

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES FINAL – Approved 1/14/26**

November 12, 2025 at 4:00 PM  
Christopher House Uptown Campus  
4701 N Winthrop Ave, Chicago IL 60640

Board Members Attending In-Person: Ronit Barrett, Desire Bernard-Forbes, Jessica Cardoni, Dee Dee Chesley, Angela Igbineweka-Obaseki, Roberto Interiano, Lauren Long, Alex Maturi, Justin Orr, Katheryn Steward, Candace Williams

Board Members Attending via Microsoft Teams: Kim White,

Board Members Absent: Rolando Acosta, Adnan Assad, Shavon Hale, Jeff Kemerley, Carlos Pineiro

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

Guests: Mike Edeke and Jessica Boutang

Quorum Met.

Minutes Recorder: Bonnie Werstein

Proceedings: Meeting called to order at 4:06PM

Welcome Presented by Alex Maturi

Alex Maturi chaired the meeting due to our President (traveling out of the country for a family emergency) and Vice President (traveling for work). Alex welcomed our guests Mike Edeke and Jessica Boutang. Mike has a background in corporate strategy, health industry, and community advocacy. His older siblings were members of the Christopher House community. Jessica is a former Early Childhood parent and current parent in our Youth Leadership program at Uptown. Also attending her first official meeting is Seema Rehmatullah the new Director of Development. Alex Maturi 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 Alex Maturi

*Motion was made by Dee Dee Chesley and seconded by Candace Williams and carried unanimously to approve the minutes for September 10, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes and October 18, 2025 Board Retreat 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. To begin on November 17, 2025.

Notification from the City of Chicago that Christopher House would be receiving funds from the FY25 Corporate Fund as part of Chicago's initiative for early childhood workforce. This one-time 2% bonus is not considered a permanent increase or to be combined with any other funding. The funds must be applied as staff bonuses occurring between 12/1/2025 and 12/31/2025 in the amounts of \$18,359 for the Early Head Start Program and \$30, 629 for the Head Start Program. All funds were allocated to personnel only. There was no additional expense covered with these funds.

A letter to the Christopher House Board of Directors from Chicago Public Schools, notifying us of the 2024-2025 Academic Accountability Ratings and ISBE Summative Designation Accountability for the Elementary School. Board inquired about categories of summative designation. Julie reviewed Illinois has four annual summative designations: Exemplary, Commendable, Targeted, and Comprehensive.

- Exemplary recognizes the highest performing 10 percent of schools.
- Comprehensive identifies the lowest performing 5 percent of schools.
- Targeted identifies schools whose performance is overall above the lowest performing 5 percent of schools but that have one or more individual student groups whose performance is on par with the lowest performing 5 percent of schools.
- All other schools receive a Commendable designation.

CH has Continuous Quality Improvement Plan Goals – and it has been shared with board [June 2024, March 2025] have four focus area priorities; Increase outcomes for all students, Diverse Learners, Differentiated Instruction and Multi-tiered Supports, Decrease Chronic absenteeism, Decrease Chronic Truancy

The Parent Policy Council (PPC) documents submitted for Shared Governance showed that the committee reviewed the Spring School Readiness Analysis showing favorable outcomes.

They also reviewed and discussed the Policy Council Bylaws to better align with the HSPPS standards by changing term limits for council members. The previous term stated “no individual may serve on the Parent Policy Council for more than three one-year terms” the update will state that “no individual may serve on Parent Policy Council for more than five term years” The vote was unanimously approved to update term limits in the bylaws in the August 29<sup>th</sup> meeting and the Consent Agenda includes these approved updates for Board approval.

PPC Meeting agendas and finances were shared and reviewed as well as staffing, enrollment, chronic absenteeism, immigration and mental health for the months of September and October.

*Motion was made by Katheryn Steward and seconded by Lauren Long and carried unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda.*

**CEO Report, Presented by Julie Dakers**

Julie introduced Ms. Jessica Boateng to share her parent impact story. Jessica shared that her children ages 5 and 10 attended the Uptown Early Childhood Program before transitioning to public school. Both children still attend Christopher House and are members of the School Age program and enjoy spending time with us after school and on days off. Jessica appreciates the CH staff for providing a supportive and safe environment for her children. The family loves to participate in the annual Fashion Show but wishes that we would offer more field trips when the children do not have school.

