



WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION MAYORAL FORUM ON 02/11/19

1. What is your understanding of early childhood education and how would you characterize the importance of the childcare industry?

- a. **Amara Enyia:** Early childhood education is the most critical juncture for so many of our children, especially those from families who are lower on the socioeconomic ladder. Early childhood education is often mistaken as starting in prekindergarten, but we need to reimagine it along a continuum. The educational outcomes we see in high school are determined in pre-birth and the first few years of life, prior to kindergarten. We need to dedicate resources to ensure every expecting parent is connected to an early childhood care center for the support, education, and nutrition they need to have a healthy birth and a healthy baby. Therefore, the childcare industry is critically important for the well-being of our community and our society. This is a moral imperative, but it is also a common sense fiscal solution. Healthy babies born into stable and healthy homes leads to productive citizens, and the opposite costs our society exponentially more.
- b. **Robert Fioretti:** Early childhood education is education for children up to age 8. Some of it is done by schools, some by community organizations, and some in the home. It's important for reasons articulated in response to your subsequent questions.
- c. **LaShawn Ford:** I am as proud of my work and support for early childhood education as any other area, and several of my closest advisors who helped convince me to get into this race are those who focus on early childhood education. There is nothing more important we can do in city government than to support the people and organizations who are dedicated to the social, emotional, and cognitive well-being of our children in their formative ages. I understand that the child care industry is the backbone of our workforce. If working people don't have childcare, they cannot provide for their families. The child care industry is the foundation for the success of our businesses, service organizations and public service.
- d. **John Kozlar:** Early childhood education is the blueprint for a child's development. In order to nurture our children, we must provide them with a well-rounded blueprint. The sooner we educate our children, the less problems he or she will have in the future. Children must be educated in academics, arts, languages, and recreational activities. More importantly, all children should have ample resources available, regardless of where they are located within the city.



- e. **Loro Lightfoot:** Early Childhood Education, widely believed to be from birth to age 8, is one of the most critical tracks of education offered. Only about 25% of the brain is developed at birth, the other 75% happening in the critical first five years of life. Quality early childhood education is essential to building a healthy and prepared citizenship, and with that comes having a highly trained, well-paid force of educators who are nimble and able to face the needs of our youngest learners. Decades of research point to the fact that high quality, long term early childhood education produces both short and long term benefits for a child and thereby for the family and for the entire community. Educating early childhood teachers AND their aides is key to success, funding staffing levels that are appropriate is critical, and we must build a system in which we support an evidence-based integrated approach to including families and entire communities. Also essential to healthy early childhood outcomes is supportive community resources: from trained informal education partners such as the libraries, parks, museums: uniting for the development of young children is critical to community success.
- f. **Susana Mendoza:** In this campaign, I've talked repeatedly about my focus on closing the achievement gap. There is no time period that's more crucial to closing that gap than a student's experience with early childhood education. Without exposure to high quality childcare and early childhood education, it becomes exponentially more difficult for public education to be what it ought to be--a great equalizer that gives every child, no matter their zip code or the income of their parents, or the color of their skin, a chance to succeed. Too often, our schools fail low income neighborhoods, especially our black and brown communities. White babies are not born smarter than their black and brown peers, but there is an achievement gap between the groups because of decades of disinvestment. My top priority as mayor would be closing this achievement gap by 50% over the next eight years by focusing on early childhood education, investing in quality schools and beginning to tackle this long history of disenfranchisement.
- g. **Paul Vallas:** I believe in universal childhood education, particularly beginning with Prenatal to the Classroom. In Chicago Public Schools, I implemented a Prenatal to the Classroom program there, in Philadelphia, and in Bridgeport, where I identified pregnant teens and first-time mothers, provided parental coaching and helped them develop their parenting skills. Prenatal to the Classroom is the only program that I've seen that comes closest to actually closing the achievement gap.



- h. Willie Wilson:** It is the development of cognitive, motor skills, comprehension and coordination learned through interactive activities and play in a hands-on environment.
- 2. Do you view early childhood education as "essential and prerequisite" to readiness for kindergarten and the subsequent educational years? Please answer Yes or No and explain your answer.**
- a. Amara Enyia:** Yes, especially for at-risk youth from families lacking the resources that would make it easier for them to thrive. High quality prekindergarten programs prepare children for kindergarten by allowing them to learn how to socialize and function in school. Without the exposure to prekindergarten, students will spend their year in kindergarten learning to socialize and how to function in school, when they should be learning phonemic awareness and number sense. We have to be careful, however, to distinguish high quality programs. While daycare is essential for many families across Chicago, too often some child care centers cannot afford to invest in high quality early childhood education, and can lead to long term negative behavioral effects in middle school. We must ensure daycares have the supports and resources that offer a high quality early education experience for every child.
- b. Robert Fioretti:** Mostly yes. Children who attend quality pre-kindergarten programs experience success that's measured in a variety of ways, including high school graduation rate, college attendance, employment, earnings, and likelihood of being on public assistance, committing crimes and smoking. It is unlikely that large numbers of children would overcome the odds against them without early childhood education, so as a society, we're better off making sure as many children as possible have access.
- c. LaShawn Ford:** Yes, I believe early childhood education is an essential prerequisite for kindergarten. Too many politicians are too focused on short-term solutions and quick gains where they can show standardized test scores increased within their terms. That is not where I stand. I stand with the long-term investment in our children in their formative ages and their later scores on culturally biased tests are NOT my priority. My priority is that young children socialize, be creative, feel supported, and learn early to love learning. This is the primary reason why I strongly support the push for universal childcare and early childhood education, and believe that we must go beyond universal education for



4 year-olds. Such efforts are also vital for our families and the future of our communities.

