



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0034-2022, **Version:** *

Res. No. 34

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.4015, which would amend the education law and the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to authorizing the chancellor of the city district to control and operate certain specialized high schools in the city of New York and to establish a commission on middle school achievement, and providing for the repeal of certain provisions upon the expiration thereof

By the Public Advocate (Mr. Williams)

Whereas, Pursuant to a 1971 New York State (NYS) law known as the Hecht-Calandra Act, student admission to eight of the nine New York City (NYC) specialized high schools is decided solely and exclusively on their Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) scores; and

Whereas, These eight test-based high schools are NYC's most prestigious and sought after public high schools, and according to the NYC Department of Education (DOE), while 23,528 students took the SHSAT during school year 2019-20, only 4,262 of these students received an offer based on their test performance; and

Whereas, According to DOE's 2019 specialized high schools admission data, Black and Latino students are significantly underrepresented in NYC's specialized high schools admissions, and while they represent almost 70 percent of DOE's student population, and over 12,000, or 44 percent, of all students who took the SHSAT, they accounted for only 506, or 10.6 percent of all specialized high school admission offers that year; and

Whereas, The Century Foundation reports that Gifted and Talented (G&T) programs, which are accelerated programs for academically "exceptional" students in elementary schools, serve as pipelines to specialized high schools; and

Whereas, While G&T programs are only for elementary school students, these schools often have their

own middle school programs or send their alumni off to high-performing screened middle schools that send a large number of students to specialized high schools, as reported by Chalkbeat; and

Whereas, Chalkbeat also reports that G&T programs diminished in predominately Black and Latino school districts when former Mayor Michael Bloomberg centralized G&T admissions by changing requirements from a multiple indicator criteria to a uniform standard that requires G&T students to score in at least the 90th percentile on an exam made up of items from two national standardized tests known as the Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test and the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test; and

Whereas, As reported by The Century Foundation, after Mayor Bloomberg changed the admissions criteria, the percentage of Black and Latino students entering G&T programs in kindergarten decreased from 46 percent to 22 percent; and

Whereas, Many advocates urge the DOE to make efforts to increase diversity in G&T programs to help put a more diverse population of students on a pathway to attending a specialized high school; and

Whereas, SHSAT preparation programs also serve as pipelines to specialized high schools, but these programs are too expensive for many New York families and are underutilized by Black and Latino students; and

Whereas, DOE's Determination, Resiliency, Enthusiasm, Ambition, and Motivation (DREAM) program, which provides free test preparation to low-income students who meet certain academic and geographical requirements, has created more opportunities for Black and Latino students, and as reported by POLITICO in March 2019, while only 10 percent of Black and Latino students who took the SHSAT were part of the DREAM program, they accounted for 29 percent of Black and Latino students who received offers; and

Whereas, NYS Senator Leroy Comrie introduced S.4015, which addresses the lack of diversity in NYC's specialized high schools by creating ten new specialized high schools, providing free SHSAT preparation for NYC sixth and seventh graders and establishing at least one G&T program in every district; and

Whereas, The proposed legislation would also create an independent commission of stakeholders to

study and make recommendations on how to improve middle school achievement, especially in high need schools, as well as review the overall structure of the middle and high school system in NYC; and

Whereas, NYC's student population is diverse, and lawmakers must take appropriate action to ensure that the City is providing opportunities for all students to gain access to its most elite high schools; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, S.4015, which would amend the education law and the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to authorizing the chancellor of the city district to control and operate certain specialized high schools in the city of New York and to establish a commission on middle school achievement, and providing for the repeal of certain provisions upon the expiration thereof.

Session 12

JB

LS #2878

1/6/22 12:00pm

Session 11

LS #11441

CS/KJ