

# **Environmental Justice Freedom School Lobby Day**

on Wednesday, October 29, 2025



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# Environmental Justice Freedom School

**Get ready for CTU Lobby Day on 10/29! In this training, we'll:**

- Introduce ourselves and share what changes we want to see for our schools, community, and environment.
- Go over what Lobby Day is all about, why it matters, and how it connects to EJ Freedom School.
- Learn about the transit and education crisis—and how it impacts our schools, public transit, and the environment.
- Connect our climate visions for schools to these issues and think about what we'd say to decision makers.
- Practice having those conversations so we're ready to speak up.
- Review the plan and commitments for the day.



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# >> Introductions <<

Introduce ourselves and share how the year is going and what changes we want to see for our schools, community, and environment?



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# >> What is CTU Lobby Day? <<

CTU is going to Springfield to tell elected officials to tax the rich and fully fund education.



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# >> Transit Crisis <<

Learn about the transit and education crisis—and how it impacts our schools, public transit, and the environment.

# Public Transit in Illinois: A Crisis and an Opportunity

Dany Robles - Illinois Environmental Council



# Understanding the Fiscal Cliff

- ▶ The COVID-19 pandemic
- ▶ \$1.4 billion in federal relief received through the CARES Act
- ▶ \$771 million budget gap
- ▶ post-pandemic issues persist
  - ▶ Delays
  - ▶ Ghost buses
  - ▶ Lack of service
  - ▶ Low ridership



# Subject Matter Hearings

- ▶ The Senate Transportation Committee Subject Matter Hearings
  - ▶ How transit supports the economy
  - ▶ Accessible and equitable transit
  - ▶ Transit's impact on community quality of life
  - ▶ Public health
  - ▶ Climate impact
  - ▶ Funding transit is a statewide priority



# Exploring Transit Systems and Solutions

- ▶ Plan of Action for Regional Transit (PART) by CMAP
- ▶ Station and facility tours with Metra and Pace
- ▶ Trip to Germany to understand their operations
- ▶ Meetings with stakeholders to continue discussions
- ▶ Meeting with IPTA to identify downstate needs



# House Bill 3438

- ▶ Governance structure changes
- ▶ Increased interagency coordination
- ▶ Solutions to safety concerns
- ▶ A new unified fare system
- ▶ Initiatives to support the state's climate goals
- ▶ Improved accountability



# Governance Structure Changes

- ▶ Creates the Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA),
- ▶ 20 Board Members
- ▶ NITA, would provide a next-generation fare collection system, including a unified mobile ticket application
  - ▶ Would be implemented by Feb. 1, 2030.
- ▶ Creates funding mechanisms to get \$1.5B

# IL School Budget Context

- New FY26 numbers are out: CPS is \$1.6 billion from adequacy. The entire state's distance from adequacy is up \$700 million between FY25 and FY 26.
- U46 (Elgin) \$143M short of adequacy, Rockford is \$154M short
- This is a statewide problem: Springfield, Decatur, Waukegan, Plainfield, Aurora, Quad Cities, Joliet, Urbana, Metro East, Carbondale, and Bloomington are all far from adequacy.
- We believe that CPS is the canary in the coal mine



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# Two Key Bills Needed

- **Appropriation for full EBF funding by the statutory deadline of FY27**
- **Appropriation for fully funding mandated categoricals**
- **These bills help every school district in IL**



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# IL School Budget Context

- We are still too far from full funding
- Graded F nationally on distribution equity
- At best, schools won't be fully funded until 2035 and more likely 2042

**\$2.5 billion is required to move all Organizational Units to 90% of adequacy.**

**Seven out of 10 students are under 90% adequacy.**



## FUNDING DISTRIBUTION

Describes the allocation of funds to school districts relative to the concentration of student poverty. States are classified as progressive, regressive, or flat.

Illinois's funding distribution is **flat**: on average, high-poverty districts receive 4% or \$734 less per-pupil than low-poverty districts.