- d. **John Kozlar:** Yes. If we begin educating children before they reach the age of 4/5 years old, they will be better equipped and well-rounded. Surrounding children with numbers, colors, music, and multiple languages will introduce their brains to what is in store for the years ahead.
- e. **Lori Lightfoot:** Yes. Early childhood education is one of the most critical areas in which we can invest. As stated above, the enormous amount of brain development happening in the young child is critical for laying down neural pathways which develop cognitive skills such as language, early computational thinking skills, as well as social-emotional learning, growth mindset and more. Developing the brain through high quality, developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive educational experiences sets a child on the path for lifelong learning success. It also pays dividends for the entire community: by providing healthy and productive children who are able to contribute to the family, community and City. A study from the National Council of State Legislators found the ROI on early childhood education is 16:1.
- f. **Susana Mendoza:** Yes. A recent analysis by CPS found that students who attended pre-K achieved higher GPAs, better attendance, and higher standardized test scores by the time they reached the 3rd grade than their peers that never enrolled in pre-K. It's extremely clear that strong early childhood education programs are an integral part of setting students up for success.
- g. **Paul Vallas:** Yes. Depending on the type of research you look at, the consensus is out there that during the critical first three years, much of the brain development occurs. The ability to provide early childhood education and Prenatal to the Classroom services is absolutely critical. We've got to reach the children earlier. The potential cost savings are significant because of when you contrast those children who have had Prenatal to the Classroom services with those who have not. For example, in 2005, after my Cradle to the Classroom program, the Illinois Hospital Association concluded that the hospitals paid \$250 million more per year in delivering babies for those mothers on public assistance who have had not had prenatal care on public than those who have had prenatal care. When you look at the Medicaid population, the cost of the hospitals alone between mothers on public assistance who deliver babies without prenatal care and mothers on public assistance who deliver babies with prenatal care will save \$10 billion over the period of a year, with just prenatal care alone. This is a game changer.

- h. Willie Wilson:** Yes. This is the foundation of the development of a child's learning. It is a critical step as it relates to the overall development of children and the specific critical development of their motor skills that is necessary for them to be able to identify shapes and colors along with their coordination. This visual engagement helps them to develop their imagination and intelligence.
- 3. What is your understanding of the short and long term economic consequences of allowing children to live in poverty? How would you prioritize child poverty in your administration? Please explain what specific qualitative, quantitative and/or financial actions would you implement to ameliorate and ultimately eradicate child poverty in the City of Chicago?**
- a. Amara Enyia:** The short term effects of children living in poverty may include immediate psychological and physical issues including but not limited to: high blood pressure, asthma, depression and anxiety. These effects, can morph into long-term health issues and last a lifetime. Long term effects include the inability to learn at the same rate as peers, which can lead to employment obstacles and an increased likelihood of entering the criminal justice system. Allowing children to live in poverty costs our society far more in the long-term. Our administration will prioritize addressing child poverty by ensuring families have safe and stable housing, access to nutritious food, access to healthcare, viable economic on-ramps and an equity funding model for schools. For too long aldermen have used their prerogative to steer affordable housing development from wealthy and/or predominantly white communities and restricting it to communities with high concentrations of poverty. Aldermanic prerogative must be eliminated. Affordable housing must exist in every community. This will increase the number of families living in stable and safe neighborhoods, minimizing some of the symptoms of poverty. Lastly, we need to continue examining the possibility of a basic income. Our city and our society has enough to provide the basics for everyone. We need to dream of a new world and stop believing in the myth of scarcity.
- b. Robert Fioretti:** As I campaign for mayor, I am confronted with Chicago's litany of woe: Underperforming schools and students, crime, lack of economic development, homelessness and despair. These problems have many causes, but one cause that is true for all of them is poverty. I believe we must have a minimum wage that is a living wage. A job is typically thought of as away out of poverty, but if it doesn't come with a living wage, it isn't a way out of poverty. As to how this affects children of early childhood age, parents who work low-wage

jobs often have unstable homes, irregular hours and lack of resources such as books to get children on a pre-school path to learning, and they are unable to pay out of pocket for a quality pre-school.

- c. **LaShawn Ford:** Every aspect of my campaign revolves around eradicating poverty and bringing about more prosperity for all families in this city. In the city of Chicago still at the early part of this century we ensure every child the human right to live a life above the devastating effect of poverty on the young brain. This is an absolute right and universal childcare and early education is the single most important intervention to meet this goal.
- d. **John Kozlar:** Children who live in poverty face difficult challenges ahead, but they are just as deserving to be treated just like every student who is not in poverty. We need to encourage all students that they can be whatever they choose in life, but they must stay focused. This is where education comes in. Education will be the pathway for an individual to get out of poverty. Childhood education will be a top priority of mine. I will incorporate new strategies to combat child poverty by building a team who have experience in childhood education and development. We will be able to identify the children most at risk, and provide a direct and continuous development plan, so that the child maintains his or her path to success.
- e. **Lori Lightfoot:** Poverty is a complex problem to which there is no single answer. The facts are there: even short term poverty has an impact on a child's health and well-being, leading to increased trauma and stress, lack of access to high quality medical care, food insecurity or improper diet: these are impacts for children that last a lifetime. Research from the Child Action Poverty Group shows that by age 3 an impoverished child is already 9 months behind their middle class peers in terms of developmental opportunities. The "Opportunity Gap" only widens from there. When children live in poverty they are likely to experience physical, mental and academic achievement loss. Additionally, traumatic experiences are "laid down" in the developing brain and become etched into the child, and yet we do not have a citywide trauma plan for formal and informal educators and this needs to be created. People in poverty lack human investments: access to health and healthy networks of people and also social capital like healthy and safe communities. All of this points to inequity in neighborhoods and communities that we must work toward solving, and as discussed below and in my education policy, I will do that, in part, by establishing pilot early childhood education zones for kids 0-4.
- f. **Susana Mendoza:** We know that addressing a student's academic achievement requires addressing the fullness of their lived experience, including poverty that they and their family may be experiencing. That's why my 50 NEW Initiative

builds on the community school model, with funding for wraparound services like job training for students' parents and after-school programs that include supper for students. My Initiative will also allow our schools to serve as community hubs where students can receive job training and also connect them to work opportunities during the summer as they get older. I also have a plan to attack poverty more broadly in Chicago. I will advocate for a statewide minimum wage increase to ensure that Chicago does not remain an island while also advocating to increase the city's minimum wage to \$15 in the years to come. In addition to raising the minimum wage, federal and state earned income tax credit programs have been some of the most successful anti-poverty programs in the United States. In 2016, the EITC lifted about 5.8 million people out of poverty, including about 3 million children. However, big cities like Chicago have higher cost of living than smaller municipalities, which reduces the impact of EITC compared to other parts of the state. I will explore strategies to implement a new Chicago EITC to supplement paychecks for working families.

