



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

File #: R2022-597, Version: 1

Committee on Health and Human Relations Chicago City Council
Meeting May 25, 2022

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Policy Manual includes a policy on Student Religious Practices, adopted in 2001, that states:

"It is the policy of the Chicago Public Schools ("CPS") to accommodate student religious practices provided that such practices can be accommodated in a manner which does not violate the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution, and to the extent that the accommodation does not place an undue burden on the school. This policy shall be implemented in a manner that is consistent with: CPS Policy Against Discrimination on the Basis of Race, Color, National Origin, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Age, Religion or Disability; and Board Rule 1-14 which prohibits discrimination or harassment against any employee or student on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability' "and,

WHEREAS, The CPS created the Office of Family and Community Engagement (FACE) to empower parents/guardians to be active stewards of their child's educational process and facilitate family and community participation in their school community through outreach events, educational opportunities, and community and faith-based partnerships; and,

WHEREAS, CPS also created Office of Faith-Based Initiatives within FACE that is committed and dedicated to bridging the gaps between Chicago Public Schools and the faith-based communities of Chicago; and,

WHEREAS, Despite these efforts, CPS has failed to adequately meet the religious dietary requirements of Jewish and Muslim students to offer food options that meet Kosher and Halal preparation guidelines; and,

WHEREAS, CPS reported in 2021 that only five schools offer Kosher and Halal food options; and,

WHEREAS, more than 80% of Sullivan High School Muslim students in 2021 said they weren't getting enough, or anything, to eat at the school because the CPS food provider Aramark doesn't offer food that is sourced and prepared under Islamic rules; and,

WHEREAS, A 2020 University of Chicago and Brandeis University study found that one in five Jewish families in Chicago were "struggling to make ends meet" thus making school lunch a critical component of their children's health, well-being and development; and,

WHEREAS, studies show that hunger or inadequate nutrition affects learning by curbing a child's physical development, inhibiting their ability to focus and perform, and limiting their future achievements; and,

WHEREAS, these same studies show that hunger and under-nutrition in children can cause low academic achievement and behavioral problems; and,

WHEREAS, the noble efforts of these Jewish and Muslim families to maintain their religious identity and practices while sending their children to receive an education in Chicago Public Schools are being thwarted by a failure or inability of CPS administrators to follow and meet their own Faith-Based policy guidelines to accommodate and not discriminate against the religious practices of their students; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO, that we, the members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, call upon the Committee on Health and Human Relations to convene a hearing to examine the failure of Chicago Public Schools to meet the religious dietary needs of their students, as required by its policies; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO, that representatives from the Chicago Public Schools administration, Office of Nutrition Support Services, Office of Faith-Based Initiatives, and its food provider be invited to appear before the Committee on Education and Child Development to provide testimony on its food service policies; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO, that representatives from the Jewish United Fund and the Islamic Food and Nutrition Council of America be invited to appear and testify on the importance of providing Kosher and Halal food to children of their respective faiths.