GRADE: **F**

RANK: 37 OF 48



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## Sources:

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/FY25-EBF-At-a-Glance.pdf>

<https://edlawcenter.org/research/making-the-grade-state-profiles/>

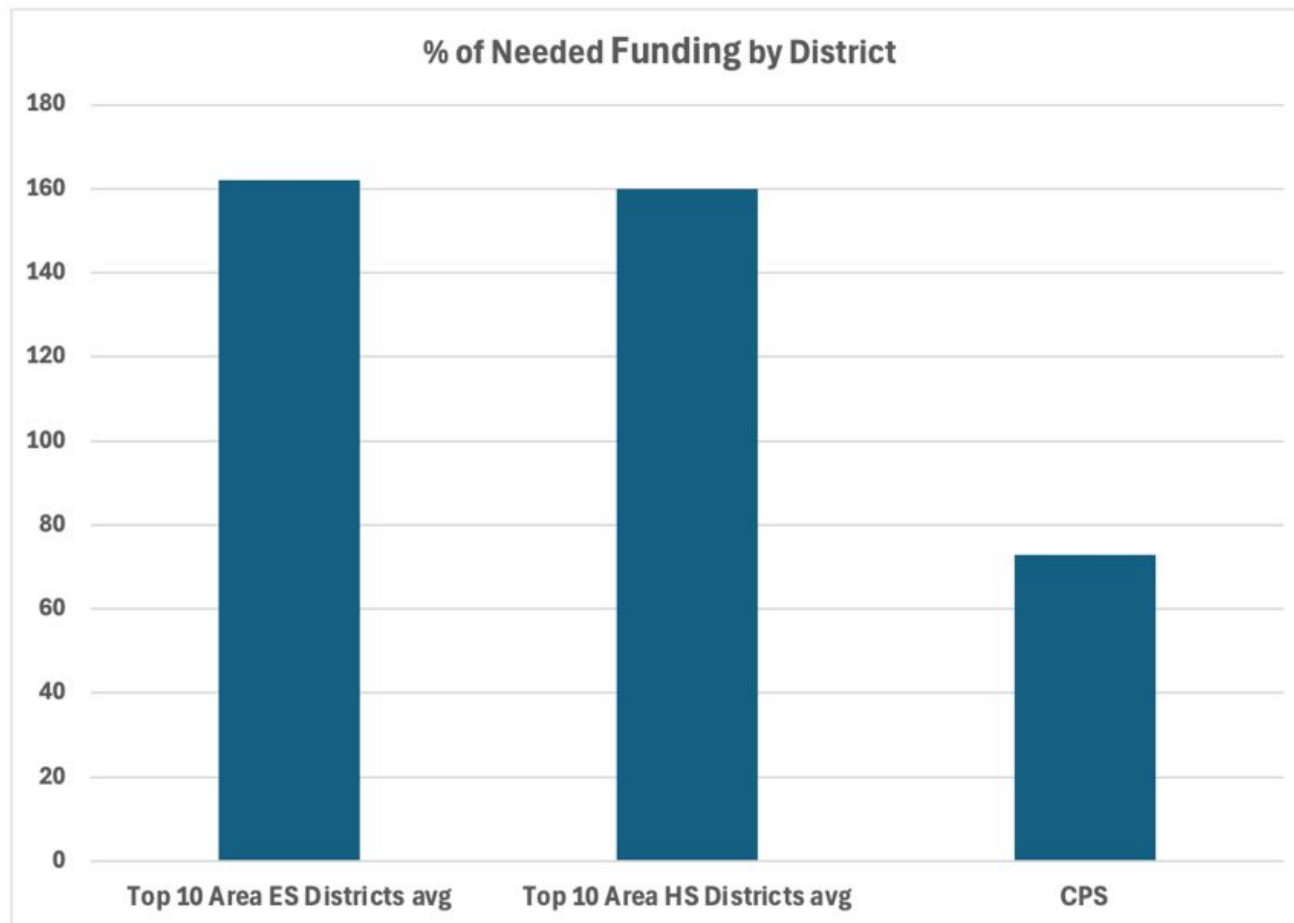
<https://www.ctbaonline.org/reports/fully-funding-evidence-based-formula-volume-x>

