

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Chicago Students Take the Floor at City Hall Through NextGen City Council

City Clerk Anna Valencia and Chicago Public Schools Partner to Elevate Student Voices and Advance Youth-Driven Policy Solutions

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CHICAGO – Chicago high school students took part in a hands-on civic leadership experience in Council Chambers today, May 14, 2026, as the Office of the City Clerk (OCC), led by City Clerk Anna Valencia, partnered with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to host NextGen City Council Day at City Hall.

Since its launch in 2018, NextGen City Council has engaged hundreds of CPS students in experiential civic learning, equipping them with the tools to develop policy solutions and engage directly with local government. The program is a collaboration between the OCC and CPS designed to empower young people as active civic participants.

“NextGen City Council is about opening the doors of government and making sure young people see themselves in the decisions that shape their communities,” City Clerk Anna Valencia said. “These students are not just learning how government works, they are actively engaging in it. Their ideas, their voices, and their leadership matter right now, not just in the future.”

This culminating event brought together student representatives from eight CPS high schools who spent weeks participating in a structured civic learning experience and ultimately drafted policy proposals presented in City Hall’s Council Chambers.

Participating schools included: Roald Amundsen High School; Richard T. Crane Medical Prep High School; Foreman College and Career Academy; Social Justice High School; Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy; Spry Community Links High School; Michele Clark Magnet High School; and Morgan Park High School.

Throughout the program, students built a strong foundation in civic engagement by:

- Exploring the role and impact of city government through classroom learning
- Engaging directly with City Clerk Anna Valencia and local alderpersons
- Conducting in-depth research and root cause analysis on issues affecting their communities
- Collaborating to draft policy proposals, including ordinances and resolutions

Building on this work, students collaborated in committees to research, draft, and refine policy proposals addressing real issues facing young people in Chicago, including public safety, economic

opportunity and education. Their proposals were debated, amended, and voted on by their peers in a simulated City Council setting, mirroring the City's legislative process.

During NextGen City Council Day, students voted to advance a final proposal that will be formally introduced by City Clerk Valencia for consideration by the Chicago City Council, creating a direct pathway for student ideas to reach City leadership.

Throughout the day, students took their seats in Council Chambers, presented their policy proposals, engaged in structured debate, and participated in formal voting procedures. Student leaders served in roles that included mayor, clerk, and alderpersons, gaining firsthand experience in how legislation is debated, refined, and advanced.

Dr. Macqueline King, Interim Superintendent/CEO of Chicago Public Schools, emphasized the importance of connecting classroom learning to real-world civic engagement.

“At Chicago Public Schools, we are committed to preparing our students not only for college and careers, but also for active participation in civic life,” Dr. King said. “NextGen City Council provides a powerful opportunity for students to apply what they’ve learned both in the classroom and throughout their participation in NextGen, engage in meaningful dialogue, and see firsthand how their voices can influence decisions that affect their communities.”

The impact of the NextGen City Council program is reflected in student outcomes, as measured in the 2025 NextGen Impact Report:

- 100% of participating students reported the experience as valuable
- More than 95% said they had the opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue and ask important questions
- Students reported increased confidence in their ability to participate in civic processes and advocate for their communities

About The Office of the City Clerk

Led by Clerk Anna Valencia, the OCC serves as the official record keeper of the Chicago City Council, administers the City's Wheel Tax (City Sticker), and oversees Chicago's municipal ID program, CityKey. The Office also partners with Chicago Public Schools on the NextGen youth civic engagement program, collaborates with community partners on fines and fees reform, and supports initiatives to improve the lives of women and girls. Learn more at www.chicityclerk.com and follow OCC on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

About Chicago Public Schools

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is dedicated to providing a high-quality education to all students, beginning with the District's free full-day preschool programming for four-year-old scholars and continuing through neighborhood, magnet, and selective-enrollment elementary schools that provide a rigorous K-12 education with schools that specialize in the fine arts, world language and culture, dual language, STEM, International Baccalaureate (IB), classical programs, and more. The rising District-wide freshmen-on-track and high school graduation rates reflect the hard work of the CPS community, including families, staff, and students across 635 schools. CPS celebrates the

diversity of its more than 315,000 students, who cite 182 home languages. Learn more about CPS at www.cps.edu and connect with CPS on Facebook, X, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

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