BCCON

BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS FOR THE CITY OF CHICAGO AS A DULY CONSTITUTED ELECTORAL BOARD

Objections of: David Jones	)	
	)	
	)	
To the Nomination	)	No.: 26-EB-SBD-018
Papers of: Anusha Thotakura	)	
	)	
Candidate for the office of	)	
Member of the Chicago Board of Education,	)	
Subdistrict 6A, City of Chicago	)	

FINDINGS AND DECISION

The duly constituted Electoral Board, consisting of the Board of the Election Commissioners for the City of Chicago, Commissioners Marisel A. Hernandez, June A. Brown and Laura Kotelman, organized by law in response to a Call issued by Marisel A. Hernandez, Chair of said Electoral Board, for the purpose of hearing and passing upon objections ("Objections") of David Jones ("Objector") to the nomination papers ("Nomination Papers") of Anusha Thotakura, candidate for the office of Member of the Chicago Board of Education, Subdistrict 6A, City of Chicago ("Candidate") at the General Election to be held on Tuesday, November 3, 2026, having convened on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 800, 69 West Washington Street, Chicago Illinois, and having heard and determined the Objections to the Nomination Papers in the above-entitled matter, finds that:

1. Objections to the Nomination Papers of the Candidate were duly and timely filed.

2. The Electoral Board was constituted according to the laws of the State of Illinois.

3. A Call to the hearing on said Objections was duly issued by the Chair of the Electoral Board and served upon the members of the Electoral Board, the Objector and the

Candidate, by registered or certified mail and by Sheriff's service, as provided by statute or statutory service was waived and service by email was authorized.

4. A public hearing held on these Objections commenced on Wednesday, June 10, 2026 and was continued from time to time. The Electoral Board assigned this matter to Hearing Officer Christopher Cohen for further hearings and proceedings.

5. The Objector and the Candidate were directed by the Electoral Board's Call served upon them to appear before the Hearing Officer on the date and at the time designated in the Hearing Schedule. Appearances were filed by or on behalf of the following persons: the Objector, David Jones, by Attorneys MICHAEL DEL GALDO, MICHAEL KASPER, JOHN FOGARTY, and ERIC M. DOMIJANCIC; and the Candidate, Anusha Thotakura, by Attorneys ED MULLEN and TIFFANY NELSON-JAWORSKI.

6. The Hearing Officer ordered that an examination of the voter registration records be conducted by clerks and agents under the Board's direction and supervision, in accordance with the laws of Illinois and the rules of the Board.

7. The Hearing Officer directed all parties to appear and be present, either personally and/or by their authorized representatives during this records examination.

8. The Candidate and/or the Candidate's duly authorized representative was present during the examination of the registration records or waived their right to do so.

9. The Objector and/or the Objector's duly authorized representative was present during the examination of the registration records or waived their right to do so.

10. The examination of the registration records was completed and the Electoral Board hereby adopts and incorporates by reference the results of the records examination conducted by its clerks and agents. The written report of the result of the registration records

examination is contained in the Board's file in this case and a copy has been provided or made available to the parties.

11. The results of the records examination indicate that:

A. The minimum number of valid signatures required by law for placement on the ballot for the office in question is 500.

B. The number of purportedly valid signatures appearing on the nominating petition filed by the Candidate total 1,429.

C. The number of signatures deemed invalid because of objections sustained as a result of the records examination total 665.

D. The remaining number of signatures deemed valid as a result of the records examination total 764.

12. The Electoral Board finds that the number of valid signatures appearing on the Candidate's nominating petition following completion of the records examination exceeds the minimum number of valid signatures required by law to be placed upon the ballot as a candidate for the office of Member of the Chicago Board of Education, Subdistrict 6A, City of Chicago.

13. The Candidate requested a hearing pursuant to Rule 8 of the Electoral Board's Rules of Procedure ("Rule 8 Hearing"). However, it was stipulated by the parties that if the Electoral Board ruled against the Objector in relation to an allegation regarding "dual circulation" (as further discussed in paragraph 16 below), the candidate would have enough signatures for placement on the ballot. The parties further stipulated that if the issue was reversed on appeal, the Candidate would have fewer than the minimum number of signatures for placement on the ballot. As a result of the foregoing stipulations, no Rule 8 hearing was conducted.

