

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

September 10, 2025 at 4:00 PM  
Stewart Campus  
5235 W Belden Ave., Chicago, IL 60639

**Board Members Attending In-Person:** Adnan Assad, Ronit Barrett, Jessica Cardoni, Dee Dee Chesley, Roberto Interiano, Jeff Kemerley, Alex Maturi, Justin Orr, Carlos Pineiro, Katheryn Steward and Kim White.

**Board Members Attending via Microsoft Teams:** Angela Ingbineweka-Obaseki and Lauren Long

**Board Members Absent:** Rolando Acosta, Desire Bernard-Forbes, Meghan Kiesel, and Candace Williams.

**Christopher House Staff Attending:** Julie Dakers, Sarah Collentine, Anna Falcon, Becky Seibel, Karen Ross-Williams, Traci Stanley and Bonnie Werstein.

**Guests:** Shavon Hale and Maria Sandoval.

**Quorum Met.**

**Minutes Recorder:** Bonnie Werstein

**Proceedings:** Meeting called to order at 4:05PM

**Welcome** Presented by Dee Dee Chesley

Dee Dee welcomed our guests Shavon Hale and Maria Sandoval. Both guests are current parents in our Elementary School. Shavon Hale was a founding elementary school representative when the school was opened in 2013. Maria Sandoval currently serves on as the Vice President of the Parent Policy Committee as well as volunteers daily in the lunchroom as a parent monitor. Dee Dee Chesley called the meeting to order and welcomed the Board members.

**Opportunity for Public Comment**

There was no one present or registered to make public comments.

**Minutes and Consent Agenda,** Presented by Dee Dee Chesley

Motion was made by Adnan Assad and seconded by Alex Maturi to approve June 6, 2025 and carried unanimously to approve the June 6, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes.

Becky Seibel, COO, overviewed the materials in the Consent agenda packet including;

A Memorandum for FY26 from the Office of Head Start, notifying us of the upcoming federal monitoring review. The review will examine foundational systems in governance, fiscal management and program oversight. No date has been identified for review.

The School Readiness Updates included a detailed narrative of the Head Start and Early Head Start Programs that have a 97% current and consistent enrollment.

The board has been diligently working on the Shared Governance and Policy Committee since May 2025 to update one of the five pillars of the DBI Training Committee: Equities in Policies and Practices. The updates were developed in partnership with the leadership team to ensure policies and practices align with the principles of diversity, belonging, equity and inclusion. The updated Shared Governance Manual now aligns with the federal standards, clarifies expectations around the Parent/Leader Code of Conduct and strengthens the collaboration between the Board of Directors and Parent Policy Council.

The Parent Policy Council (PPC) approved the changes at the meeting held on August 26, 2025 and the Consent Agenda includes these approved updates for Board approval.

Board discussion included emphasizing the importance of ensuring the PPC has a consistent voice and clear role in contributing to the governance. The changes presented and approved will strengthen the partnership between the Board and PPC, particularly in resolving conflicts. The Board recognizes and appreciation was extended to Candace Williams, Alex Maturi and Megan Kiesel for their work in collaboration with Parent Policy Council. .

Motion was made by Ronit Barrett and seconded by Roberto Interiano and carried unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda.

#### **Executive Committee, Presented by Dee Dee Chesley**

The Executive Committee met extensively over the summer to discuss and ultimately propose the following revisions to the organization's bylaws regarding Board membership size. The current bylaws require a minimum of 20 and maximum of 30 members. The proposed revision reduces the minimum required board members to 14, allowing greater flexibility while continuing recruiting efforts.

The rationale for the revision is in alignment with nonprofit and charter board practices and ensures compliance with organizational bylaws while supporting sustainable governance. The Executive Committee would like to recognize that Christopher House has been consistent in ensuring that a quorum has been met for all meetings over the past year.

Motion was made by Carlos Pineiro and seconded by Jeff Kemmerly and carried unanimously to approve the Revisions to the Bylaws.

The Executive Committee recommended the Board Officer slate that includes the following members to serve as officers for the 2025-2027 term; President: Adnan Assad, Vice President: Jeff Kemerly, Treasurer: Katheryn Steward, Secretary: Alex Maturi. Ronit Barrett, previous secretary will serve as additional member of Executive Committee.

Motion was made by Dee Dee Chesley and seconded by Carlos Pineiro and carried unanimously to approve the Slate of Officers for the Board of Directors for the 2025-2027 officer term.

The Executive Committee also recommends the re-election of Angela Obaseki- Igbineweka as a Parent Representative and Rolando Acosta as board member. The executive also recommends the election of new board member Shavon Hale as a Parent Representative.

Motion was made by Alex Maturi and seconded by Ronit Barrett and carried unanimously to approve the election and re-election of stated members to the Board of Directors

Dee Dee shared that as Meghan Kiesel shared in her email to the board, she has had some shifting work priorities which will make her unable to fulfill her continued board commitment. As a result she has resigned from her position on the board.

