS has made too many piecemeal decisions around school actions, which has caused unnecessary disruption to students, parents and schools across our city,” said CEO Byrd-Bennett. “Once we execute a final, comprehensive plan to address the utilization issues facing our District, the Mayor has requested that we implement this moratorium as we believe this will bring stability to our school communities, and I will personally commit to ensuring that this is a commitment CPS keeps.”

In order to rigorously engage the community and seek input into CPS’ space utilization issues, CEO Byrd-Bennett appointed the independent Commission on School Utilization, a nine-member group with various expertise that will make recommendations to the CEO around right-sizing the District. The Commission will hold public meetings across the city, listen and gather input from parents, teachers and school communities, meet with subject matter experts and present a written report in March to guide CEO Byrd-Bennett in making decisions around school actions.

Chaired by Frank Clark, the former chairman and CEO of ComEd, the Commission is holding its first public hearing today at UIC to hear testimony from CPS officials and other researchers about school enrollment reports, finance challenges facing the District and other data being considered by the

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Commission. A transcript and video of the meeting, as well as future meeting dates, will be available on the Commission's website at [www.schoolutilization.com](http://www.schoolutilization.com). Next, the Commission will hold five public hearings to solicit community input, one in each part of the city.

“It is critical that before we take any measures to right-size our District that rigorous and transparent community engagement be done on the front end of this process, not the back end, so we can truly listen to the concerns and ideas of our school communities,” added CEO Byrd-Bennett. “I believe this process will allow us to better position our District to have strong neighborhood schools in each community that provide our children with the high-quality education they deserve.”

CPS is seeking a one-time extension from the Illinois General Assembly of the Dec. 1 statutory deadline to announce school actions. CEO Byrd-Bennett will travel to Springfield during the upcoming veto session to work with the original sponsors, State Senator Iris Martinez and State Representative Cynthia Soto, as well as other legislators, to amend the law governing school actions. If CPS receives the extension, the District would announce proposed school actions by March 31, 2013, after the Commission has made its recommendations to CEO Byrd-Bennett.

Chicago Public Schools serves 403,000 students in 681 schools. It is the nation's third-largest school district.