



January 27, 2020

Dear Mayor Lightfoot,

It is with respect and hope that we reach out to you regarding a sentiment you shared several months ago about the possibility of replacing school resource officers with restorative justice (RJ) practitioners and counselors. Our research and work in Chicago schools over the last several decades informs us that a professional staff dedicated to shifting a school culture from punitive to restorative, combined with a whole school approach to restorative justice leads to increased academic and social-emotional success and school safety<sup>i,ii</sup>. A whole school approach is more than teaching a set of restorative practices, it includes a change of “head and heart” necessary for a paradigm shift in a school (Watson & Pranis, 2015, Circle Forward.) Shifting from police officers to restorative justice practitioners in our schools is a true change of “head and heart.”

A whole school approach is not reactionary; rather it is a preventative approach where trust, relationship and community building practices are happening each day throughout the school and ideally beyond the school walls in the community. As such, restorative practices like peace circles are inclusive of the full school community – teachers, staff, students, parents and community members.

With adequate resources and a comprehensive, preventative approach to RJ in our schools, the need for more intense interventions to address conflict and school safety issues are significantly reduced. When conflict does occur, addressing and repairing the harm in restorative ways results in a deeper understanding of the impact of harm caused and a reduced tendency to cause the same harm again. Accountability measures in a restorative practice such as a peace circle are decided by all involved in the circle. Further, the powerful process of storytelling that happens throughout the circle humanizes all involved and is a catalyst for lasting social-emotional strength that is carried on as our student's progress in their academic and personal life paths.

Where we believe that police officers are not necessary in schools that have a strong contingent of counselors and restorative justice staff, we do not discount the importance of certain aspects of police work that helps keep the community safe. Some in our movement work with police officers and young people to repair and to build relationship. We are confident this work will continue in communities across Chicago in an effort to build trust needed as we transition from school based officers to

restorative justice professionals. We also believe that increased levels of restorative justice in our schools lead to safer school communities.

We appreciate your consideration of this matter. Changing school cultures takes a mindset shift; we believe the ideas you shared are an important step in making this shift. We would welcome an opportunity to meet to discuss this and other restorative justice matters with you in person...perhaps in circle. Please let us know what your availability is in the coming weeks by emailing: [nancyjmicahels@gmail.com](mailto:nancyjmicahels@gmail.com). Thank you.

With respect,

Members of the Chicago Restorative Justice Community and Educational and Children's Advocates

*Alliance of Local Service Organizations*

*Nehemiah Trinity Rising*

*Illinois Balanced and Restorative Justice (IBARJ) Board of Directors*

*Prevent School Violence Illinois (PSVI) Board of Directors*

*New Life Centers*

*Women's Justice Institute*

*Chicago Urban League*

*TARGET Area Development Corporation*

*Kenwood Oakland Community Organization*

*Lawndale Christian Legal Center*

*Circles and Ciphers*

*Community Justice for Youth Institute*

*Chicago Community Bond Fund*

*Civitas Child Law Center, Loyola University Chicago School of Law*

*Juvenile Justice Initiative*

*Elizabeth Clarke, President, Juvenile Justice Initiative*

*Audrey Dunford, Circle Facilitator, Restorative Justice Trainer*

*Jackie Ingram, Circle Facilitator*

*Annalise Buth, M.R. Bauer Foundation Fellow Center on Negotiation and Mediation,*

*Northwestern Pritzker School of Law*

*Jose M. Wilson, Director of Workforce Programs and Clinical Services, North Lawndale*

*Employment Network*

*Father Larry Dowling, Pastor, St. Agatha Church*

*Mazel Sykes, Circle Facilitator, Restorative Justice Advocate*

*Sandra Sosa, Restorative Justice Practitioner, Community Justice Network for Youth*

*Sonia Arroyave, Community Advocate*

*Michael T. Meyer, Restorative Justice Practitioner, DePaul University Faculty*

*Ethan Viets VanLear, Restorative Justice Advocate, Trainer, Practitioner*

*Nina Fernandez, Community Advocate*

*Ryane Louise Michaels, Restorative Justice Advocate*

*Marriann Stephens, Restorative Justice Advocate*

*Andrew Tonachel, Restorative Justice Case Manager*

*Nancy Michaels, Restorative Justice Practitioner, Trainer, Advocate*

*Mary Scott Boria, Social Justice Activist*  
*Christine Agaiby Weil: adjunct professor Loyola law, trainer and practitioner*  
*Karen Lynn Morton, RJ Practitioner, Coach, Trainer*  
*Emmanuel Andre, Esq.*  
*Heather M. Dalmage, PhD Professor of Sociology and Director of the Mansfield Institute for Social Justice*  
*Salome Chasnoff, PO Box Collective*  
*Ann Russo, Professor, Women's and Gender Studies, RJ practitioner and Circle Keeper*  
*Kit Helaku, Director of Culture and Climate, Ogden International, Chicago Public Schools*  
*Elizabeth J. Vastine, Restorative Practitioner, Educator and Facilitator*  
*Tom Golebiewski , Ph.D. Adjunct Faculty, Loyola University, School of Social Work; SEL Consultant, RJ Practitioner*  
*Fredrick Cooper. Restorative Justice Practitioner, Trainer, Advocate*  
*Emmanuel Andre Esq, Northside Transformative Law Center*  
*Sarah-Bess Dwoin, Restoring Community of Illinois, LLC*  
*Kathleen Bankhead, Restorative Justice Practitioner*  
*Hon. Sheila M. Murphy*  
*Unitarian Universalist Prison Ministry of Illinois*  
*A Greater Good Foundation*  
*Cortez Watson Jr, Community Member, RJ Advocate*  
*Daryle Brown, Restorative Justice Practitioner and Trainer*  
*Alexandra Piper, Cabrini Green Legal Aid*  
*Tony Graefe, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Ana Mercado, Director of Restorative Justice, Alternatives, Inc.*  
*Miguel Rodriguez, Restorative Justice Manager, Alternatives Inc.*  
*Kayla Jackson (Old St Pat's)*  
*Kathy Powers, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Griffin Smith, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Cheryl Arata, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Corrine Witcher, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Tod McCoy, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Rodney Brown, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Kevin Carney, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Marilyn McMannus, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Venita Flucker, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Mariann Stephens, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Collette Davion, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Maudette Carr, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Trudi Goggin, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Sr Bernadine Karge, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Mike Connolly, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Mary Schweitzyr, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Paul Schweitzyr, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Eileen Sutter, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Colleen Porter, Restorative Justice Advocate*

*Stan Brown, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Willie Woods, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Magda Szumlakowska, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Grace Rubin, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Soren Rucker, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Maribeth Gibbs, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Nancy Freehafer, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Rachelle Zola, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Joseph Crumenapp, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Mike Anderson, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*David Beauzile, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Lauetta Beauzile, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Dorey Tate, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Chris Kuliskan, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Margaret Kuliskan, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Margaret Szynska, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Sr Janet Ryan, Restorative Justice Advocate*  
*Joanne Archibald, Community Member*

CC:

Jadine Chou  
Norman Kerr  
Candace Moore

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<sup>i</sup> [https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Revised%20PB%20Gregory\\_0.pdf](https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Revised%20PB%20Gregory_0.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/resource-restorative-justice-in-u-s-schools-an-updated-research-review.pdf>