



CHICAGO TEACHERS UNION

August 13, 2021

VIA Electronic Mail

Kaitlyn Girard
Labor Relations Officer
Chicago Public Schools

Re: Fall 2021 Bargaining

Dear Ms. Girard:

This concerns the status of our negotiations for an agreement regarding the Fall 2021 semester. The CTU understands CPS wants to meet for bargaining every day, including today. The Union appreciates and shares CPS's urgency around achieving an agreement that will allow schools to be open for in-person instruction as the Covid-19 pandemic continues in Chicago and across the country. It will take more than a press release that CTU and CPS have reached a safety agreement, however, for schools to *remain* open. It will take an agreement that actually provides for safety and recovery for Chicago's school communities, and that restores school community members' trust in CPS. That is the Union's focus.

Your statements at the bargaining table and in correspondence make clear that you believe CTU is due to submit a concessionary counterproposal. But the state of the pandemic and CPS's current reopening plans leave the Union little room to move from the positions in its August 3 counterproposal. And it is difficult for the Union to respond piecemeal to individual pieces of a puzzle that is about layered mitigation when all of the pieces need to fit together. The Union remains deeply concerned about the following areas:

- 1) Public health metrics and quarantine protocols. CPS is proposing to do away with the terms of our February MOA that dictate what level of Covid-19 community spread requires a return to remote instruction, while the Delta variant surge is sending those metrics in the wrong direction. In so doing, CPS is effectively saying that no matter how bad things get, the district is going to forge ahead with in-person school. This is unacceptable. The Union has yet to hear a persuasive rationale for changing, let alone scrapping, the metrics we agreed to last semester. CTU urges CPS's reconsideration.
- 2) Vaccination. The way we avoid hitting the metrics established by our February MOA is through vaccinating as many of our school community members as possible as quickly as possible. Yet CPS has flatly rejected CTU's proposals to massively expand the vaccine program schools. Schools are community anchors that are distributed evenly in neighborhoods across the city, including those with the lowest vaccination rates. They are staffed by trusted members of the community, and have the ability to do targeted outreach and follow-up to get shots in arms. CPS saying it shares the goal with CTU of vaccinating 100% of eligible CPS students

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and staff means little if CPS is unwilling to commit to a program that actually has a chance of achieving that goal. CTU urges CPS's reconsideration.

- 3) Staffing. CPS and the City of Chicago are receiving a combined \$4 billion in federal relief funds. Our schools were understaffed prior to the pandemic, with many lacking critical support personnel and clinicians that allow schools to provide effective wraparound services. The need for those supports has only grown – our students are recovering from the trauma the pandemic has brought to their communities and families, which has only compounded the trauma wrought by decades of disinvestment in Chicago's Black and brown communities. And the safety plans CPS is developing – including around social distancing and provision of instruction to quarantined students and classes – require additional staff to execute effectively. Yet CPS has wholly rejected CTU's staffing demands and is instead hiring non-union, hourly miscellaneous employees to perform bargaining unit work and refusing to reverse the senseless layoff of 443 CTU bargaining unit employees in June. CTU urges CPS's reconsideration.
- 4) Quarantine plan and simultaneous instruction. The practice of requiring teachers to simultaneously provide instruction to students learning remotely and in-person was one of the worst academic features of last school year. It short-changes the in-person students and the remote students, and makes a teachers' job nearly impossible. For that reason, the CTU proposed to prohibit required simultaneous teaching. CPS evidently plans, however, to have simultaneous teaching be the way classes are taught whenever a student is in quarantine due to Covid-19 infection or exposure. CPS further appears intent on providing cursory overview to CTU of how it believes this should happen, and then imposing that plan upon our members. The Union hereby demands to bargain over the terms of the protocols for delivering instruction to quarantined students, which the Union believes needs to include the hiring of additional staff to attend to the needs of remote and in-person students, and additional preparation time for teachers.
- 5) Covid-19 testing. While the Union appreciates CPS's proposal to increase testing availability for CPS students and staff, the Union is awaiting critical details of how the testing program would be carried out. These include the type of test that will be administered, the vendor CPS has hired to perform testing, and how testing will be scheduled to ensure that students and staff are actually able to participate, which was a frequent problem across the district last semester.

To these ends, the Union is willing to meet more frequently, and will provide availability for additional bargaining sessions next week, on top of our regularly scheduled Tuesday and Thursday afternoon sessions, but is unavailable to meet today. The CTU officers will be at the Bud Billiken parade tomorrow, and the CTU Foundation has scheduled a vaccination event at the parade. CPS's bargaining team is more than welcome to join us at that event.

Sincerely yours,

/s/
Jesse Sharkey
President

cc: Stacy Davis Gates
Christel Williams-Hayes
Maria Moreno
Jennifer Johnson
Zeidre Foster
Robert Bloch
Thad Goodchild

Sally Scott
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