Julie shared the preliminary findings for the Charter Renewal. The renewal process has three priority conditions to review, and the team feels confident that we are meeting two of the three areas and subdomains. Therefore, the expected rating should be “Approaching Standards”. Julie stated that the average renewal term for organizations under review last year was 2.6 years and the longest term awarded was 5 years.

We need to continue our efforts as we enter into the third year of our Continuous Work Improvement Plan (CWIP). We recognize that the English Language Learners (ELL) program remains a challenge. 47% of students are English Language Learners (ELL); over half of special education students are also ELL. We have been focusing on co-teaching: collaboration between SPED teachers, ESL teachers, and classroom teachers and improving the systems established to improve instructional quality and student impact.

As part of the CWIP, Christopher House was allocated financial resources that allowed us to offer after-school tutoring and a 4-week summer academic program. We also partnered with Carnegie Math for math instruction improvement.

Julie also reported that we are prioritizing the recruitment of teachers with ELL and SPED credentials for K–8 classrooms, but the interim solution is to retain contractual expertise from external partners (ELL support, special education).

**Strategic Plan Update Presented by Traci Stanley**

The Board Members discussed the current Strategic Plan that is scheduled to end in June 2026 and proposed to the Board that the plan should be extended by one year (to June 30, 2027) and that Community Impact should be added as a fourth pillar. The New plan development to start January; expected completion by Sept 2027. It was further recommended that Christopher House should maintain ‘Investing in Equity’ pillar despite political climate.

*Motion was made by Candace William and seconded by Ronit Barrett and carried unanimously to approve updating the current Strategic Plan to include a Community Impact pillar and to extend the Strategic Plan by one year.*

**External Affairs,** Presented by Lauren Long

Lauren reported that Christopher House FY26 fundraising goal is 41%. Giving Tuesday (Dec 2) and holiday appeals underway.

The Annual Benefit scheduled for May 1, 2026 (Friday) with the Theme: 'Once Upon a Time: The Power of One Story, The Strength of Many' (celebrating 120 years). The Corporate sponsorship lists shared; board asked to review and provide contacts.

A New initiative to cultivate donors and offer a stronger bond with our scholars has been created. The Lunch & Learn series will happen monthly, if possible, with the Middle School Scholars providing a tour of the school and discussion about chosen topics while sharing a meal. The first session was held on Nov 25, 2025 and included Board Members, Staff and Scholars.

**Executive Committee,** Presented by Alex Maturi

Mike Edeke who has a background in corporate strategy, health industry, and community advocacy was invited to join the Board of Directors.

*Motion was made by Roberto Interiano and seconded by Lauren Long and carried unanimously to approve the nomination of Mike Edeke to the Board of Directors for a three year term 2025-2028.*

**Finance Committee Report,** Presented by Katheryn Steward

The finance committee reported that the Audit performed by Plante Moran is almost completed. Initial audit shows a clean opinion with no material weaknesses and a net gain of \$322,000. The final piece still required to close out the FY2025 is a single audit pending due to federal delays.

Loan update: Old National Bank loan settled at \$4M (forgiveness of \$900K); new loan with IFF: \$4M, 15-year term; gain of \$600K expected.

Q1 performance: Budgeted loss \$252K; actual loss \$313K (variance due to timing in salaries/benefits). Federal funding impact is minimal so far; awaiting city guidance for contracts ending Nov 30.

**DBEIJ Task Force,** presented by Candace Williams

The committee reported that immigration enforcement is still impacting families and attendance. Christopher House has been hosting biweekly federal preparedness meetings. The food pantry and emergency assistance have seen an increase in participation. The staff are participating in peace circles and Professional Development to better understand and support the families and scholars. The attendance fluctuates (90–98%); some families still impacted but overall has remained consistent. The committee asked that Board Members join safety campaigns, volunteer for drop-off/pick-up, support giving campaigns and emergency needs, participate in upcoming board self-assessment.

*Motion was made by Candace Williams and seconded by Ronit Barrett and carried unanimously to move into closed session.*

**Closed Session**

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

*Motion was made by Roberto Interiano and seconded by Lauren Long and carried unanimously to go back into open session.*

*Motion was made by Candace Williams and seconded by Dee Dee Chesley and carried unanimously to adjourn meeting.*

Meeting adjourned at 6:15pm

**Key Decisions:**

- Extend strategic plan by one year and add Community Impact pillar.
- Approve new board member (Mike Edeke).