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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Funding Crisis Forces Rescheduling of Monthly Board Meeting**

*Unprecedented step needed to “protect our children,” officials say*

Facing severe cuts in education in several state budgets under consideration, Chicago Public Schools officials and members of the Chicago Board of Education took the unprecedented step of rescheduling Wednesday’s monthly board meeting so that Board President Rufus Williams and CPS Chief Executive Officer Arne Duncan could go to Springfield and personally urge legislators to pass a responsible education budget.

The proposed budget for FY09 includes a \$40 million increase in funding for CPS, which falls well short of the \$180 million in new funding the district needs.

“Children cannot wait until next year or the year after,” Williams and Duncan wrote in a joint letter to legislators Tuesday. “They can’t just skip a year and hope to make it up in the future. Every year is critical. Please protect our children.”

While in Springfield, Williams and Duncan hoped to join education leaders from across the state who will also be hurt by the funding cuts.

Without additional funding, CPS officials said the following projects, among others, would be at risk:

- **School construction projects.** CPS has received no new capital money from the state in four years, but the proposed funding cuts would exacerbate the situation by forcing the district to draw down its reserves. As a result, the district would not be able to borrow as much money as it needs to finance new construction.
- **After-school programs.** This cut would be especially painful for students who need safe, constructive places during dangerous after-school hours.
- **High School Reform.** Major initiatives like High School Transformation would be delayed or dramatically scaled back.

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- **Long-term contracts.** Salaries alone rise by more than \$100 million each year, with pension and health care costs rising by tens of millions more. CPS' ability to meet those obligations would be at risk.

“We’re already 49<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states in education funding,” Williams said. “The budgets now being considered push us that much further back.”

Duncan added: “We had to take this step to prevent the last six years of progress being erased over the next four days of the legislative session.”

The Board meeting was rescheduled for Monday, June 2, and will be held at the CPS Central Office Building, 125 S. Clark St., fifth floor board chambers. Public comment will begin at approximately 10:30 a.m.

The Chicago Public Schools is the nation’s third-largest school system. It includes more than 600 schools and serves about 409,000 students.

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