- g. Paul Vallas:** I will find a way to level the playing field by providing children who come from low-income families with the same support that children coming from affluent families have. First, we have Prenatal to the Classroom-type programs, where every parent has access and participates in prenatal care services and that first-time parents, particularly single mothers, have access to parent coaches and mentors, they have access to all the social services available to them and that all children have access to day care and preschool services. When the kids are in school, the city can do a lot to level the playing field. Under my community model, when children from low-income families come to preschool, the schools are not only education centers, they will be open through the dinner hour and sometimes into the early evening. They will also serve as nutritional centers, and schools will become safe havens for children where they can go. These will be centers for children and families to access social service supports, parent coaching, et cetera. Parents can access for their children all the supports that their children receive, and all the educational and support services that they need to prosper. You can read my full education plan on my website here. (<https://vallasforallchicago.com/issues/#schools>)
- h. Willie Wilson:** Short term consequences will have a major impact on the child in terms of retarding the development of their comprehensive and basic overall educational abilities putting them at a disadvantage and placing them behind their peers that are in more stable living situations. The long term consequences will deprive a child of being able to fairly achieve and compete academically and avoid remediation (failing) and lay a solid foundation to build their life upon. Comprehension and interpersonal skills will suffer in the area of communication,

vowels, and consonants. I would prioritize this issue by looking at the needs of the children, child by child. We would first initiate a needs assessment per child administered by a group of specialist that would include the parent, social workers, principals, nurses, teachers, speech specialists and psychiatrists that will analyze the child and determine what is needed to move successfully move the child forward in their educational journey. This team of counselors will draw up the personal treatment plan for each child referred to as an Individual Educational Program (IEP).

4. What is your understanding of the Mayor Emanuel's "universal preschool for all" plan for the City of Chicago?

- a. Amara Enyia:** Mayor Emanuel has proposed “universal preschool for all (UPA)” which might, for the first time, begin to desegregate our schools beginning in preschool. Currently, schools have preschool programs ranging from federally funded Head start programs to a tuition-based programming. This model reinforced segregation as funding source was determined by zip code and demographics, resulting in some preschools with 100% black and brown children receiving federal funding, and a preschool with an overwhelming majority of white students nearby being tuition based. UPA plans to mix the funding streams so that classes, and therefore schools will be less segregated. The mayor has only promised 3,700 universal preschool seats in the first year, far short of the what’s needed, and with no guarantee of a future increase.
- b. Robert Fioretti:** The goal is to serve 24,000 4-year-olds by 2021. Cost: \$175 million (\$7,200 per student).
- c. LaShawn Ford:** I admire it greatly but believe it can be vastly expanded. My understanding is that every child between three to 5 years old will have access to preschool. This has recently been rolled out in some areas. As it continues to include all of our 77 neighborhoods, we need to make sure it’s done right. It is to important to rush through.
- d. John Kozlar:** I think the intent was to make sure children are starting school at an early age, which I support. However, I will make sure that the program in place is re-evaluated, and includes the input of many early childhood education professional, so that we can build the best and most effective program.
- e. Lori Lightfoot:** In 2018 the Mayor rolled out a plan which sought to increase access to early childhood education in 180 classrooms serving 3,700 children. But this plan, while a good step, is not enough. I will continue toward universal pre-K and have proposed a pilot program to provide early childhood care to kids 0 to 4. Children in many of Chicago’s poorest communities start kindergarten well behind their peers. According to one recent report, only 17% of Chicago school



children who receive free or reduced lunches are ready for school as measured by their capacity and skills in math, reading literacy and social emotional development. This cannot continue. CPS will seek to close the pre-school gaps in math, reading literacy and social emotional development by investing in an early childhood care and education pilot program. The city will designate communities where children enter kindergarten below their peers as early education zones. Children will receive free, early childhood care and education and wrap around services in these zones, from birth to age four. Each child will be formally screened and assessed. Working with a child's parent, a plan will be developed to ensure a child makes age-appropriate progress toward developing language, reading literacy, numeracy, social-emotional and other skills that contribute to kindergarten readiness. Progress will be assessed and services modified at regular intervals. Based on family need and the child's assessment, families will be provided a range of services, from evidence-based, in-home visiting providers, to year-round in-center early childhood care and education services. Referrals will be made to address needs outside of the educational setting. Staff will work with parents to ensure families have sufficient financial resources to access those services.

- f. **Susana Mendoza:** I believe that the mayor laid out a strong vision for full-day universal pre-K, prioritizing communities with the most children in need and working towards universal pre-K over the course of four years. As the parent of a Chicago Public Schools kindergarten student, I know how important it is to have quality pre-K programs that get children ready for kindergarten. With full-day pre-K, parents can have the peace of mind that their children are in healthy learning environments and spend less time arranging child care and transportation for their kids. The next mayor will have to continue prioritizing funding for the program to ensure that it is able to be fully implemented and as mayor, I pledge to do that.
- g. **Paul Vallas:** Mayor Emanuel's "universal preschool for all" plan over-trumpets what is really a very narrow program compared to what we had implemented and was taken from CPS. What Mayor Emanuel has laid out does not cover the Prenatal to the Classroom program that we had in place at CPS when I was CEO. As mayor, for earlier education and to eliminate the achievement gap, I will implement universal Prenatal to the Classroom, which will provide universal pre-kindergarten and help new parents through the prenatal stages, postpartum stages, and early childhood stages of their and their child's lives.
- h. **Willie Wilson:** Basically that he is calling for a free, full-day of preschool for all 4-year-olds to give them all a good start to their educational journey and that the



preschool curriculum has to be implemented in all elementary schools throughout the entire Chicago public school system.

5. Would you continue the adoption of "universal preschool" as the Mayor has stated or would you amend or change any aspects of the strategic plan? Please explain your answer.

