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**82% OF CHICAGO VOTERS AGREE: FAMILIES SHOULD BE ABLE TO CHOOSE THE PUBLIC SCHOOL OPTION THAT BEST MEETS THEIR CHILDREN’S NEEDS**

*A New Stand for Children Poll Digs into Opinions on Transitioning Away from Magnet, Selective Enrollment, and Charter Public Schools*

**(Chicago)** – Stand for Children Illinois commissioned a poll asking voters to weigh in on public option schools. In a city where fewer than half of public school students attend their neighborhood school, the move to “transition away from” selective enrollment, magnet, and charter public schools affects a significant portion of Chicago Public Schools families. The results of the poll show that the majority of voters believe such a move would increase segregation and flight from the city.

“Transitioning away from high-quality public schools that parents have chosen for their children is a monumental decision that is out of step with the majority of Chicagoans’ preferences,” said Illinois Executive Director of Stand for Children, Jessica Handy. “A family’s zip code or income should not pre-determine the quality of education their children can access.”

Some highlights from the poll findings include:

* 82% of Chicago voters families in CPS believe they should be able to choose the public school that best meets their student’s needs, whether that’s their neighborhood school, a school in another neighborhood, or a magnet, selective enrollment, or charter school. The proportion of parents who agreed was even higher, at 86%.
* 63% of voters feel that eliminating school choice would limit opportunities and increase school segregation.
* Half of the families in CPS who do not choose their neighborhood school said they would move to find a school that is a better fit for them if their neighborhood school was the only public option available to them.
* Of the families that said they would move, 30% would opt to leave the City altogether.

Tulchin Research conducted the poll of Chicago voters in English and Spanish from January 4 – 9, following the Chicago Board of Education’s December resolution to shift away from selective enrollment, magnet, and charter schools. The intended change stands in contrast to the will of the 78% of voters who believe we don’t have to choose between public school choice and strong neighborhood schools.

“I am a staunch advocate for better-resourced neighborhood schools, but this cannot come at the expense of restricting families to only their neighborhood option. Families should have the freedom to seek the best educational fit for their children, especially when neighborhood options fall short,” said Cata Truss, an Austin resident, parent, and educator.

Katie Milewski, a parent to two fifth graders in a selective enrollment school and a leader of the group "CPS Parents for Buses," conducted an informal poll of her own:  133 parents in her group's Facebook Group responded.  Forty-nine percent said they would move out of Chicago, 20% would choose a private school, and 24% would go to the neighborhood school (13% reluctantly) if that was their only option.  Milewski has been one of many magnet and selective enrollment school parents advocating for transportation options for the 5,500 students who are no longer offered bus rides to and from school.

"Denying students busing or even a transportation allowance is one way the board and CPS have already covertly begun undermining public schools of choice.  Families are uprooting their lives to get children to school.  This is not sustainable.  It will erode enrollment at magnet and selective enrollment schools; in fact, 154 students already have left a school they loved because their bus was cancelled.  Eighty-five percent of the students that qualify for busing come from low-income families and are being hurt the most," said Milewski.

Stand’s poll brings to light the reality of public school choice: eliminating families’ options would not improve equity. Instead, it would encourage those with enough resources to move or choose a private school. “School choice will always be an option for families that can afford it,” Handy continued. “Transitioning away from public school options will disproportionately hurt low-income students and further solidify that a child’s zip code dictates their ability to access a great education.”

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*Stand for Children Illinois is a non-partisan education advocacy organization that fights for educational equity. Stand partners with parents to support their education journey and become strong advocates, and it advocates for proven policies and funding so that all students receive a high-quality, relevant education. Learn more about our work at* [*stand.org/illinois*](https://stand.org/illinois/)*.*