

June 1, 2020

Dr. Janice Jackson, via electronic mail to ceo-jackson@cps.edu Lori.lightfoot@cityofchicago.org
Mayor Lori Lightfoot, via electronic mail to Lori.lightfoot@cityofchicago.org

Dear Dr. Jackson and Mayor Lightfoot:

It should go without saying that hunger harms children. However, since recent actions in Chicago call on us to say it, we note that science bears out that child hunger impedes brain development, causes anxiety and depression, lowers attention span, triggers behavioral issues, and results in poor physical health. See, e.g., American Psychological Association, "What are the Psychological Effects of Hunger on Children?" <https://www.apa.org/advocacy/socioeconomic-status/hunger.pdf>. In fact, our own legislature has recognized the strong link between adequate child nutrition and a child's physical, emotional, and cognitive development. 105 Ill. Comp. Stat. 125/0.05.

Not only is it harmful, but child hunger is, sadly, endemic in Chicago. Local policy researchers estimate that due to COVID-19, in April 2020, the increase in food insecurity doubled overall, but *tripled* among households with children. See, <https://www.ipr.northwestern.edu/news/2020/food-insecurity-triples-for-families-during-covid.html>. Because of the pervasiveness of poverty (and therefore food insecurity) among CPS students, the Chicago Public School District (CPS) participates in a program designed to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students without determining individual students' economic eligibility.

And, helpfully, even before Chicago moved to remote learning due to COVID-19 on April 13, 2020, CPS began providing free meals for pickup for families with children across the city on weekdays from 9am-1pm. CPS has already distributed over 12.5 million free meals to families.

We are deeply concerned, however, that yesterday evening, Dr. Janice Jackson, CEO of CPS, announced suspension of the meal program. In spite of, and perhaps even more so as a result of, unrest in our city, Chicago children and families need to eat. This food is vital now, more than ever. We call on CPS and the City of Chicago to work to immediately reinstate the CPS food distribution program and address any safety concerns individually as (and if) they arise.

Sincerely,



Julie Harcum Brennan, JD/MSW
Program Manager, Chicago Medical Legal Partnerships for Children
312-605-1989

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