14. The Hearing Officer has tendered to the Electoral Board a report and recommended decision. Based upon the evidence presented, the Hearing Officer found that the Candidate's Nomination Papers contained 764 valid signatures, which exceeds by 264 the minimum number of valid signatures required by law to be placed upon the ballot as a candidate for the office of Member of the Chicago Board of Education, Subdistrict 6A, City of Chicago, and that the Candidate's Nomination Papers should be found valid.

15. Objector(s) further allege that circulators who circulated for an established party candidate at the March 2026 General Primary are prohibited from circulating for a nonpartisan school board candidate to be elected at the November 2026 General Election and that the signatures gathered by the "dual circulators" are invalid and in violation of Section 10-4 of the Election Code. The Electoral Board, having heard this issue in a separate consolidated proceeding and having considered the pleadings, motions, responses, oral arguments and relevant caselaw, all of which shall remain a part of the record, finds that the decision in *McCaskill v Municipal Officers Electoral Bd. For the City of Harvey, et. al.,* 2019 IL App (1st) 190190, is binding upon the Electoral Board. The Appellate Court unequivocally ruled therein that "[s]imply stated, the dual-circulation prohibition in section 10-4 does not apply to nonpartisan elections." *Id.* at ¶ 45 Accordingly, the objection(s) based upon alleged dual circulation are therefore overruled.

16. The Electoral Board, having considered the evidence and arguments tendered by the parties and the Hearing Officer's report of recommended findings and conclusions of law, hereby adopts the Hearing Officer's recommended findings and conclusions of law and incorporates them herein. A copy of the Hearing Officer Report and Recommendations is attached hereto and is incorporated herein as part of the decision of the Electoral Board.

17. For the reasons stated above, the Electoral Board finds that the Candidate has a sufficient number of valid signatures on her nominating petitions and that the Nomination Papers of Anusha Thotakura are, therefore, valid.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the Objections of David Jones to the Nomination Papers of Anusha Thotakura, candidate for the office of Member of the Chicago Board of Education, Subdistrict 6A, City of Chicago, are hereby OVERRULED, said Nomination Papers are hereby declared VALID, and the name of Anusha Thotakura SHALL be printed on the official ballot for the General Election to be held on Tuesday, November 3, 2026.

Dated: Chicago, Illinois, Tuesday, July 28, 2026.

Marisel A. Hernandez, Chair

June A. Brown, Commissioner

Laura Kotelman, Commissioner

NOTICE: Pursuant to Section 10-10.1 of the Election Code (10 ILCS 5/10-10.1) a party aggrieved by this decision and seeking judicial review of this decision must file a petition for judicial review with the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County within 5 days after service of the decision of the Electoral Board.

BOARD OF ELECTION COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO
AS THE DULY CONSTITUTED ELECTORAL BOARD
FOR THE HEARING AND PASSING UPON OBJECTIONS TO
NOMINATION PAPERS OF CANDIDATES FOR THE
NOVEMBER 3, 2026, GENERAL ELECTION IN THE CITY OF CHICAGO

Objections of David Jones To the Nomination Papers of Anusha Thotakura for Nomination as a Candidate for the Office of Member of the Chicago Board of Education for Subdistrict 6A, City of Chicago, State of Illinois at the November 3, 2026, General Election	)	**Case 26-EB-SBD-018**

HEARING OFFICER'S RECOMMENDED DECISION

This matter came before the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners sitting as the Duly Constituted Electoral Board ("Board") on the Objector's Petition ("Objections") of David Jones ("Objector") to the Nomination Papers of Anusha Thotakura ("Candidate") for Nomination as a Candidate for the Office of Member of the Chicago Board of Education for Subdistrict 6A, City of Chicago, State of Illinois at the November 3, 2026, General Election. The Board appointed attorney Christopher B. Cohen to preside as Hearing Officer for this case. The Hearing Officer finds and recommends as follows:

1. This Board is the duly constituted Electoral Board for hearing and passing on objections to Nomination Papers for the office that is the subject of these proceedings.

