My name is Tenisha Jones, for the past decade I’ve been the Chief Architect of the Auburn Gresham GOLD Initiative. We seek to interrupt the cycle of poverty by investing in neighborhood schools and children.

I work every day to fight poverty with school administrators, teachers, students and parents by working to transform schools into community access points for academic achievement, access to health and workforce development services. I do this because poverty hurts, it really hurts and Education alone is not enough.

The science is clear, we know the problem starts immediately, that’s why strong early childhood programs are so critical. We know that children living in poverty need not only good pedagogy, but they desperately need critical wrap around resources. Anything less leaves poor students at a disadvantage for short- term and long term success.

In the Auburn Gresham Community, on the far South Side of Chicago we work in five underserved schools, in those schools 80% of K-3rd grade students are not reading at grade level. Not only is this the manifestation of inequity, but it impacts the future competitiveness of Chicago. Shouldn’t we all care about this? In fact, what does it look like when we care about this 80%.

Research shows that to interrupt the cycle of poverty there are basic things that poor children and families need to thrive. Schools are a great place to start but we cannot rely on teachers, administrators and parents to solve the problem alone. That is where we come in, we need your support, and we need you to commit to standing with us to level the playing field for poor children across Chicago.