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Via Email

Sheila Nix
Chief of Staff
United States Department of Education
Lyndon Baines Johnson Building
400 Maryland, Ave. S.W.
Washington D.C. 20202

Dear Ms. Nix:

I am writing to you as the parent of a rising senior at Lincoln Park High School (“LPHS”) in Chicago, Illinois, who was denied the opportunity by the College Board to utilize his score on the Standard Aptitude Test (“SAT”) in the college application process, along with hundreds of other children, allegedly due to an error in test administration by the Chicago Public Schools. In addition to being a parent of a senior, I am also the Chair of the publicly-elected Local School Council for LPHS. LPHS is operated by the Chicago Public Schools with some oversight from the elected Local School Council. At this time, we are unaware of the total number of students impacted by the College Board decision. The administration error occurred when students were given the same booklet during the administration of the SAT on April 27, 2021 as was distributed during the SAT on April 13, 2021.

As a result, the College Board has refused to allow students who sat for the SAT during the administration error to submit their scores as part of the college application process. The test was properly scored, and there have been absolutely no allegations of improper conduct by any of the students who took the test. The College Board has refused to respond to or even acknowledge requests from both parents and media outlets covering the story. I am asking for the United States Department of Education’s assistance in opening a dialogue with the College Board to respond and reconsider its position to lessen the impact on the affected students.

By way of background, due to COVID-19 spacing restrictions promulgated by the Center for Disease Control, LPHS and numerous other high schools that are part of Chicago Public Schools, could not accommodate all of their students taking the SAT on a single day due to space limitations. As a result, two days of testing were held, on April 13 and April 27, 2021. The second date, April 27, was also the test date assigned to students who received approved accommodations from the College Board (e.g additional time), as well as students who did not take

the SAT on April 13. According to the Chicago Public Schools, the College Board, the operator of the SAT, will not allow students who took the SAT on the second day of testing to submit their score in the college admissions process because they received the same booklet on the second date of testing as those who sat for the SAT on the first day. Even though the children with approved accommodations received the identical test as the first day of testing without this impacting their ability to use their scores. To date, it is not clear why the same booklet was distributed twice. One thing is clear: the students had no knowledge of or role in the booklet they received. The students prepared for the exam like any other student taking the SAT and received the booklet distributed by the Chicago Public Schools on the morning of the test. The test was scored along with the other exams, and the students were provided their score.

In late July, CPS parents, including some at LPHS, were advised for the first time that the scores of their students would not be accepted by the College Board. In light of the College Board's refusal to accept the scores, these students must now take the SAT again if they would like to submit their scores for consideration with college applications.

In efforts to minimize the impact of this error, the Chicago Public Schools has agreed to pay the cost that students will incur to retake the SAT on August 27 or October 2, which are days offered by the College Board and separate from the October administration of the SAT at Chicago Public Schools. Nonetheless, students were given approximately one month notice before the August exam and less than a week to decide if they were able to retake the exam in August before registration closed. In addition, for those students who will take the exam in October, it will inevitably impact their college application process as scores will not be available until very close to certain application deadlines.

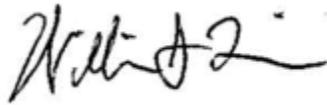
The impact of the College Board's decision not to accept the scores of these students cannot be understated. The requirement that students retake the examination with little notice or with the certainty that it will impede their college application process based on the fact that they will not have scores back until, at best, September or in some cases, late October, will, without a doubt, lead to increased emotional and, likely, financial stress on the students and their families. This requirement totally ignores the reality of test anxiety that so many students suffer from, particularly when sitting for an exam of this magnitude. Students will be forced to retake the exam under even more stressful conditions, knowing that their prior scores have no weight and that the significance of this second sitting for the exam, so close to the finalization of the college application process, is heavy.

Chicago Public Schools has indicated that the scores will satisfy its graduation requirement, so the only students who will need to retake the examination are those who wish to submit scores for consideration to the universities where they apply. This is not sufficient. A student's opportunity to submit the best application should not be impacted by a ministerial error.

Although certain universities do not require the SAT scores, a student should have the opportunity to evaluate his or her scores and determine if they will assist his or her application. A student should not be forced to limit his or her application because test anxiety impacts the decision to retake the examination, or because his or her financial ability to participate in test preparation was already exhausted in the spring. It simply cannot be disputed that COVID has taken a toll on all students. The College Board's decision not to accept the scores from students who sat for the exam on the second date it was administered imposes yet another barrier on these students and, for many, may eliminate their ability to submit SAT scores that they feel will add to their application.

We bring these matters to your attention because of the impact they have, not only on the students at LPHS, but also on those throughout Chicago due to ministerial errors by third parties. COVID has negatively impacted all students, and the College Board's decision to not allow students to submit these scores for consideration is detrimental to these students on many levels. If there is anything the US Department of Education could do to assist and alleviate the harm caused to these children and their families, it would be most appreciated. I am certainly happy to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William J. Quinlan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "W" and a long, sweeping underline.

William J. Quinlan