# Budget impacts of state funding

- CPS has \$5,000 less *per pupil* than what's considered adequate - while districts around the area have thousands more per pupil more than what's considered adequate
- Elementary schools in LaGrange have class sizes of less than 20, with Kindergarten classes of 17. CPS caps class size at Kindergarten at 25.
- In other words, CPS is \$100,000 short per classroom, which would fund teacher assistants, librarians, counselors, social workers, and nurses.



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# Revenue is the only way

## Illinois has options

- Digital advertising tax: Could raise \$500M+ annually
- Excise tax on Capital Gains (see WA raised \$560+million for schools)
- Millionaire's Tax (see MA, \$3 billion+ for schools, 2/3rds support in IL)

**We don't fix transit, healthcare, school funding for facilities/ programs and instruction, or improving human services without additional revenue.**



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# >> WHAT ARE WE ASKING FOR? <<



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CTU is asking State leaders to **fully fund** the Evidence-Based Funding grant (**EBF**) and mandated categorical grants (**MCATs** 🐱🐱🐱).

A **grant** is a package of revenue, which is money, to pay for something set by state law.

- > **EBF** is a general pot of money to pay for things like teachers, nurse, books, technology, etc.
- > **MCATs** are dedicated to transportation, free lunch and breakfast, and SPED students.

Our state leaders (State Representatives, State Senators, and the Governor) get to decide how much money (or revenue) goes into these grants.

They **help all students in Illinois**.

# >> State Leaders Underfund EBF and the MCATs 🐱🐱🐱<<



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EBF and the MCATs are 2 of Illinois largest education grants (money for schools), but our State leaders are not fully funding them.

Illinois owes teachers, staff, students, and our schools **\$5.4 billion for EBF** and **\$500 million more for MCATs.**

We are telling State leaders to **fully fund EBF and the MCATs** 🐱🐱🐱

# >> We Can Tax Rich People To Pay for Education<<



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The resources exist, they just aren't in the right place.

Working people pay more in taxes than millionaires and billionaires but millionaires and billionaires have more income and wealth.

Millionaires and billionaires take billions of dollars from our schools, transit, public health, and other public programs because they don't pay their fair share.

If we tax them we could raise 10s of billions of dollars for education!

"...another billion for Chicago Public Schools? That's just not going to happen... **we don't have those resources** today."



# >> TAKEAWAYS<<



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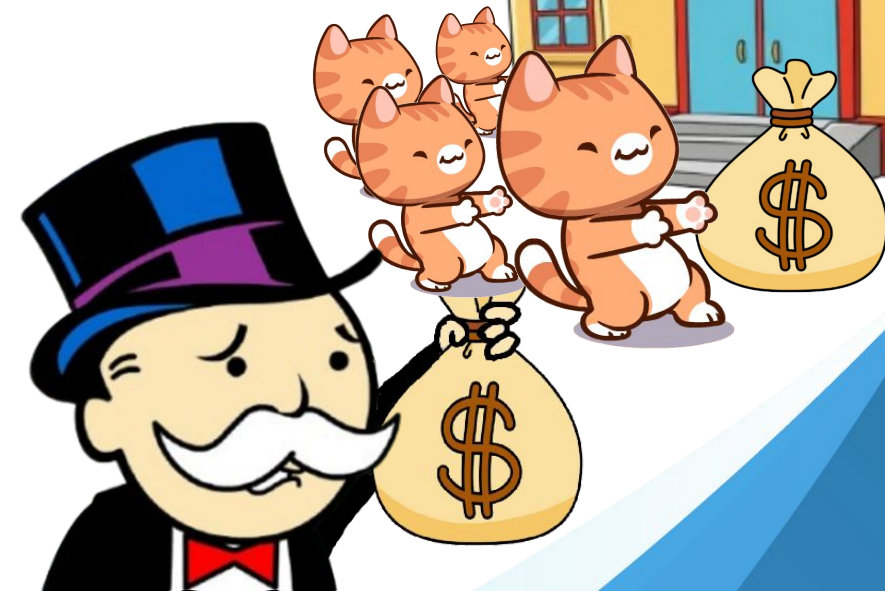
Fully funded schools is a constitutional right in Illinois.