#### **CEO Report, Presented by Julie Dakers**

Julie thanked Dee Dee for her 6 years of leadership and service as Christopher House Board Chair. We are so grateful for her leadership through some of the most challenging times in recent history including pandemic and post-pandemic growth, to where we are today a place a strength. While today is her last meeting serving as board chair, Dee Dee has another year in her current board term and we look forward to her continue board leadership.

Julie introduced Ms. Maria Sandoval to share her parent impact story. Ms. Sandoval is an elementary school parent, Parent Advisory Committee member and vice chair, as well as parent volunteer. As we have reviewed numbers and narratives of each community we serve, we want to deepen the board's learning by hearing directly from parents. Maria shared her CH journey and wishes for the school, including addition of sports team, clubs, and increasing parent volunteers. The board asked what does Maria think we need to do to strengthen parent support and volunteers? Maria shared she would like to see more variety in volunteer and fundraising opportunities for parents.

Julie shared that we have had a strong start to the new school year that began August 18<sup>th</sup> for all scholars birth through eighth graders, including strong enrollment, well-coordinated transitions, and collaboration of school leaders and managers. We kicked off the new school year with our annual all-staff professional development e focused on growth and development, Recommitment to Our Mission and Goals, and To celebrate the impact of our collective purpose.

Julie shared an update on elementary school leadership; the Elementary school has welcomed our new Middle School (5-8) Instructional Leader, Ms. Glover-Douglas. She joins the team with 22 years of experience as teacher, instructional coach, leadership coach, Assistant Principal and Principal and has deep commitment and track record to delivering academic excellence. She

joins Mrs. Alexander who will transition back to focus of leading Primary (K-4) Instructional Leader Principal. The team has also added Mr. Perez to the admin team, in the role of Dean, Social Emotional Learning. Mr Perez is bilingual english/spanish. Mr. Perez has served as Middle and high school educator, dean and leader, engagement and student services and has his principal endorsement. We have had a strong start to the team driving strong outcomes in highest student achievement social emotionally and academically.

Sarah Collentine, Director of Early Childhood presented on summer celebrations, including Uptown Family Cultural event, and the collaboration between elementary school and early childhood to deliver CH's summer bridge program. The summer bridge is an extension of the monthly collaboration between early childhood and elementary kindergarten teachers. 64 rising kindergartners participated in summer bridge. The Bridge program was led by collaboration of early childhood lead teacher Mr. Julian, and elementary English Language leader teacher Ms. Lopez. In addition to small group instruction, the transitioning kindergartners spend time in Kinder classroom throughout the summer. Outcomes reports, demonstrating impact of summer bridge will be presented November Board meeting with our FY25 outcomes reports.

Julie reviewed timeline, rubric, and board engagement in the upcoming Elementary Charter Renewal. Christopher House's application for renewal is due September 30<sup>th</sup>. Julie reviewed how our continuous plan for quality improvement and school improvement plan aligns with renewal rubric. Our goal is to deliver strong performance and continue to improvements to deliver on continued student growth and highest student achievement. Julie reviewed board engagement expectations in the renewal visit that will take place on September 29, 30 and November 3 and 4<sup>th</sup> for Special Education. Julie referenced curriculum overview in board packet reflective of current curriculum and which curriculum materials are up for evaluation this school year. Updated recommendations will be shared in the spring based on evaluation metrics.

### **Strategic Plan Update Presented by Becky Seibel**

In March 2023, we shared what we envisioned as the Best Place to Work pillar of our proposed Strategic Plan – which included a 3-year goal to increase pay equity and develop career advancement pathways. Becky reminded board that we defined pay equity as internal equity within our continuum, Living wage for all employees – lowest wage earners making far below \$40K, and to increase parity with CPS – our greatest competitor. We shared our aspirations – where we wanted to be – and our then reality as of FY23, which was far off.

We needed to prioritize pay equity in order to recruit and retain best in class talent. In 2023, pay was the #1 reason people cited for leaving CH and #1 reason people declines positions when we were hiring. We could not retain high performing staff – they were leaving us for our competitors. The impact of these issues was felt by our children – in student achievement and in our ability to deliver on our mission and commitment.

Over the last several fiscal years, you have seen expense reductions, fund reallocations, and revenue gentrification to support increased salary expenses. Beginning in FY24, we have implemented a targeted stepped approach to get us to our pay equity goal – we prioritized and

scaled in over the last several years, including implementing early childhood teacher pay scales based on credentials and tenure.

Our retention data in 2025 look markedly different from what I shared in 2023. This last year, 87% of CHES teaching staff were retained – and over the last two years, 100% of Lead Preschool Teachers were retained. We have also been able to deliver on 100% of employees making a base minimum pay. Board inquired about what we see as next steps, and how are we communicating this impact to funders and potential funders?

**External Affairs,** Presented by Jeff Kemerley

Jeff overviewed YTD Private Revenue fundraising is on track towards goal with 28% raised in the first quarter of the new fiscal year.

