



August 1, 2018

Austin Needs a New Comprehensive High School

I have fought for a new comprehensive high school for Austin since 2006. During a meeting with CPS CEO Janice Jackson, I was informed that the city will work with and listen to the requests of the community. Therefore, I am launching an advisory referendum for a new comprehensive public high school in the Austin community. The referendum petition asks, "Shall the City of Chicago and State of Illinois work together to construct a new Comprehensive High School in the 29th Ward to be placed in the Austin Community?" The petition will start in the 29th Ward and will be ready for the November 6, 2018 election.

The city of Chicago has recently announced the plans to build new high schools for several Chicago communities, but still ignores the taxpayers of the Austin community. The Austin community is the second largest community in Chicago with a population of 97,643, with 30% of the population being 19 and under. Austin has around 7,000 seats available for around 14,000 high school-age youth on the West Side. That means half of our high schoolers must leave Austin to pursue their education – that shouldn't be happening. The best Austin had was when we had Austin High School at its best. We must recognize the good work at Michele Clark Academic Prep Magnet High School, but why shouldn't Austin have a new comprehensive high school like other communities in the city?

We need to continue the fight for support for development on the West Side, especially in this election season when candidates are looking for votes and support, and one way to do that is through the West Side Development Task Force which I am forming. This Task Force aims to bring awareness to the many possibilities for development here on the West Side of Chicago. It will use the many years and plans of many West Side organizations to build one comprehensive development plan for the West Side. Having a new state of the art comprehensive high school in Austin goes hand in hand with plans for development of the West Side. The West Side Development Task Force will be used to propose new development projects for the West Side of Chicago in preparation for the 2019 state of Illinois capital bill.

As a resident of the 29th Ward, we should start the work for an advisory referendum in the 29th Ward for this November's election, and then expand the effort to all of the wards in Austin. Let's show that we want and need a new comprehensive high school in Austin!

Sincerely,

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District