- a. Amara Enyia:** Yes, but our administration would set a goal of 100% of students living at or below the poverty level receiving a seat in prekindergarten by 2021. We will pay for these seats through adjustments of real estate assessments of wealthy corporations and individuals, claw backs of corporations that have received public funding but failed to deliver results, the winding down and reallocation of TIFs, and by working with philanthropies such as the Gates Foundation, who's funds would be better spend on early childhood education rather than continuing to fund failed education reforms.
- b. Robert Fioretti:** I am undecided on whether to continue the rollout that Rahm has started. For one, money is always a problem. In 2009, there were 95,000 Illinois school children in state-funded pre-school; that number fell to 70,000 by 2014, largely due to lack of funding. Given the budget challenges facing the city and the Chicago Public Schools, it is impossible to promise that this well-meaning program will continue as Rahm proposed. However, quality programs operated by organizations other than CPS may allow us to reach the target of serving all eligible children at a more reasonable cost.
- c. LaShawn Ford:** Yes, and I would expand the ages but also the resources needed to support the best community childcare centers possible. Perhaps what would be most helpful here is to provide my plan for expansion: In collaboration with early childhood experts, educators, child care providers, and parents around Chicago, I have developed developed a comprehensive birth to five system to ensure that all of our children have the best start at life, regardless of family income. My comprehensive early childhood education plan is comprised of five key areas:
 - i. Affordable childcare for Chicago families
 1. As mayor I want to continue to work with our State Legislature to increase eligibility for the Child Care Assistance Program to 300%, expanding access to more families, and decreasing co-payments to families to less than 5% of a family's income. This is critically important as our city moves to being one that has citywide workforce with a livable wage.
 - ii. Universal preschool for all 3 and 4 year olds
 1. Every child in the City of Chicago deserves access to high quality preschool education as a foundation for long term academic



success. Unfortunately for many, good high quality preschool is unaffordable. My administration will expand on the existing the Universal Preschool Program by growing the initiative to include all families in Chicago. Building on existing public/private partnerships that the City already has, my administration will create an additional 25,000 preschool slots for existing and new community based organizations in our neighborhoods. Parents will be able to decide if they would rather enroll their children in a preschool of their choice in their neighborhood or one that is in closer proximity to their place of employment. Investment in universal preschool will increase kindergarten readiness for our children, the gateway to academic success; assist our corporations in attracting and retaining talent in the city's workforce; and improve the productivity of Chicago's workforce, strengthening the backbone of our business industry.

iii. Expanding support for pregnant and new moms

1. According to a study conducted by the Illinois Department of Public Health, "Each year an average of 73 women in Illinois die within one year of pregnancy." The study also found that Black women are six times more likely to die from pregnancy-related conditions than White women. These deaths are preventable. We have to work to change this heartbreaking statistic. I am proud share a new initiative to called Chicago Doula Services. This program will establish access to culturally relevant doula services for families in Chicago most at risk maternal mortality and premature birth. In my administration we will establish a 2 year pilot program with the support of public and private universities to create a community based doula network that works with the Department of Family Support Services to train, support, and sustain doulas from marginalized communities. Our goal will be to significantly reduce mortality rates of both mother and their babies. Doulas provide non-medical assistance and support to women before, during and after childbirth. Among other recommendations are creating home-visiting programs to help high-risk mothers, implementing the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' suggested "fourth trimester" of care and expanding Medicaid eligibility from 60 days postpartum to one year. Home visiting programs are critical to increasing school readiness, curtailing child maltreatment, and reducing lifetime arrests and



convictions. Equally as important, home visiting programs that are evidence based also positively impact familial structure and relationships: increasing parental income and increasing the likelihood of parents continuing to live together. As a state legislator I have been involved with in either sponsoring or voting in favor of all legislation that expands the outreach of the birth-to-three home visiting programs available in the State. As mayor it will be my goal to ensure that residents of the city of Chicago are informed and empowered to engage in those resources to the level they think is best for their family.

iv. Investment in Chicago Educators

1. The Illinois State Board of Education estimates more than 2,000 positions remained vacant during the 2016-17 school year, including teaching, administrative and support staff. In order to ensure that all students in the city of Chicago have access to a high-quality education, the city must employ strategies to attract and retain highly qualified, culturally competent educators. In order to achieve this goal, my administration will develop a Chicago Teacher Fund to cover the cost of two years of college tuition for high-performing City of Chicago residents (students who maintain a 3.0 gpa) who pursue degrees in education at state schools. These students must be accepted into a college of education, at a state school, and must maintain a 3.0 GPA. In return for free tuition, students must commit to teach in Chicago Public Schools for a minimum of five years. Additionally, I plan to expand the CPS Teacher Homebuyer Assistance Program for highly qualified school teachers who are first-time homebuyers in Chicago from the stagnant \$3,000 per teacher in closing cost and down-payment assistance to \$7,000 per teacher or \$15,000 to teachers who are returning to the neighborhoods they grew-up in. The expansion of this program more truly reflects the average cost of becoming a homeowner in Chicago and increases the likelihood of attracting high quality individuals who understand the culture of the communities they serve.

v. Investment in high quality community based centers:

1. Parents need to be able to choose what setting is the best for both their children and family needs. In order to fully implement Universal Preschool my administration will make sure that the existing available resources fairly distribute funding to ensure high

quality programs exist in every community. Child care is the hidden support system that most working families rely on to help maintain their household. This public private partnership is essential to provide the bedrock that the “City that Moves” thrives on. In my administration we will not only invest in large corporation, but also invest in small businesses like early childhood education centers. They are invested in our community, committed to our children, employ our residents, and serve as the support system for our workforce.

- d. **John Kozlar:** As indicated above, I will make sure that the program in place is re-evaluated, and includes the input of many early childhood education professional, so that we can build the best and most effective program. Our current and past administrations did not do a good job in listening to community members and professionals, because egos got in the way. I will check my ego at the door, and be sure to incorporate a comprehensive, effective, and well-rounded plan for early childhood education.
- e. **Lori Lightfoot:** See response to question 4.
- f. **Susana Mendoza:** As part of my Future Now Plan, I’ve made a commitment to implementing universal full day pre-K throughout the city. In order to fulfill that commitment, I will go after the resources we need by pursuing federal Title I funds set aside for this purpose and looking for a dedicated source of revenue from the state. Once fully implemented, this program will provide free, quality full-day pre-K to more than 24,000 four-year-olds. Studies show that the educational benefits of pre-K education are significant. Investment in pre-K improves kindergarten preparedness, shrinks achievement gaps, increases high school graduation rates, and is a good financial investment. As mayor, one aspect I will emphasize in the strategic plan is protecting and improving the quality of pre-K programs, ensuring that they are focused on literacy and judged in a transparent manner on the quality of their impact on kindergarten readiness. With an early enough start, we can begin to shrink racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps, including in literacy. I will ensure that principals are evaluated fairly and transparently on the quality of their pre-K programs and the impact these programs have on kindergarten readiness. I will also ensure that pre-K programs are using proven evidence-based programs to tackle racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps.
- g. **Paul Vallas:** My goal is to provide universal preschool, which includes a Prenatal to the Classroom component. I will ensure that preschool programs are supported and that the support that programs and individual schools receive are based on the individual needs of the students.



