



Statement

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CONTACT: **Stephanie Gadlin**

312/329-6250

StephanieGadlin@ctulocal1.com

CTU Wants Full Moratorium on All School Actions This Year, including closings, turnarounds and phase-outs

CHICAGO –The Chicago Teachers Union continues to advocate for a full moratorium on all school closings, phase-outs, restarts and turnarounds and will actively oppose any school actions that involve these draconian methods. The union believes a moratorium must begin this year and no school should face destruction while the Chicago Public Schools admits to a flawed and unclear process.

CTU issued these remarks today in response to the district’s announcement that it will seek a five-year moratorium on school closings if state lawmakers grant an extension on announcing which schools will be hit with campus shut downs. The union’s leaders will travel to Springfield during the veto session to tell lawmakers CPS should not circumvent state law and should be ordered to reveal its hit list for school closings on December 1.

CTU President Karen GJ Lewis said” Today’s announcement is nothing more than a sleight of hand on behalf of the school district. CPS school actions target communities of color. How can the district cry ‘under-utilization’ as a justification for school closings while it simultaneously approves the opening of new charter campuses? If CPS can afford to hold off on shutting down schools for the next five years, they can afford to hold off on shutting down our schools this year.”

Last year, the Chicago Education Facilities Taskforce issued a report that debunked CPS’ under-utilization claim. ([Read the report here.](#)) In part it stated: “CPS identifies 224 schools as utilizing less than 50% of their ‘capacity’—but there is clearly a problem: CPS currently operates with an average of 96 gross square feet per student (over all grade levels and school types).” The taskforce said using the national median for school space utilization..., many schools deemed “under-utilized” by CPS would in fact, be “at capacity” or even over-crowded. The district’s flawed formula leads to inaccurate conclusions about under-utilization and ultimately leads to bad decisions, the Illinois General Assembly taskforce concluded.

Added CTU Vice President Jesse Sharkey, “The CEO has said *‘if’* state lawmakers will grant the district a March 31 extension they will implement a ‘five-year moratorium’ on facility closings. CPS must not play politics and poker with the lives and education of our students. Their actions have a human cost—children lose their schools and educators lose their jobs.”

CTU maintains that a moratorium should remain in effect until CPS has completed and published a study done by an independent researcher on the impact of the school actions on the students, community, and affected personnel; CPS has held appropriate public hearings based on the study findings; CPS has published a clearly delineated set of criteria for school actions, and left those criteria in place for at least two years; and, CPS has designed and implemented a legitimate process in which community, parent, and union members make decisions about how to best improve our schools.

More than 42,000 students have been directly impacted by CPS School Actions since 2001. Black students represented 88 percent of students affected. Schools that are over 99 percent students of color have been the primary target of CPS school actions – representing over 80 percent of all affected schools. Black communities have been hit the hardest – 3-out-of-every-4 affected schools were economically poor and intensely segregated African American schools.

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The Chicago Teachers Union represents 30,000 teachers and educational support personnel working in the Chicago Public Schools, and by extension, the more than 400,000 students and families they serve. The CTU is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers and the Illinois Federation of Teachers and is the third largest teachers local in the United States and the largest local union in Illinois. For more information please visit CTU’s website at www.ctunet.com.

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