2. The Candidate filed Nomination Papers with the Illinois State Board of Elections, to which no objection was raised as to timeliness.

3. The Objector filed Objections to the Candidate's Nomination Papers, to which no objection was raised as to timeliness.

4. The Board's official file contained the Nomination Papers of the Candidate and the Objections of the Objector.

5. The Objector's Petition In this matter alleged that the Candidate's Nomination Papers were insufficient in fact and law for the following reasons: (Paragraph 5) some signers were not registered at the address shown; (Paragraph 6) some signers did not sign in their own proper persons and thus those signatures were not genuine; (Paragraph 7) some signers resided outside the District for which this Candidate filed; (Paragraph 8; some signers signed more than once; (Paragraph 9) they contained petition sheets circulated by persons who had previously circulated Nomination Papers for candidates

in the March 17, 2026 primary election; (Paragraph 10) they contained fewer than the required minimum of 500 valid signatures signed.

6. On June 10, 2026, the Board's Hearing Officer began a public hearing regarding the Objections in the nature of a case management conference. This June 10, 2026, hearing and subsequent proceedings were each held at 69 W. Washington, Chicago, Illinois, Lower Level, and were each recorded for transcription by a court stenographer. Also present at this, and each subsequent proceeding, were one or more Clerks from the Board's staff who marked exhibits and maintained the official file for this matter.

7. At the June 10, 2026, hearing, the Objector appeared not personally but by attorneys Michael Del Gado and Eric Domijancic. The Candidate appeared not personally but was represented by attorney Ed Mullen. The Board's official file contained Appearances, Non-Disclosure Agreements, and a Waiver of Service filed by each party.

8. The Hearing Officer made available to each party a copy of the Rules of Procedure the Board had adopted at its June 9, 2026, meeting. Notwithstanding Rule 17, he noted that Board offices will be open weekdays from 9 AM to 5 PM and closed on Saturdays and Sundays.

9. The Hearing Officer indicated that documents were to be filed in PDF form, served via email on the opposing party, on the Hearing Officer at cohenlaw@umich.edu, and on the Board at ElectoralBoard@ChicagoElections.gov as indicated in paragraph 16 of the Board's Rules, with no service by fax.

10. Schedules of hearings to be conducted by hearing officers, with the date, time, and location of upcoming hearings, will be posted daily at the Board's Offices in 69 W. Washington, Chicago, on floors 6 and 8 and on the Board's website at www.chicagoelections.gov under "Petition Filing/Objection Information."

11. During the June 10, 2026, case management conference, the Candidate indicated that he planned to file a preliminary written motion, which the Hearing Officer considered to be in the nature of a Motion to Strike and Dismiss (MTSD).

12. The Hearing Officer indicated that he would schedule a hearing on the Candidate's written Motion in the nature of a Motion to Strike and Dismiss (MTSD) and would schedule a hearing on the Candidate's oral objection to jurisdiction in case either or both parties cared to file written pleadings. Consequently, the Hearing Officer set a briefing schedule with these deadlines – 5 pm on June 11, 2026, for the Candidate's written motion; 5 pm on June 12, 2026, for the Objector's Response to the Candidate's Motion; and 5 pm on June 15, 2026, for the Candidate's Reply. if any. Each party was reminded to provide filings in PDF format and to be able to receive service by email, not fax.

13. The Hearing Officer scheduled a hearing and oral argument for the Motion and responsive pleadings for 11 am, June 17, 2026. Each party attending the June 10,

2026, hearing received oral notice on the record of the date, time, and location of the upcoming hearing.

14. Also, at the June 10, 2026, hearing, the Hearing Officer signed an order directing that a Records Examination be conducted by Board staff starting June 11, 2026. The hearing was then continued to 11 am on June 17, 2026.

