

June 23, 2020

Dr. Janice Jackson, via electronic mail to [ceo-jackson@cps.edu](mailto:ceo-jackson@cps.edu)  
Mayor Lori Lightfoot, via electronic mail to [Lori.lightfoot@cityofchicago.org](mailto:Lori.lightfoot@cityofchicago.org)

Dear Dr. Jackson and Mayor Lightfoot:

Police presence in Chicago Public Schools (CPS) causes disproportionate harm to Black and brown students and students with disabilities by inappropriately forcing them into the criminal justice system rather than engaging them educationally. As an organization, Legal Council for Health Justice is dedicated to dismantling these structures and we call on you to remove Student Resource Officers (SROs) from CPS in order to create a police-free district and to replace them with educationally appropriate, best practices for student safety and success. Our work with students in CPS makes clear that police presence in schools only serves to create more harm, pain, and injustice for students and it is past time for this harm to stop.

Focusing on the students for whom we primarily advocate, diverse learners who receive a 504 Plan or an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the evidence is clear that these populations are disproportionately involved with police officers in the school setting. A recent [report](#) from the #CopsOutCPS coalition found that school-based policing disparately impacts students with diverse learning needs. Specifically, in the school years 2011-2012 to 2017-2018, students with IEPs made up only 15% of the CPS population, yet over 30% of police-student engagement involved students with IEPs. Frequent interactions with the criminal justice system at a young age undoubtedly have lasting emotional, mental, and physical consequences for the students involved. (See the Shriver National Center on Poverty Law's 2017 [report](#) on policing in CPS). Our students/clients and all students need educationally valid alternatives to police presence and intervention as tools for behavior management.

The time has come to act on our knowledge that law enforcement should not be utilized to address the behavioral challenges of learners in CPS' special education system. The value of special education services comes from the focus on creating individualized plans that recognize the unique and diverse needs of the student. The purpose of this individualization is to equip special education providers with greater care, understanding, and training in order to best support these students. We do not need police to support these learners; instead we need nurses, social workers, psychologists, teachers, and others who receive in-depth special education training. Absent its \$33 million contract with the Chicago Police Department, #CopsOutCPS calculates that CPS could replace the 180 SROs with investments in 317 social workers, 314 school psychologists, and 322 nurses—school personnel who are adequately trained and prepared to uplift diverse learners and to address the safety issues in our schools in healthy and educationally valid ways.

In sum, Legal Council is deeply concerned by the continued presence of police officers in Chicago Public Schools. Now is the time to provide students with school personnel who are able to support their emotional and physical needs so that they can thrive in the classroom and in their lives, to remove the Chicago Police Department from CPS, and to use the funding instead for resources and educators trained to support the diverse array of students present across Chicago.

Sincerely,

/s/ Carrie Chapman

Carrie Chapman, JD  
Senior Director of Policy and Advocacy  
312-605-1981

Cc: Ms. Madison, Mr. Del Valle, Mr. Revuluri, Ms. Rome, Mr. Truss, Dr. Todd-Breland, Dr. Melendez, and Mr. Sotelo (all via electronic mail)