- h. Willie Wilson:** I would certainly continue the universal preschool initiative. Our children are our future and it is critical that all children have preschool education and a fair opportunity. This program will level the playing field for all children to get an equal start and close the achievement gap that will lead to building stronger communities in Chicago now and for years to come. The only adjustment or change that I would strategically make (if any) would be based on any new information uncovered through new assessments completed once I am in office.
- 6. Do you find the Mayor's current strategic plan for early childhood equitable for both CPS and Community Based Organizations (CBO's)? Please explain why or why not?**
- a. Amara Enyia:** The mayor's current plan is equitable on paper in that it expands early childhood opportunities and parent centers in high need areas by partnering with CBOs. However, we have not seen enough research or data to determine if the CBOs are offering high quality early childhood learning opportunities. The mayor's plan is outsourcing childcare to CBOs without any evidence they are being held accountable for outcomes, or without giving the CBOs the support or funding they need to achieve expected outcomes. We need more transparency of data and research to ensure this strategy is working before it can be determined if it is equitable.
- b. Robert Fioretti:** No. It obviously favors public schools.
- c. LaShawn Ford:** I am aware of the disparities against early child care centers. My administration with work with both CPS and CBOs to make sure there is equity and parity.
- d. John Kozlar:** An issue that we face in Chicago and have been facing for the last 30 years, is issues with our CPS and the lack of quality education for our children. We are not working together to tackle the roots of our problems. This is why we need a mayor who is not tied to the past and puts our children and community members first.
- e. Lori Lightfoot:** The next mayor needs to create an equitable, truly universal pre-K program. As discussed in responses to questions 3 and 4, I intend to build upon Mayor Emanuel's pre-K program while at the same time creating a pilot program aimed at providing early childhood education to kids ages 0-4.
- f. Susana Mendoza:** In the push for greater expansion of early childhood education, there have clearly been some unintended consequences with regards to the impact on Community Based Organizations. As Mayor, I will work to ensure that expansion of child care and early childhood education results in productive partnerships, rather than adversarial relationships between CPS and CBOs.



- g. Paul Vallas:** Community-based preschool services are one of the most effective ways to expand such services and make them more effective with individuals who know the communities and environment. I am a strong believer in community-based early childhood education services.
 - h. Willie Wilson:** No, I do not. CPS' primary focus is a curriculum-based structure while CBO's are based on the needs of the community. Both value and implement preschool programming but their structure is very much different.

- 7. Community Based Organizations (CBOs) , aka child care centers, that collaborate with larger public organizations are called partners. For example, DFSS/CPS partners with CBOs in Head Start and Preschool For All programs to service our youngest children across Chicago. Theoretically, it sounds like a great marriage. Often times, however, in practice, the partners function like competitors, competing for teachers. Pay disparity between CBOs & larger organizations has fueled a lopsided competition that CBO's cannot win. The result has been a decline in much needed child care centers in our neighborhoods, loss of jobs, a diminishing interest of potential candidates in our industry, and an instability in the support network families need. Are there any plans for your administration to create a system to improve pay parity among "partners"?**

 - a. Amara Enyia:** First we need to examine what currently exists in the education landscape across Chicago, and where childcare centers are needed. The dilemma described sounds similar to the problem plaguing neighborhood and charter schools, in that they were both set up to fail when charters were placed in the same attendance boundary as an under-enrolled neighborhood schools, resulting in two schools competing for the same students, teachers, and funding. Next, we need to make sure public funding is not being misused. We have charter networks with a handful of schools in which the CEO is earning the same salary as CPS CEO Dr. Janice Jackson. While management is important, it also needs to be efficient. If CBOs can demonstrate they are necessary, efficient, and effective for a community, our administration will work to level the playing field to offer a stable environment for childcare centers in that neighborhood. Continued audits would ensure ongoing success and efficiency. This is similar to our plan for CPS, in which we want to do away with student based budgeting and adopt an equity model of funding to ensure schools and communities receive the funding they need to address the issues unique to their neighborhood.
 - b. Robert Fioretti:** Not at this time, but we will examine the problem
 - c. LaShawn Ford:** We do need parity across the different types of centers. My administration will assemble a panel of experts from across the industry to make sure that there is parity in implementation.

- d. **John Kozlar:** I am an advocate for paying our teachers and professionals a higher starting salary. When we pay a higher starting salary, we attract and recruit the best and most effective educators. We cannot continue to undermine our teachers and education professionals.
- e. **Lori Lightfoot:** I recognize that this is an important issue that must be addressed if we are going to ensure communities have access to these services and CBOs can attract and retain qualified employees. As discussed in my education policy, I have proposed pilot early education zones (ages 0-4) that will be run by existing early childhood care and education programs with a track record of excellence. The centers will be staffed with certified/licensed educators, and childcare providers from the surrounding community. By employing community members, we can address potential job losses at home-based daycares that may lose clients to such a program, and provide an outlet to train people to become childcare providers and educators.
- f. **Susana Mendoza:** I'm fully committed to expanding child care and the issue of partner pay parity is a clear obstacle to ensuring adequate access across the city. I will also direct the city's planning department to develop a set of incentives to reduce start up costs for new child care centers in areas of need, particularly those run by CBOs with strong ties to local communities. These incentives can include expedited permits and inspections, reduced cost sale or leasing of public land and buildings, and reduced city fees. This will ensure that they can compete on a much more level playing field.
- g. **Paul Vallas:** My plan is to have community-owned, community-run, and community-operated child care centers and to build community-based social services, including early childhood services. The emphasis should always be placed on community-owned and community-run services, legal aid, business aid, and family counseling services. Those programs are best provided at the local-level, run and staffed. I think pay parity can be promoted through the allocation formulas. My plan is to review how these entities are funded in the first place and how community organizations can access both local state federal resources available, like Medicaid reimbursements. I will make funding for such programs a priority in my budget and provide supplemental funding by dedicating a portion of the property tax levy to providing such services, so they are literally taken off budget and not based on the whims of city revenue, and utilizing the cannabis tax revenues. You can read more about my plan for community-based social services in my Economic Development Plan under "Strengthen communities through quality schools and community services." (<https://tinyurl.com/y3njvlxw>)
- h. **Willie Wilson:** Yes. As the new mayor, I would put equality and continuity in place to strike a pay balance across all programs. Everyone seems to be

“marching to their own drum beat”. But we all must have the same “drum beat” when it comes to the protection, care and development of our children. All programming needs to be one consistent and constant curriculum so that all children can receive the same equitable and equal opportunity across the board and throughout the City of Chicago. This will also be based (as with my earlier answers) on the child’s particular needs. I will work for parity in pay in all programs.

