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CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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October 29, 2019  
Start: 11:55 a.m.  
Recess: 12:19 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm, 16<sup>th</sup>  
Fl.

B E F O R E: Mark Treyger,  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Alicka Ampry-Samuel
- Inez D. Barron
- Joseph C. Borelli
- Justin L. Brannan
- Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.
- Daniel Dromm
- Barry S. Grodenchik
- Ben Kallos
- Andy L. King
- Brad S. Lander
- Stephen T. Levin
- Mark Levine
- Farah N. Louis
- Ydanis A. Rodriguez
- Deborah L. Rose
- Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
- Eric A. Ulrich

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: [GAVEL] Okay, good, I think  
3 it's still good morning because it's not twelve yet.  
4 So, good morning everyone, I would like to welcome  
5 everyone here for a vote on Proposed Introduction  
6 1541-B.

7 My name is Mark Treyger; I am the Chair of the  
8 Committee on Education. I would like to acknowledge  
9 my colleagues that are present, beginning with the  
10 gold star Council Member Borelli today from Staten  
11 Island. The gold star; amazing right. Council  
12 Member Levin, Council Member Levine, Council Member  
13 Barron, Council Member Grodenchik, Council Member  
14 Alicka Ampry-Samuel, Council Member Farah Louis,  
15 great to see you. Council Member Brannan and anyone  
16 else I missed? I think that's it for now. Oh, the  
17 Chair Danny Dromm, yes. Our great Chair, thank you  
18 to Chairman Dromm.

19 On May 1, 2019, this committee held a ten hour  
20 plus hearing. If we could just close that door, I  
21 would appreciate it. Thank you very much.

22 On May 1, 2019, this committee held a ten plus  
23 hour hearing on school segregation. At the hearing,  
24 we heard powerful testimony from students, parents,  
25 educators, administrators, community leaders and

1  
2 other stakeholders who spoke out about the  
3 extraordinary benefits of school diversity. All are  
4 impacted by the issue of segregation in our schools,  
5 not were directly then our students.

6 Our city has long had issues with school  
7 segregation. However, the conversation of  
8 segregation in specialized schools was recently  
9 resparked when the DOE released the 2019 Admissions  
10 Offer Results at the city's aid test based  
11 specialized high schools.

12 The results showed that Black and Latino students  
13 who make up nearly 70 percent of the city's student  
14 population received only 10 percent of all offers to  
15 these schools. Advocates of many sides believe that  
16 these numbers are egregious and unacceptable but  
17 there is broad disagreement about the solution to  
18 this problem.

19 This debate was and continues to remain intense  
20 on both sides of this issue. As I pointed out then,  
21 many of the policy proposals put forward by the de  
22 Blasio Administration did not involve the most  
23 critical stakeholders, students, parents, in the  
24 larger communities that would be directly impacted by  
25 the proposals.

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2 We promised that the council would take a  
3 different approach and that any legislation we pass  
4 would involve community input. A conversation driven  
5 from the bottom up rather than top down.

6 Proposed Introduction 1541-B keeps true on that  
7 promise. This introduction by Speaker Johnson would  
8 create a specialized high school task force.

9 Appointments will be by the Mayor and the Council.

10 Mandated participants include, students, parents,  
11 educators and education policy experts in the field  
12 of testing, child development, standardized testing  
13 and educational measurement. There is also a  
14 mandated public hearing process to hear from as many  
15 community voices as possible.

16 On or before May 1, 2020, the task force will be  
17 required to submit a report on recommendations to  
18 achieve greater diversity at the specialized high  
19 schools. It is our hope that our colleagues in  
20 Albany will see that a community driven process has  
21 happened here in the city and enacts some of the  
22 proposals that our community wants to see changed.

23 There were other bills heard at the May 1<sup>st</sup>  
24 hearing that I look forward to advancing very soon.  
25 These other bills require greater reporting by the

1  
2 DOE on demographics of our schools and also an  
3 Introduction that I am proud to sponsor that would  
4 for the first time require the DOE to report on the  
5 demographics of teachers, support personnel and  
6 school leadership.

7 As we develop a great picture of conditions on  
8 the ground, we could appropriately push the DOE and  
9 state to enact lasting change that will truly bring  
10 integration to our classrooms.

11 I'd like to thank Committee Staff Malcom  
12 Butehorn, our Counsel Jan Atwell, Policy Analyst  
13 Kalima Johnson, Chelsea Baytemur Financial Analyst.  
14 I also want to thank my staff Anna Scaife, my Chief  
15 of Staff and Vanessa Ogle my Policy Director. And  
16 with that, I will now turn to the clerk to call the  
17 vote.

18 COUNCIL CLERK: William Martin Committee Clerk  
19 roll call vote Committee on Education, Introduction  
20 1541-B. Chair Treyger?

21 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I vote aye.

