



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

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**RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE CLOSURE OF CERTAIN VOCATIONAL TRAINING
CLASSES AT SIMEON CAREER ACADEMY AND THE FUTURE OF VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION IN THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

WHEREAS, One of the bas-relief panels sculpted on the facade of the entrance to Chicago's City Hall depicts the education of the youth of this city as a principal pillar of municipal service. The city's basic covenant with its citizens to provide a comprehensive public education is endangered through the dismantling of educational policy built from the institutional knowledge and experience of multiple generations of Chicagoans from all walks of life who hold the common belief that a good public education offers a broad-based elementary and secondary curriculum that includes relevant vocational education; and

WHEREAS, From 1880 until very recent times, the Chicago Public School's Boards of Education and all former Superintendents have championed vocational education as a desirable and necessary adjunct to college preparatory curricula. A 2011 Harvard Graduate School of Education report stated "This surge in educational attainment laid the foundation for the staggering increase in American wealth and power that came to be known as the American Century ... Within the U.S. economy, there is also growing evidence of a 'skills gap' in which many young adults lack the skills and work ethic needed for many jobs that pay a middle-class wage. Simultaneously, there has been a dramatic decline in the ability of adolescents and young adults to find work. Indeed, the percentage of teens and young adults who have jobs is now at the lowest level since World War II"; and

WHEREAS, Current CPS policy appears to be shifting from an education for the students it has, toward only providing programs that cater to the needs of students it desires. There has been a decided erosion of the traditional curriculum that provides balanced academic, artistic and vocational offerings that address the requisites and aspirations of all of this city's youth today; and

WHEREAS, This emphasis on providing only a strictly college preparatory education has left the majority of this city's young citizens bereft of a viable alternative to an expensive and time-consuming pursuit of a four-year degree. Pronouncements setting the goal of "100% college-ready, 100% college-bound" for CPS graduates have only led to significantly reduced opportunities and resultant expectations for some of today's CPS high school students; and

WHEREAS, An excellent example of such reduced opportunity is the proposed closures of an electrician and an automotive program at Simeon Career Academy. It is impossible to conceive of the notion that a community with consistently high unemployment could have a better alternative than that of comprehensive training as an electrician or automotive mechanic, both high-paying trades; and

WHEREAS, It is incumbent upon this legislative body to understand and ameliorate this trend in Chicago Public School policy; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED That we, the undersigned members of the City of Chicago City Council, gathered together this 30th Day of July, 2014 AD, do hereby call upon the Committee on Education and Child Development to expeditiously hold hearings in order to take testimony by both the public and expert witnesses concerning the closure of such essential programs as Simeon Career Academy's electrician and automotive classes in specific and the future of vocational education in the Chicago Public Schools in general.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED That a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and presented to Latasha R. Thomas, Chair of the Committee of Education & Child Development and Dr. S. House, Principal of Simeon Career Academy, and Dr. Barbara Byrd-Bennett, Chief Executive Officer of the Chicago Public Schools.