8. **The way the housing voucher system currently works for Chicago residents, families are forced to move out of state for one year in order to qualify for the Section-8 Voucher. In 2015 there were 182,442 children enrolled in CCAP. One year after the landscape of the program changed, there were 55,000 fewer children enrolled. Budget cuts, slowly restoring the program to 185% of poverty level and the Voucher System is dramatically impacting the families. The CHA vouchers just opened up after four years of being closed, but only a few families will be able to participate. Do you have any short or long term plans to restructure the CHA system and retain residents rather than steer children and families (potential clients) to other cities/states?**

- a. **Amara Enyia:** The legacy of urban redevelopment in communities of color is the widening class divide left in its wake. The CHA transformation is a gentrification metaphor. It has also proven to be an eviction indicator for former CHA residents who were promised replacement housing on the CHA land only to be denied access once the development was complete. In the late 1990’s and early aughts, draconian housing policy led to the Chicago Housing Authority’s \$1.6B Plan for Transformation, the largest public housing land grab in our nation’s history. With blatant disregard for the nuances of poverty and circumstance, thousands of poor families were evicted. Their communities demolished. Government and the private real estate sector colluded to market and sell new housing developments to new consumers while displacing many residents who were promised replacement housing. As such, the city must be held accountable for denying replacement housing on CHA land to residents that were promised such.
- b. **Robert Fioretti:** I am concerned about anything that causes people to leave Chicago, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, whether bureaucratic or economic. Retention of residents and businesses will be a priority, and if a bureaucratic remedy will keep people from moving away, we can do that.
- c. **LaShawn Ford:** The current housing voucher system defeats all of the goals we should have with CHA. I will take care of the negative consequences associated with this policy. I also have a wide variety of approaches to increase affordable housing across the board. We have a horrific history when it comes to housing in

the city of Chicago. As a real estate developer I know that affordable housing is one of our most serious problems. I want many African American and communities of color who left the city to want to return. My goal is for revitalization while avoiding gentrification. I am very familiar with working with corporations and building partnerships and negotiating in an open way that will benefit the hardest hit residents in Chicago. We need tremendous partnerships, engaging with groups like Habitat for Humanity and their efforts toward neighborhood revitalization, focusing on particularly hard hit neighborhoods on the West and south side. The goal is to be realistic. Transformation may have to give to slower progressive long term change, but I strongly believe we can become a model global city in relation to housing.

- d. **John Kozlar:** This question needs to be addressed from multiple angles. People are leaving our city due to Crime, city finances, and education. Furthermore, corruption has plagued our city, and our communities no longer trust our government. We need to restore trust in our government by electing individuals who are not tied to the past, and who are willing to put Chicagoans first (instead of their family and friends). I would ask that residents please visit my website at www.JohnKozlar.com – each of the major issues impacting our city – Crime, Education, and city finances – are outlined on my website, with specific ideas on how to move Chicago forward.
- e. **Lori Lightfoot:** As mayor, I will facilitate an intergovernmental task force to ensure that city departments and key county and state agencies are working closely with the CHA to ensure that Chicago’s public housing options are indeed in the public interest, and that voucher holders and other CHA residents have full access to the services and resources that make Chicago strong. In addition, I will order an audit of CHA’s voucher waiting list and work to bring greater transparency to the process for allocating, awarding and placing all available Housing Choice Vouchers. The Housing Choice voucher waiting list was last opened in 2014, when approximately 260,000 households applied. The number of households applying was up considerably from 2010, when 203,000 households applied for vouchers. The dramatic increase in applications came during a period when Chicago’s population declined, which underscores the need for more housing that is affordable. The average household stays on the Housing Choice waiting list for 4.3 years, although some people remain on the waiting list considerably longer. My administration will utilize and enforce the Source of Income ordinances and other tool which prevent property owners from discriminating against voucher holders, while ensuring optimal use of incentives such as the Housing Opportunity Tax Incentive Act, which rewards owners and developers for renting to voucher holders in economically stable neighborhoods.



- f. **Susana Mendoza:** Restructuring the CHA system and expanding access to the Child Care Assistance Program has to be part of a broader strategy on expanding affordable housing and expanding access to child care. Chicago’s “affordability gap” in rental housing continues to get worse. We now have a deficit of 120,000 affordable rental units compared to what residents need and nearly 40% of Chicago households spend more than a third of their income on their rent or mortgage. I have said that expanding the number of CHA vouchers has to be a part of a multi-pronged approach towards affordable housing and desegregation that includes increasing affordable housing stock, reforming the affordable requirements ordinance, and preserving multifamily units. In terms of reforming and strengthening the Affordable Requirements Ordinance, we have to ensure that there is development of family units on site, and more funds are invested to create affordability in gentrifying neighborhoods and near transit. I would also advocate for more low income housing tax credits, including to nonprofit community development corporations. The next mayor also needs to have a strategy to access federal and state funds, and I would work with the Illinois congressional delegation to increase the amount of HOME funds allocated to the city. Finally, I’ve committed to supporting an increase in the real estate transfer tax on mansions that would create a dedicated \$150 million fund for affordable housing and addressing homelessness. All of these steps can help to retain residents in Chicago.
- g. **Paul Vallas:** The CHA needs to be an economic development tool, not only in terms of providing housing, but in terms of providing job training. I intend to fully utilize the CHA as a part of my comprehensive economic development strategy. Specifically, the housing voucher program needs to be expanded and needs to be supplemented as a part of my Affordable housing plan. We also need to ensure that there is no discrimination when it comes to where housing vouchers can be used. My intent is to also use vouchers as part of a needed Witness Protection Program to provide housing for witnesses and victims who often have to return to their communities for extended periods of time as court proceedings can sometimes take years to reach resolution and to provide transitional housing for individuals who are the victims of domestic violence. You can read my Affordable Housing Plan on my website here. (<https://tinyurl.com/y2e3u5nk>)
- h. **Willie Wilson:** Equity and fairness are the foundation of my administration. I would look at restructuring and consolidation of the current programs and ensure everything is centered on the citizens and their needs. A short term pilot plan will be proposed that will give neighbors and the community an opportunity to buy into a collaborative program that will concentrate on resident retention.

