

Statement on Termination of Contract between Chicago Board of Education and Alma Advisory Group

We are extremely disappointed that the mayor and his appointees on the Board have chosen to sabotage the process to find a permanent leader for CPS. This blatant political interference is harmful to the entire District -- to schools, staff, families, and most importantly, the students. Every problem becomes more difficult to solve when there is leadership instability.

For the sake of our employees, families, and school communities, we strongly urge this hybrid Board to retain Interim Superintendent/CEO Dr. Macqueline King until a fully-elected board can restart the search in 2027.

In April 2025, this Board unanimously agreed on a clear and transparent process to identify a new leader for the District. We identified a local, minority-and-woman-owned firm with extensive experience working with CPS, and a proven ability to place Superintendents in districts around the country. We conducted extensive community engagement across the city, and surveyed parents, staff, and community members to make sure that any new leader would reflect the priorities of those we serve.

We want to thank Alma Advisory Group for their outstanding work throughout this search. They designed a competency-based process that was rigorous, thoughtful, and thorough. They did an excellent job recruiting a pool of over 100 candidates, including exceptionally qualified leaders of major American school systems who understand the complex work of executive leadership and know exactly what it takes to deliver results for students – especially those furthest from opportunity.

The termination of Alma's contract with the Board is a sad development, but it is entirely understandable. This process was working well until November, when Mayor Johnson and his allies started running political interference. Since then, names of finalists have been leaked, progress has stalled, and major decisions have been put on hold.

By making it impossible for a professional firm to see this through, Mayor Johnson and his appointed board members have shown that they are either unwilling, unable, or uninterested in finding a qualified CEO/Superintendent to lead CPS into the future.

This dysfunction has real consequences. CPS faces tremendous immediate challenges -- shifting enrollment, budget shortfalls, federal attacks on our funding and our families, and the struggle to create a more equitable system. We need stable leadership to address these urgent issues.

Dr. King has done laudable work under impossible circumstances. Under her leadership, CPS solved a \$734 million budget deficit and delivered a balanced budget that kept cuts out of the classroom and kept our credit rating intact. She re-opened schools successfully this fall, and

has led the District with stability and confidence as Chicago communities have been targeted by federal agents. She is someone who understands CPS inside and out -- as a student, a teacher, a principal, a policy leader, and now as Interim CEO/Superintendent.

Given that the Mayor and his appointees — the current Board majority — are not following through on the thoughtful and community-driven process we started over nine months ago, the best thing for CPS' staff, families, and students would be to retain Dr. King through the 2027 school year so a fully-elected board can have a say in a permanent leader for the District.

Carlos Rivas Jr. - Elected Board Member District 3b

Ellen Rosenfeld - Elected Board Member District 4b

Jessica Biggs - Elected Board Member District 6b

Angel Gutierrez - Elected Board Member District 8a

Therese Boyle - Elected Board Member District 9b

Dr. Che "Rhymefest" Smith - Elected Board Member District 10a