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### Statement on School Closings

I have worked with a number of young people in the city of Chicago as an employee and volunteer through- out my career. Specifically, I have been a case manager, counselor and manager of several outreach, life skill and education-based programs. And as I reflect upon my time with young people I recognize that there have been several indelible themes regarding their development and education:

- Vulnerability of children and adolescents

Children and adolescents experience a series of biological, behavioral, psychological, emotional, and social developments at an accelerated rate which places them in a vulnerable position in life. Through those milestones children have specific needs such as safety, support, and structure to name a few. Closing schools in communities that already have little to no safety and support is disruptive to the ecology of a child's environment as schools often provide the aforementioned needs in some way shape or form. Some may feel that closing ineffective schools and consolidating children into fewer schools is the answer; however, there should be some consideration of how to properly improve existing schools in tandem with overall community development as this will provide the essential structure that youth need during this period of growth and development.

- Underserved marginalized populations

Most of the children being affected by school closings are African American and Latino students who are also low-income. These students already bear the brunt of systemic and institutional oppression which impacts their ability and opportunity to advance themselves within our society. Closing neighborhood schools sends a message to our youth (particularly Black and Brown youth) that they are not valued and that they are not expected to grow into adults that make positive contributions to society. This is also disruptive to their development as the lack of investment in their well-being serves as a de-motivating factor. Instead of closing schools it would be more effective to show our young people that their city is invested in their growth by improving their schools to instill more stability within their respective communities.

- Devaluing of Public School education

Overall, our Public School System is broken in that it is not rooted in ensuring that young people grow to be critical thinkers. Instead, they are evaluated based upon standardized tests that don't take into account a child's learning style. Thus, children are systematically de-valued by a system that fails to recognize their needs for a learning environment that prepares them for higher education and the workforce. Our children have a right to a Public School education with high standards; and closing schools adds insult to injury to our youth as it is symbolic of the erosion of Public School education. The constant chipping away of public schools represents a constant chipping away of higher learning and employment opportunities for our children. Moreover, as they are subjected to these cuts they will not be prepared to advance and excel in an increasingly accelerated economy.

In closing, there are few questions that city officials should ask themselves before making such a decision to continue to hack away at Chicago Public Schools:

- 1) Will the proposed closings improve the quality of life for our children as they are preparing to become adults, especially if it is projected that class sizes will increase and staff and administration personnel numbers will decrease?
- 2) Will the proposed closings decrease the trauma and violence that our children already experience, especially since it is predicted that children will now interface with multiple dangerous environments as many of them will travel greater distances to get to school?
- 3) Would you send your child to one of the schools that will be preparing to consolidate children from multiple neighborhoods?

If the answer is "No" to any or all those questions, then closing schools is not the solution to improve Public School education within CPS.