Christopher House will be hosting a cultivation event Saturday November 1, 2025

This is a great opportunity to engage your network, friends, potential supporters, advocates to learn more about Christopher House in a fun and educational way. More detailed description in your board packet. Limited seats available – Registration will begin week of September 15<sup>th</sup>. We will be accepting donations, to offset cost of tour. Suggested donation of \$50. Reminder from last meeting that Christopher House's 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Benefit will take place Friday May 1, 2026 will be our 35<sup>th</sup> annual Benefit.

We are also focused on strategic board Member Recruitment. We are recruiting board members in the priority areas of Elementary and High School Education, Finance and Investment, and Organizational Development/Human Resources. If have a mission aligned prospect, please connect with Jeff, Julie, or Adnan.

**Finance Committee Report,** Presented by Adnan Assad

Adnan shared that Unaudited financials are included in your packets. The team is still working with auditors to finalize FY25 numbers, however, unaudited June 2025 Financials – actual as compared to approved FY25 budget – are favorable. Even with some adjustments, we anticipate we will close in the black. This is mostly attributed to on the revenue side, CHES Enrollment actuals exceeded conservative projections, Early Childhood Grants were fully expended – no money was left on the table, Accurate CCAP projections – where in years past we landed substantially unfavorable, on the expense side: Staffing vacancies.

We are nearing the completion of our FY25 Financial and Compliance Audits. Based on feedback to date, we are not anticipating any findings. Our auditors will present final reports to Finance Committee this October. Reports are due to CPS on 11/1. Final reports will be included in the November Board Packet and will be reviewed during that meeting. As a reminder, the details of this audit will be considered in our charter renewal – with a keen focus on financial sustainability.

As a reminder, current loans come to term end of this month – on 9/30. In alignment with previous board resolution, we continue to work strategically with new lender. The draft loan documents are included in your packet. Legal counsel from Paul Hastings are currently reviewing draft loan documents. Those draft documents were reviewed with Finance Committee members earlier this week. One documents are finalized and ready for execution, they'll be shared with Finance Committee members, and ultimately, with the Executive Committee for their approval. Included in your board packets are the Board Resolution and Secretary's Certificate related to that loan.

#### **Board Resolution Authorizing Loan Approval**

Adnan shared that we have received a commitment letter for refinancing of our loan. In September 2024 updated loan terms were executed, accelerated both of our loans. We have received refinancing commitment with the terms as outlined in your packet for the balance of approximately 4.9 million. Included in your packet is a Board Resolution, authorizing the Executive Committee, on recommendation from Finance Committee, to approve new loan terms.

Motion was made by Carlos Pinero seconded by Adnan Assad and carried unanimously to approve Board Resolution Authorizing Loan Approval.

#### **DBEIJ Task Force, presented by Julie Dakers**

Julie presented DBEIJ report on behalf of committee. In alignment with the 5 pillars of the DBEIJ taskforce the committee is continuing to focus on Equity in Policies and Practices defined as Partner with the Leadership Team to review, develop, and refine policies and practices consistent with our principles of diversity, belonging, equity, and inclusion. You approved today updated Shared Governance that the committee has worked in collaboration with PPC. The other current focus area is Listen to Our Staff and Faculty: Proactively gather and act on feedback from our staff and faculty about the challenges they face and opportunities they seek. CH conducted its annual employee engagement survey this summer. 80% of employees organization wide participated in the survey, which is strong representative employee voice to inform our action plan. Christopher House's overall engagement score is 60%. Based on Gallup data 30–40% engagement is considered average to good, while the benchmark goal for top-performing companies: 70%+ engagement. One of our strategic priorities, is committed to delivering on the best place to work. While 60% is above average we want to do better and strive towards 70%+ engagement. Board asked if areas for improvement in employee engagement data aligns with opportunities identified in 5 essentials survey? Overall, yes they are well aligned. Julie shared top engagement areas and leading action areas, areas we need to improve on which will be reflective in action plan for improvement. Drilling down into specific survey results, staff report their job allows them to make a positive difference (social connection), their manager is a great role model and cares about them (management), they feel they have enough autonomy in their job and systems to support them in getting their work done (enablement), and they believe they are

appropriately involved in decisions that affect their work (alignment and involvement).

Currently working on Action Plan with management team for identified areas of improvement. DBEIJ committee has challenged us to look at data in other aggregated ways, that help us reflect on engagement across diverse populations of our workforce – tenure, demographics to see if provides additional insights.

Motion was made by Adnan Assad and seconded by Jeff Kemmerly and carried unanimously to move into closed session Personnel Matters: The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees

**Closed Session**

Personnel Matters: The appointment, employment, compensation, discipline, performance, or dismissal of specific employees

Motion was made by Roberto Interiano and seconded by Carlos Piniero and carried unanimously to go back into open session.

Motion was made by Dee Dee Chesley and seconded by Alex Maturi and carried unanimously to adjourn meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 6:15pm