9. We have noticed that previous administrations have invested in recruiting large outside companies to set up shop in Chicago with vast promises of incentives and tax breaks. Yet small businesses have been and will continue to be the backbone of business development in our city. What initiatives can you envision that would “invest inward,” propelling small businesses towards increased job creation, financial growth, and ultimately reinvestment in our communities?

- a. Amara Enyia:** A public bank for the city of Chicago would fund business loans to expand the small business sector, creating more jobs, and increase entrepreneurial opportunities. I would institute worker-owned cooperatives and land trust models where communities own the land in the neighborhood and can preserve affordability. Our administration will not support sweetheart deals for corporations, which rarely deliver on the promises of jobs, economic growth, and increased investments for local communities. The tax breaks and other financial incentives offered to corporations must instead be used to organically develop flourishing local economies that enable residents to be financially secure, without the reliance on outside actors coming in co-opting local public policy.
- b. Robert Fioretti:** If we’re going to demand that all businesses pay employees a living wage, it may be necessary to provide some support to small businesses during a period of adjustment in order to minimize displacement. Examples of support might be breaks on property tax for a short time.
- c. LaShawn Ford:** As I have stated publicly, I will do everything in my power to ensure the Big Box stores will stop receiving excessive hand-outs from the city, as in the example provided above. I have been actively concerned about Target, for instance, pulling out of two locations on the Southside. As State Rep. I have introduced legislation that requires Big Box stores to consistently contribute to a revolving loan fund that will benefit smaller and micro businesses in the communities where they set up. I would insist that future proposals ensure these companies pay their fair share and that they contribute financially in serious ways to the communities in which they reside. They must also stick with their commitment to the communities where stores set up so the stores do not leave these communities worse off than if the stores never arrived in the first place. All of these stores would benefit from unionizing. As the Mayor of the City of Chicago, the single and most important thing I am planning to do is develop an inclusive economy, one that connects all 77 communities to Chicago’s powerful business sector. My plan to achieve this goal is to:
 - i. Establish Chicago as an advanced manufacturing hub and leader in green technology
 - ii. Create a connected workforce by developing the technical skills of Chicago residents



- iii. Establish a social investment fund to promote community entrepreneurship
- iv. Eliminate current fee structures that financially burden city residents (e.g. red light cameras, boots, and high/disproportionate property taxes)

Collaborate with state and federal government to increase the amount of returning federal dollars, growing the city's revenue base without increasing taxes

- d. **John Kozlar:** TIFs have been mismanaged and misused. The intent of TIFs are for blighted areas. They have unfortunately been used for downtown Chicago, and away from the neighborhoods that make up our city. We invest inward by investing in our neighborhoods, and by listening to the needs of the residents in each area throughout Chicago. We need to give incentives to our entrepreneurs to invest in the areas in Chicago that have been ignored, which include tax incentives and eliminating the red tape to open a business. We need to attract businesses to our city that will employ residents from the communities in which they are opening their business. We can do this by working together. Again, I would ask that residents please visit my website at www.JohnKozlar.com where specific ideas are listed.
- e. **Lori Lightfoot:** Chicago cannot be a truly world-class city if large parts of the city are left behind. City hall invests heavily in the downtown business districts, but it does not invest in our neighborhood economies. As mayor, I will also focus on building up economic activity in our neighborhoods by increasing access to capital for small businesses; offering small businesses planning advice and technical support; making it easier to open and operate businesses in Chicago; growing white collar apprenticeship programs for City College students; decentralizing city operations by moving municipal offices into neighborhoods to serve as community anchors; emphasizing using local supply chains through community partnerships; and expanding opportunities for minority-and women-owned businesses.
- f. **Susana Mendoza:** I absolutely believe we need to create additional jobs in Chicago's neighborhoods. That's why my plan on economic growth begins with a strategy to get more investment in our neighborhoods. I also believe that we need to continue job growth downtown, and make the necessary investments to attract innovative companies and emerging industries, while providing viable transit options for people living outside of the Central Business District to access those jobs. For too long, too many of our neighborhoods have suffered from disinvestment and disenfranchisement that cuts our working families off from opportunities to build true wealth and prosperity. We can reverse this disinvestment in part by intentionally leveraging our downtown success to build



an inclusive economy that lifts up our working families. I believe we can put our neighborhoods first by expanding access to capital and support for small businesses and development in struggling neighborhoods through the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund, setting our students up for success, from expanding universal pre-k to creating fair lending programs for student loans, and strengthening our working families by fully enforcing our labor laws, increasing the minimum wage, and expanding access to the EITC. I would also work to take advantage of the new federal Opportunity Zone tax credits. I've said that I would develop a program, linked to the city's other initiatives from its retail thrive zones to the Neighborhood Opportunity Fund and beyond, to take advantage of this tax credit. With our planning department having identified 133 census tracts for inclusion in the program, there are tremendous opportunities to attract investment to Chicago through this program.

- g. Paul Vallas:** My economic development plan will expand economic opportunities throughout Chicago.

Highlights include the following:

- i. Taking full advantage of the new Federal Opportunity Zone program to raise billions of dollars that can be invested in Chicago's 133 opportunity zones that include much of the West, South and Southeast sides.
- ii. Earmarking one-third of all Tax Increment Financing revenues to economically struggling communities, including those communities in the 133 federal opportunity zones.
- iii. Utilizing other federal, state and local tax incentives and grant programs that have been offered in the City's Amazon proposal and using those resources instead to stimulate business and job creation in Chicago's poorer communities.
- iv. Implementing a Buy Chicago, Hire Chicago plan, which will take the \$20 billion in revenue that the City controls (the City budget, the school district, Chicago Housing Authority, Chicago Transit Authority, Chicago Park District, airports). To ensure that Chicago businesses and city residents are the full beneficiaries when it comes to City contracting, City purchasing and City hiring. This component of my plan will prioritize businesses that are willing to locate in poorer communities and willing to hire local residents from those communities. I will also apply the minority and women-owned business targets that I used in the Chicago Public Schools that resulted in over half of the contracts and hiring going to minority and women-owned businesses.