State leaders underfund education.

We are asking state leaders to fully fund education: \$5.4 billion for EBF and \$500 million more for the MCATs.

The resources exist, they just aren't in the right place.

We can tax the rich to fully fund education.



# >> EJ Freedom School Goals <<

Students will:

- Develop climate and environmental literacy to **identify environmental issues, causes of climate change, impacts, and solutions.**
- Understand social and emotional intelligence and skills to process feelings about climate change and reflecting, collaborating, negotiating, and organizing towards climate action.
- Identify and develop individual and collective agency to **address individual and collective climate impact of air and water pollution in underserved communities.**
- Advance skills and practices to identify and develop action-oriented solutions, climate change mitigation and adaptation plans.
- Develop skills to **disseminate information and school climate action plans** to school district, various stakeholders, and the public.

# >> Environmental Action Plans <<

For Lobby Day:

- Describe how **transportation affects climate change, air quality, and community health**, especially in underserved neighborhoods.
- Promote policies and projects such as electric school buses, safe walking/biking routes, and **affordable public transit access for youth**.
- Explain how transportation contributes to greenhouse gas emissions and local air pollution.
- Describe the **health and equity benefits of clean transit** (e.g., reduced asthma rates, better access for underserved neighborhoods).
- Share stories of **how lack of accessible transit impacts students** and families in their communities.

## >> Next Steps <<

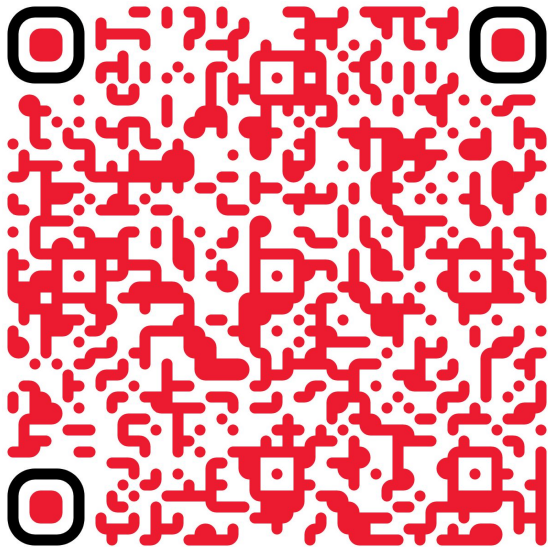
Web page: <https://www.ctuf.org/ej-freedom-school/trip/>

### Before Lobby Day

- Permission Slip
- Action Plan Speaking Template
  - Email to Mike, [michaelmoriarty@ctuf.org](mailto:michaelmoriarty@ctuf.org)

### Lobby Day, October 29, 2025

- **Arrive at CTU Center by 6:30 am**
- Drop Off at 6:00 pm at CTU Center,
  - 1901 W. Carroll Ave, Chicago IL 60612





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# Environmental Justice Freedom School

**Purpose:** We see how clean energy transit, such as electric buses, bikes, and public transit powered by renewable energy, directly supports the EJ Freedom School's goals. Clean transit reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, improving the health of communities disproportionately affected by poor air quality. EJ Students will also be able to apply this advocacy to their climate action plans. This is where we hope the partnership can help the students for CTU's Lobby Day.

By highlighting equitable access to sustainable transit, the program can empower youth to advocate for cleaner, healthier, and more just transportation systems in their schools and neighborhoods, aligning with the Freedom School's mission of advancing environmental justice and resilience.

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