



March 29, 2016

## **Parents, Unite for Chicago's Children!**

During the last teacher contract battle in 2012, Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) and its 30,000 members left about 400,000 students and their parents at 675 schools scrambling for a week — scrambling for daycare, for meals, for a safe place to spend the days out of school, and with parents trying to get off of work so their children weren't unattended. Not to mention, the students were not learning during this period of time. Of course, we should provide teachers with more respect and a better contract, and in turn, we hope that students would also benefit from a better contract for teachers. However, this process makes me think that our educational system is more about the interests of everyone else first, and the interests of children last. But, we cannot blame our teachers - we have to blame a government and a system that pits teachers against students and their parents.

What if the parents of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) students decided to stand up for their children and extended the one day CTU walkout - extending the walkout until CPS truly considers the educational needs of the students they are pledged to serve? Some facts:

- Four out of 10 CPS freshmen don't graduate.
- 91 percent of CPS graduates must take remedial courses in college because they do not know how to do basic math and other schoolwork.
- Only 26 percent of CPS high school students are college-ready, according to results from ACT subject-matter tests.

The operations budget for Chicago Public Schools is close to \$6 billion annually of taxpayers' money, plus hundreds of millions more dollars for capital improvements. Still, we have heard that the biggest fight during this battle is for more money from Springfield to help "improve education". This fight seems fair at first, because in the coming fiscal year, other school districts will receive \$2,266 per student in pension support from Springfield, while Chicago will receive only \$31 per student. But, if Springfield gives more money to CPS, it will be for teacher's pensions - there is still no real promise for support for improved instruction for students.

This fight is about spending more money on a system serving mostly black and brown students. CPS receives billions of taxpayers' money and accepts the responsibility for students who are: African American: 39.3%; Hispanic: 45.6%; White: 9.4%; and Other: 5.7%, which includes Asians.

As a licensed and certified teacher in Illinois, I remember the daily challenges of being an elementary school teacher in CPS. I support our teacher unions, and they must continue the fight. At this time, I am urging parents to join in the fight for the love of their children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Ford', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford  
State Representative-Eighth District