15. On June 16, 2026, the Board's General Counsel notified all Hearing Officers via email that the Electoral Board would hear the dual-circulation objection issue on June 30, 2026

16. On June 17, 2026, at the reconvened hearing, the Candidate appeared by attorney Ed Mullen. The Objector appeared by attorney Tiffany Nelson-Jaworski. The parties discussed the Petition Summary Report, which had been issued on June 16, 2026. The hearing was then continued to 11 am, June 22, 2026, for the purpose of seeing if the parties would be seeking a Rule 8 evidentiary hearing.

17. Via a series of emails, the parties agreed to have the Hearing Officer postpone the June 22, 2026, hearing and to reschedule it for 10:30 am, July 1, 2026. This would be after the Electoral Board had an opportunity to rule on the dual-circulation issue.

18. At the July 1, 2026, hearing, the Candidate appeared by attorney Ed Mullen. The Objector appeared by attorney John Fogarty. The Hearing Officer confirmed that the Final Petition Summary Report indicated that the Candidate had 264 valid signatures greater than the required minimum of 500 signatures. He confirmed that the Candidate had filed a Rule 8 motion on June 17, 2026, but that neither party would be pursuing a Rule 8 Hearing. The parties confirmed that at its June 30, 2026, hearing, the Board voted to strike the dual-circulation objection of the Objector. That is, the Board ruled in the Candidate's favor.

19. The Hearing Officer scheduled a status hearing for July 8, 2026, at 10:30 am.

20. At the reconvened hearing on July 8, 2026, the Candidate appeared by attorney Ed Mullen. The Objector appeared by attorney John Fogarty. The Objector said he was considering whether to submit an offer of proof or to join the Candidate in a Stipulation. The Hearing Officer and the parties agreed to set the next tentative Hearing for July 16, 2026, at 11 am. The Hearing Officer stated that if the parties subsequently agreed among themselves that no subsequent meeting was necessary, they could ask the Hearing Officer to cancel the July 16, 2026, hearing.

21. On July 14, 2026, the parties filed a joint Stipulation. It listed petition sheets in the Candidate's Nomination Papers that were circulated by individuals who had previously circulated petitions for established political party candidates for the March 17, 2026, Primary Election. The Stipulation noted that the Objector's petition contained an allegation that any petition sheets contained in the Candidate's Nomination Papers listed in the Stipulation were invalid. The Stipulation noted that on June 30, 2026, the Board granted the Candidate's motion to strike that allegation. The Stipulation further indicated that as a result of the Board's decision, the Candidate's Nomination Papers

contain more than a sufficient number of signatures to qualify to appear on the Ballot. The Stipulation further indicated that if the Board's decision regarding all dual circulation allegations were reversed on appeal, the Candidate's Nomination Papers would contain an insufficient number of valid signatures to appear on the ballot,

22. The Hearing Officer had previously recommended that the Board issue subpoenas requested by the Objector. However, the Objector stated that given the dual-circulation ruling, subpoenas would not be used.

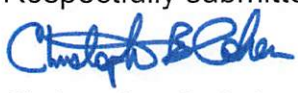
23. At the July 8, 2026, hearing, the Hearing Officer confirmed that the Board's exhibits had been marked and admitted into evidence.

24. The parties agreed to reconvene at 11 am on July 16, 2026, if necessary. The Hearing Officer approved this date and time but indicated that if, after reviewing the offer of proof or Stipulation, the parties agree among themselves that each will rest on the record, they may suggest to the Hearing Officer that the next hearing be cancelled as unnecessary. In light of the Stipulation filed by the parties, the July 16, 2026, hearing was cancelled, and no new hearing was scheduled.

RECOMMENDATION

In light of the Stipulation between the parties and in light of the above findings of fact and conclusions of law, it is this Hearing Officer's recommendation to the Board that the Candidate's Nomination Papers be deemed valid in law and in fact and that the name of the Candidate, Anusha Thotakura, appear on the ballot for as a Candidate for the Office of Member of the Chicago Board of Education for Subdistrict 6A, City of Chicago, State of Illinois at the November 3, 2026, General Election.

Respectfully submitted,



Christopher B. Cohen
Hearing Officer
July 16, 2026