

December 2, 2022

IPS Board of Commissioners
120 E Walnut Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Superintendent Johnson and IPS board of commissioners:

As IPS parents, teachers and taxpayers, we want to express our concerns with the district pushing forward an \$800 million dollar referenda without engaging the community in a deep and meaningful way.

Many of us who have signed this letter have been advocates for replicating schools (of all types) in our city that are working to close the opportunity gap for children of color. Despite our many years of feedback – which has come in the form of speaking at board meetings, gathering petition signatures and sending numerous emails to IPS leaders – this district recently approved a strategic plan that does not grow our city's best public schools for Black and Brown children. It's our understanding that the referenda being considered will fund this strategic plan, which did not include the changes we requested in a letter sent to the IPS board back on October 6.

Whether this referenda actually supports growing school models that meet IPS' own board guidance for closing opportunity gaps is one of several concerns we have. According to district documents, there is a large funding gap that will grow wider between innovation schools in IPS and traditional schools if this referenda is approved. Under the current plan, direct district-run schools would receive an average of \$2,300 in funding each year from the operating referendum. Students in IPS innovation schools would receive only about \$650 per year per student. How is this large funding gap fair or equitable?

We also think it's important to fully consider the impact an \$800 million tax increase will have on our communities. These are very difficult economic times. Inflation continues to impact the very families that IPS serves and many residents face a housing crisis due to increased costs. Whether families own their home or rent, the financial burden from this potential referendum will have a disproportionate impact on low-income households.

All these concerns, combined with the incredibly brief window of time our community has had to review and give feedback on this significant referenda, leads us to request that the IPS board delay any vote on the proposed tax increase. Consider this: IPS only announced plans for this \$800 million ask of taxpayers just over a month ago. Many parents spend more time researching schools and deciding where to enroll our children than IPS has on vetting this referenda.

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We are supportive of investing in our public schools. We believe in IPS and we want nothing more than this district to become the best in our state when it comes to student achievement. Some of us actively supported the 2018 referenda as a part local advocacy group Stand for Children Indiana, which was the single largest supporter of that initiative. We want to get to a place of supporting this plan too. Our request is simply to slow this process down to allow for the public to appropriately review the referenda proposal and to also allow time to address the concerns we've raised above.

Thank you for your work and leadership to support our students in Indianapolis.

Sincerely,

Mary Bova, Teacher and IPS community member

Alisha Bell, IPS community member

Maria Cardenas, IPS grandparent

Melissa M. Damm, IPS grandparent

Ana Delgado, IPS guardian

Dontia D. Dyson, IPS guardian

Jacks Estrada, IPS guardian

Juan Figueroa, IPS grandparent

Natalie Lott, IPS grandparent

Swantella Nelson, IPS guardian

Jesus Ocanto, IPS teacher

Noemi Oliva, IPS guardian

Irma Perdomo, IPS community member

Virginia Ramos, IPS grandparent

Genessis Salinas, IPS community member

Giselle Salinas, IPS community member

Shawanda Tyson, IPS community member

Lizzbeth M. Arias Villamizar, IPS teacher