- v. I am going to open adult education and occupational training centers throughout the city, with priority given to placing these centers in closed Chicago public schools.
- vi. I am going to rebuild the social service infrastructure in poorer communities by placing mental health facilities in each of the police stations to work with the police in the schools, by supporting legal aid offices, newcomer centers for immigrants, opioid and drug addiction treatment centers, family counseling centers and food pantries. I will fund these initiatives through the partial use of developer fee revenues and proceeds from the legalization of cannabis. To support the opening of new businesses, I plan on making available financial support for new business start-ups and expansions through the use of opportunity zone investment incentives, the allocation of grants from the TIF revenues, the awarding of federal job training and tax credits for the training and hiring of people in the community who may be high-school dropouts or chronically unemployed and the initial abatement of taxes and fees, including the freezing of local property taxes to give these businesses time to grow without the financial burden of high taxes and fees. You can read my full economic development plan here. (<https://tinyurl.com/y3njv1xw>)
- h. Willie Wilson:** One of my initiatives propose that all city owned properties both vacant buildings and vacant lots be released into a pool for redevelopment and below market rates. The city will then create grants and funds to allow new and minority construction companies, with limited experience, access to these funds for redevelopment purposes and job creation. In conjunction with that the city would sponsor a trades training program so that new carpenters, electricians, plumbers and other tradesmen can have on-the-job training while creating moderate income housing. This will solve a jobs problem, a housing problem and a neighborhood problem in one single program.

10. What are your strategies to ensure all stakeholders are at the table to address concerns and ideas related to early childhood education?

- a. Amara Enyia:** Our administration will adopt a true community engagement strategy that seeks input from community members on the status of early childhood education in their communities and options that are available to them. In the past, these processes have been fraught with attempts to manipulate communities through misinformation or no information, processes that lacked integrity either because they took place behind closed doors or outcomes were decided prior to actually engaging the community. Residents want honest, upfront information that can help them make the best decisions for their children. We

must engage in a thorough, bottom-ups strategy that arms parents with the information about options open to them.

- b. Robert Fioretti:** As mayor, I will not be an inaccessible big shot. I intend to have ward nights almost every week of the year, so that I'm in every ward, hearing from regular people, at least once a year. With respect to early childhood education, I have no ulterior motives. I don't have to direct contracts to somebody who's somebody's somebody; I don't have political pals on a gravy train. My decisions will be based on benefit, cost, efficiency and reasonableness, and you will have access to me and my staff.
- c. LaShawn Ford:** By working directly with your collaborative here and others like it, and always being open to receiving input and getting guidance on how we can make ourselves the greatest city in the world around childcare and early childhood education.
- d. John Kozlar:** Simple – we include all of the stakeholders at the table where decisions are made. For too long, we have been ignoring those who have been fighting since day one and on the ground for early childhood education. They are the ones with the most insight, and who can aide Chicago in a comprehensive plan to make our city a better place for all, which includes our youth.
- e. Lori Lightfoot:** Through educating the stakeholders, this needs to become a "Prevention not Intervention" model and call to action. We can smash the anticipated outcomes for children in poverty but it will take a cross-sector commitment with the mayor's office providing the leadership to achieve this. We must bring city stakeholders across public-private sectors to the table to understand the impact on the city, the critical need to dismantle the outcomes of poverty and invest in the healthy determinants of the child and his/her family are the only way forward. We must leverage research from our higher education institutions such as Erikson Institute, University of Chicago and University of Illinois to help us develop evidence-based strategy, and we must go to where families are, reducing their barriers and increasing their awareness of supportive services in the city. We must engage faith-based leaders, health care workers and small business owners around one, aligned message: children first. And that is just the beginning, because then we as a city have to live it. From prenatal health through secondary education, the way to change our trajectory is through supportive, connected communities that Put. Children. First. This must be an imperative for all aspects of the city.
- f. Susana Mendoza:** I've been proud to have a track record of being a grassroots leader that listens and brings people together. After reports of harassment and gender discrimination in Illinois politics, I was asked to lead a statewide discussion on the role of women in the Democratic Party of Illinois and develop a



plan to work to change the culture of politics. After holding six listening sessions throughout the state, we produced a final report that included recommendations like a goal of making sure at least half the members of the General Assembly (and other state and local governments) are women. It also called for the state parties to each hire a “director of diversity” to recruit candidates and staff, invest in training women to run for office, and require racial and gender diversity in the pool of applicants for every political vacancy. I would take that same approach when it comes to early childhood education. I would begin by ensuring all stakeholders are at the table, work to gather solutions and inputs from all corners of the city, and then work together to make recommendations and implement solutions.

- g. Paul Vallas:** By creating an infrastructure to facilitate greater parent and community participation and empowerment. I will increase the voice of parents and the community in school decisions by supporting locally elected school councils (LSC’s) and protecting their right to have access to all school financial and educational data with the exception of student personal information protected under Federal and State law. I support the LSC’s rights to weigh in on decisions regarding the selection of principals and the approval of local school budgets. I plan to increase the voice of the LSC’s by creating an advisory board consisting of members selected by the LSC’s to provide direct input to the Mayor and the CPS Board on school policies, programs and financial issues. Every school should also have a “Parent and Community Center” to provide parent support and to have a parent and community presence in the schools on a daily basis. I would also restore the Parent Leadership Academy which I created as CEO. It was led and operated by parent LSC leaders and served as a training center for parents. Support for LSC’s, the creation and support of school-based Parent and Community Centers and the Parent Leadership Academy were mainstays of my parent empowerment strategy when I was School District CEO. As for closing schools, I will only close schools with the advice and consent of the community and only after the development of a community-supported plan to repurpose the buildings.
- h. Willie Wilson:** I will implement a partnership approach between the community and Board of Education. I will stand with parents and install an elected School Board. Community-based parent organizations in conjunction with an elected school board and CPS staff will determine the proper number, size, location and staffing of each school in each community. Inclusion is the key. Together is the way.