22 COUNCIL CLERK: Barron?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Request to explain my  
24 vote.

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2 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Yes, Council Member Barron  
3 to explain her vote.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Thank you. I just want  
5 to say that I'm pleased to see that we're going to  
6 have this task force which will examine the use of  
7 multiple measures that can be used to grant  
8 admissions to the specialized high school. Over the  
9 past two decades, there's been a steady decline in  
10 the number of Black and Latino students admitted to  
11 the so-called elite specialized high schools. And  
12 we've heard the data about the number of students  
13 that represent their presence in the system as  
14 compared to their attendance at these schools.

15 This situation is governed by the fact that the  
16 sole criteria at this point for admission to these  
17 schools is a single test and the American  
18 Psychological Association and the American Research  
19 Association and the National Council on Measures and  
20 Education have concluded that, "a high stakes  
21 decision with a major impact on a student's  
22 educational opportunities such as admission to a  
23 specialized or a gifted and talented program should  
24 not turn on the results of a single test."  
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2       So, I am pleased to know that this task force is  
3 going to examine other measures that will be  
4 considered as admission for these elite specialized  
5 high schools. And with that, I vote aye.

6       COUNCIL CLERK: Dromm?

7       COUNCIL MEMBER DROMM: Aye.

8       COUNCIL CLERK: Levin?

9       COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: I vote aye and I want to  
10 congratulate everyone that worked on this and I'd  
11 like to add my name as a sponsor, thank you.

12       COUNCIL CLERK: Levine?

13       COUNCIL MEMBER LEVINE: I vote aye on all.

14       COUNCIL CLERK: Grodenchik?

15       COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Permission to explain  
16 my vote Mr. Chairman.

17       CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Council Member Grodenchik  
18 to explain his vote.

19       COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I am voting aye and I  
20 would just like to ask the Chair and the members of  
21 this committee and all the members of the council to  
22 remember that while we work to diversify the students  
23 in what was phrased as the elite schools of New York  
24 City, we also have to remember that many of the  
25 students are geographically challenged and for my

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2 district in eastern Queens and I dare say Mr.  
3 Borelli's district on Staten Island, it is an  
4 extremely long ride to get to Stuyvesant to get to  
5 Bronx Science to get to Brooklyn Tech. You know, and  
6 so, many parents forego the opportunities these  
7 children might have. We do have an outstanding  
8 school in New York College campus which is accessible  
9 to students in Northeast and Southeast Queens,  
10 communities that I represent but it's small. And so,  
11 we're working forward now, hopefully to expand that  
12 school. I have hope, there is room and there is the  
13 desire to do so among the elected officials in our  
14 community, so I am hopeful that that will happen.

15 We have to remember this is a very, very large  
16 city and we have to provide an equal opportunity for  
17 all our young people. So, with that Mr. Chairman, I  
18 thank you for indulging me and I vote aye.

19 COUNCIL CLERK: Ampry-Samuel?

20 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: I vote aye.

21 COUNCIL CLERK: Brannan?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Aye.

23 COUNCIL CLERK: Louis?

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Aye.

25 COUNCIL CLERK: Borelli?

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: Permission to explain my  
3 vote.

4 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Council Member Borelli, to  
5 explain his vote.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER BORELLI: So, I guess I will be  
7 the one dissenting no vote and just want to register  
8 with the committee, that after hearing the testimony  
9 that we heard and hearing from so many people on both  
10 sides, but more fundamentally, reviewing the DOE's  
11 own school quality snapshots. I remain convinced  
12 that the problem is that we have schools in our  
13 system which the DOE is telling parents that are  
14 doing a great job and yet, seemingly can't produce  
15 students that not only can pass this test, whether it  
16 be through prep or through their general curriculum  
17 but also pass state exams that objectively measure  
18 students.

19 I think that, that challenge, is more  
20 fundamentally important than the determination of any  
21 small fractional amount of the students that would  
22 graduate that school. The bigger problem is the  
23 hundreds of kids who are in middle schools where the  
24 DOE has seemingly no plan to address the failings of  
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1 the teachers and administrators of those schools.

2 So, I vote no.

3 COUNCIL CLERK: Kallos?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Aye on all.

5 COUNCIL CLERK: By a vote of ten in the  
6 affirmative, one in the negative and no abstentions,  
7 item has been adopted by the committee.

8 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: I will hold the vote open  
9 for ten minutes.

10 Okay, and folks, we're just continuing the vote  
11 and next, we'll hear from Council Member Cornegy.

12 COUNCIL CLERK: Introduction 1541-B, Council  
13 Member Cornegy?

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CORNEGY: I vote a yes.

15 COUNCIL CLERK: Final vote Committee on  
16 Education, Introduction 1541-B is now adopted by the  
17 Committee. Eleven in the affirmative, one in the  
18 negative, and no abstentions.

19 CHAIRPERSON TREYGER: Okay, this vote is  
20 officially now adjourned. [GAVEL]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date April 1, 2018