



STATEMENT

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New School Closing Report Continues the Myth of 100,000 Students Missing from Public Schools

CHICAGO – In response to the “Interim Report,” released today by the Chicago Public School (CPS) Commission on School Utilization, Karen Lewis, president of the Chicago Teachers Union offered the following statement:

“This afternoon, the Chicago Teachers Union received a briefing from the Commission on School Utilization regarding a list of recommendations they intend to share with the CPS as it moves forward with unnecessary school closings. Unfortunately their recommendations come too little and too late for far too many of us. Parents, teachers, students and community leaders have called for a full moratorium on all CPS actions this school year.

“We dispute CPS’ assertion that the district has lost more than 140,000 students in the last decade and therefore the city is faced with an underutilization crisis. I have been teacher for 25 years and I can tell you first hand there were never 500,000 students enrolled in public schools during that time. Their use of numbers is disingenuous across the board and this crisis is a manufactured one.

“What is clear to us after reading the Commission’s recommendations is that the public deserves a full facilities plan with a complete vision of where CPS is headed. Taxpayers deserve accountability, transparency and real voice in how the city discards public assets and to whom they are entrusted. School closings signal that this administration has no real commitment to developing the communities where those schools served our most vulnerable children.

“It is clear certain neighborhoods are the primary targets of CPS school actions. School closings exacerbate the problems of foreclosures, joblessness and violence. We are troubled that this report still lacks a clear safety plan and given the spike in violent crime in Chicago this is extremely problematic.

“The Commission recommends that no Level 1 schools should be closed even if they are underutilized. They also suggest that Level 2 schools that are “on the rise” should be spared closure, unlike Piccolo Elementary that was closed just last year. Why are some underutilized

schools given a pass? Is this an issue of underutilization or performance? CPS has already stated it did not intend to close high schools and they should have taken that under consideration when they closed schools such as Dyett and Crane.

“We need a moratorium now. The public deserves a comprehensive study that shows us what the impact of school closings has been in past. The District should take the time it needs to do this correctly, deliberately and thoughtfully rather than in its historical haphazard way of shutting down buildings and disrupting the lives of our students.

“The Chicago Teachers Union will continue to work with the district to not only highlight these problem areas but develop solutions for them. Our number one concern is for the academic progress and well-being of our students.”

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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 students and families they serve. CTU, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers and the Illinois Federation of Teachers, is the third largest teachers local in the country and the largest local union in Illinois. For more information visit CTU's website at www.ctunet.com

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