

**BRIEFING PAPER ON “HB0200”
Oversight & Reform of Chicago Public Schools’
School Closings Policy**

Key Provisions

HB0200 specifically recognizes that the General Assembly requires children be protected. HB0200’s primary goals are to set protective legislative measures specifying parameters and procedures for school district’s school closings policy. HB0200 sets standards for school closure that focuses on closings driven by the **necessary** best interest of children as opposed to bureaucratic motivations. In addition HB0200 will:

- Protect students displaced by school closures and will not allow them to be sorted into other marginal school that may be closed in the near future.
- Require that students that have been displaced by school closings are given choices to attend significantly better schools that have met No Child Left Behind requirements for at least 2 preceding years and are unlikely to close.
- Allow children to stay at their new school for the remainder of their schooling program and for students to receive transitional and transportation services. (Research and educators have pinpointed that school change may cause 4-6 months of academic loss. Although CPS has known that it has a serious problem with student mobility and minority students are disproportionately affected, CPS has done nothing to address this problem. Renaissance 2010 worsens student mobility by dispersing these students once again.)
- Provide that children cannot be displaced until the end of the school year.
- Require school districts to annually track individual students that have been reassigned to another school and to report on their performances

Negative Impacts of CPS’ Current School Closings Policy

CPS school closings policies are controversial for reasons that encompass the lack of community participation and voice, delayed notification of proposed school closings, and lack of transparency of which schools are chosen to be closed. The public is also concerned about CPS’ practice of reshuffling students from low-performing schools to schools that are not much better. *Catalyst Magazine*, a respected journal on urban school reform, investigated public school enrollment and student performance data of 8,000 displaced students from 23 neighborhoods.

The article published in March, 2006 reports:

- 11% of displaced elementary children are enrolled this year in charters or new contract or district-run schools opened since 2002.
- Only 10% of displaced elementary school children are now attending schools where at least half of the enrolled students passed a standardized reading exam. Only 1% are going to top district schools where pass rates are 70% or higher.
- 67% of elementary school students were reshuffled into schools on academic probation.
- Students displaced from elementary schools that closed in 2004 improved their reading but their overall scores remain low.

One of HB0200’s key provisions is to ensure that students from displaced schools have the **choice** to enroll in higher performing schools; schools that have been determined to have met adequate yearly progress under the criteria set forth by the federal *No Child Left Behind Act (“NCLB”)*. Furthermore, the bill will also provide students and families with necessary transitional and transportation services that will facilitate and support student achievement during the reassignment process.

Chief Sponsor of HB0200

In the State House of Representatives: Chief Sponsor Representative Cynthia Soto

Status: “Pre-Filed” January 7, 2007

History and Rationale

As originally introduced to the Illinois General Assembly in the 2006 session, Representative Cynthia Soto’s School Closings Reforms were embodied in HB2012 (Amendment 2). In 2006, the old version of the bill passed the House with overwhelming support, but when it arrived in the State Senate, the bill was gutted and died in the Rules Committee.

Now, HB0200 has re-introduced the main provisions of HB2012, but with some modifications from the original language. However, this bill remains strong and will ensure that Chicago's children and youth receive quality education and that Chicago's families are protected under the law, to the fullest extent possible, from the negative effects of Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) school closings policy. If enacted, HB0200 will only serve to strengthen and raise the educational standards of Chicago Public Schools to benefit students, educators, and the public. Although closing a school closing may sometimes be necessary, according to set criteria, this bill will ensure students and families that the educational disruption will be kept at a minimum for students.

The main provisions of the bill are to:

- Ensure that school closing procedures are guided by transparent and consistent measures that minimize instructional disruption and are in collaboration and dialogue with the affected community.
- Promote an inclusive school closings process that has measurable and consistent criteria that is developed and applied in conjunction with the districts' Local Schools Council and is open to modification and feedback from the public.
- Guarantee to the public and other stakeholders a timely notification process of school closing proposals. The Board will be required to announce any recommendation for school closure at least 6 months in advance. This process will also require the CPS Board to conduct 3 public hearings to ensure maximum feedback and participation from the community.
- Provide children and youth who are being displaced by school closures the choice to enroll in higher performing schools that meet specific criteria and to provide transitional and transportation services.
- Require the school district to annually investigate, assess, and publicly disclose the impact of school closings on displaced students and the student population at receiving schools.

HB0200 will ensure that the quality of public education is consistently beneficial and accessible to all students. **In a strong effort to work with CPS, Representative Soto and her co-sponsors revised the bill and dropped 2 controversial provisions included in HB2012: The requirements for a referendum and for CPS to enter into binding arbitration in cases where the community and CPS could not agree on a school closing.** In effect, Representative Soto and her allies have crafted a bill that will promote and protect the best interest of children and youth while allowing CPS to have the flexibility it needs to proceed with educational reforms.

Preliminary List of Organizations Calling for School Closings Reform

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless	Greater Englewood Community/Family Task Force
Neighborhood Capital Budget Group	West Town Leadership United
Grand Boulevard Federation	Community Coalition on the Drop-Out Crisis
Chicago Principals and Administrators Association	Greater West Town Project
Chicago Teachers Union	Westside Health Authority
Designs for Change	SEIU
Parents United for Responsible Education	

For more information, and to join the growing list of supporters, please contact:

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