BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES
DRAFT

March 11, 2026, at 4:00 PM
Christopher House Uptown Campus
4701 N Winthrop Ave, Chicago IL 60640

Attendance

Board Members Attending In-Person: Adnan Assad, Ronit Barrett, Desire Bernard-Forbes, Mike Edeke, Angela Igbineweka-Obaseki, Roberto Interiano, Lauren Long, Justin Orr, Carlos Pineiro, Brooke Roark, Katheryn Steward, Kim White, Candace Williams

Board Members Attending via Microsoft Teams: Jessica Cardoni, Jeff Kemerley

Board Members Absent: Rolando Acosta, Dee Dee Chesley, Shavon Hale, Alex Maturi

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

Guests Presenter: Janet Hernandez

Guests Registered for Public Comment: Gustavo Marquez, Gabrielle (Cory) Muschong, DeShai Rover, Endora Turner, Mackenzie Weadick. Registered but did not attend Aimee Daugherty, Jordan Reece. Gaby De Loof submitted written Public Comment to Board Secretary.

Quorum Met. Meeting called to order at 4:00 PM by Chair, Adnan Assad.

Minutes Recorder: Bonnie Werstein

Welcome Presented by Adnan Assad

Adnan welcomed our guests and Board Members before calling the meeting to order.

Opportunity for Public Comment

The Chair reminded attendees of the Board's public participation guidelines and three-minute time limit per speaker. Eight speakers were registered, five addressed the Board in the order listed below and one submitted via email due to illness.

Speakers:
Aimee Daugherty — Third Grade Teacher (Registered but did not attend)
Gaby DeLoof — Fifth and Sixth Grade Math Teacher (Registered but did not attend)
Gustavo Marquez — School Social Worker
Gabrielle 'Cory' Muschong — First Grade Teacher (3rd year)
Jordan Reece — Seventh and Eighth Grade ELA Teacher (Registered but did not attend)
DeShai Rover — K–4 Music Teacher

Endora Turner — Paraeducator and CTU Delegate
Mackenzie Weadick — Diverse Learner (Special Education) Teacher
Written statement submitted by Gaby DeLoof (via C. Muschong)

Key themes raised (summary)

- Student and staff need for stability; concern about ongoing teacher/administrator turnover.
- Concerns with a dual-principal/instructional leader model; preference voiced for a single, empowered school leader.
- Acute staffing shortages in Special Education (only 2 of 6 DL teachers in place at the time); students missing legally required IEP minutes.
- Need for in-house substitutes or associate/floater teachers to ensure classroom continuity; better onboarding and support for substitutes.
- Requests to reduce unnecessary paperwork; increase teacher voice in decisions; and provide ISBE-certified professional development.
- Equitable student rostering and appropriate student-teacher ratios (including EL classrooms).
- Mentoring program for new teachers; coaching and actionable feedback for all teachers; formal evaluations for specialists.

Board response: Chair Assad thanked speakers and affirmed commitment to address turnover, support gaps, and to rebuild trust in collaboration with staff.

Minutes and Consent Agenda, Presented by Adnan Assad

The Board reviewed the January Board Meeting Minutes and no changes were recommended.

Motion was made by Carlos Pineiro and seconded by Candace Williams and carried unanimously to approve the minutes for January 14, 2025, Board Meeting Minutes.

Becky Seibel provided an overview of the materials in the Consent agenda packet included.

The Board considered the consent agenda, which included governance and compliance materials required for program operations, including the Early Childhood Program Year 2027 selection criteria and Policy Council documentation. Staff provided an overview of the Head Start and Early Head Start enrollment selection criteria, noting that they align with federal, state, and local funding requirements, as well as the organization's community assessment data and priorities for serving families with the highest levels of need. The Board discussed how the criteria is used to ensure equitable access to services while maintaining compliance with program guidelines.

The Shared Governance Reports and Policy Council meeting minutes were shared and reviewed with updates from the January 14, 2026, January 20, 2026 and February 18, 2026 meetings.

Head Start Shared Governance Note: Per 45 CFR Part 1301, relevant items are subject to Parent Policy Council review/approval. Staff will ensure reciprocal approvals and file cross-approvals with the official record.

Motion was made by Lauren Long and seconded by Mike Edeke and carried unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda.

CEO Report, Presented by Julie Dakers

Julie presented the CEO report, beginning with an update on employee engagement efforts. She noted that the organization's May 2025 engagement survey showed approximately 60 percent of staff were engaged, and that leadership has since focused on improving communication, strengthening relationships, enhancing performance systems, and building a culture of engagement. A follow-up pulse at the February in-service indicated that approximately 89 percent of staff believed leadership was taking action based on feedback, demonstrating measurable improvement.

The CEO also provided an update on the CPS charter renewal process, reporting that all required milestones have been completed and that the Board's vote is expected later in 2026. Academic evaluation results from a fall site visit have been received, while special education review results remain pending. She explained that the organization has implemented a three-year school improvement plan focused on curriculum alignment, tiered interventions, instructional leadership, student culture, and family engagement. While progress has been made, she acknowledged that continued work is required to reach the organization's desired level of academic excellence.

Additionally, Julie discussed improvements to teacher evaluation and professional development systems. She reported that while only 75 percent of teachers were evaluated in the prior year, the organization is on track to achieve full evaluation coverage for all teachers eligible in the current year. Weekly, structured professional development has been implemented, though ongoing challenges remain due to contractual limitations around instructional coaching.

Early Childhood Family Assessment Report, Presented by Janet Hernandez

Janet presented on the implementation of the ParentGauge assessment tool, a research-based instrument designed to evaluate family engagement in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. She explained that the tool aligns with the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) framework and replaces a prior system that was time-intensive and less standardized. As of January 2026, 188 family assessments had been completed, with parent engagement scores approaching national benchmarks.

Janet highlighted key findings, including strong performance in areas such as health compliance and parent advocacy, as well as opportunities for improvement in family participation in program activities and reading at home. She described ongoing efforts to address these gaps through targeted workshops, increased family outreach, and collaboration between family advocates and teaching staff. The Board discussed the importance of using this data for continuous improvement and expressed interest in receiving regular updates through dashboard reporting.

Executive Committee Report, Presented by Adnan Assad

The Executive Committee provided an update on staffing trends, noting that approximately half of recently vacated positions have been filled. However, significant challenges remain in recruiting and retaining special education teachers, with four vacancies still unfilled. Leaders explained that these shortages reflect broader statewide trends and described interim strategies, including the use of substitute services and planning for compensatory services for students who have missed required instruction.

Board members requested additional data to support oversight, including metrics on staff retention, average tenure, attendance, and completion of performance evaluations. The Committee affirmed that these metrics will be incorporated into future Board dashboards.

The Board discussed the Executive Committee's recommendation of the formation of an Education Advisory Council to provide additional expertise and oversight on academic matters. The Council will serve as an advisory body to the board focused on improving instructional quality and student outcomes.

Motion was made by Carlos Pineiro and seconded by Candace Williams and carried unanimously to approve the establishment of the Education Advisory Council.

Brooke Roark and Roberto Interiano were appointed as initial members.

External Affairs Committee Report, Presented by Jeff Kemerley

Jeff Kemerley presented the External Affairs report, highlighting strong year-to-date fundraising performance and noting that the organization is ahead of the prior year in philanthropic revenue. He emphasized the importance of the upcoming Annual Benefit scheduled for May 1, 2026, and encouraged Board members to support sponsorships, ticket sales, and auction contributions. Efforts are also underway to expand donor engagement and increase participation in fundraising events.

Finance Committee Report, Presented by Kathryn Steward

Kathryn Steward reported on the organization's financial position, stating that year-to-date results are favorable to budget by approximately $216,000. She explained that higher-than-expected grant revenue and strong investment performance contributed to this positive variance, while increased spending on consultants reflects efforts to address staffing gaps, particularly in special education. The Finance Committee is currently evaluating new banking partners and will bring a recommendation to the Board. Work has also begun on the FY27 budget, which will be presented in June.

DBEIJ Task Force Report, by Candace Williams

Candace reported that the DBEIJ Task Force encouraged Board members to integrate diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice principles into all committee work. Members were asked to reflect on personal values related to DEIBJ and consider how those values can inform governance

practices. The Task Force will provide additional guidance and expects committees to report back on implementation strategies at future meetings.

Closed Session

Motion was made at 5:52 PM to enter into a Closed Session by Ronit Barrett and seconded by Brooke Roark and carried unanimously to move into closed session to discuss personnel matters, in accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act (5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1)). The motion was approved by roll call vote, with all members present voting in favor. No final action was taken in closed session, and all formal Board actions remained in open session.

Motion was made by Carlos Pineiro *and seconded by* Angela Igbineweka-Obaseki *and carried unanimously to go back into open session.*

Motion was made by Katheryn Stewart and seconded by Candace Williams and carried unanimously to adjourn meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 6:04 PM

Key Decisions:
- Approval of January Board Meeting Minutes and Consent Agenda
- Approval to Establish the Education Advisory Council