



Legislation Text

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File #: Res 0442-2014, Version: \*

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Res. No. 442

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign S.7738/ A.9979, to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools.

By Council Members Barron, Torres, Lander, Dromm, Rodriguez, Levine, Maisel, Johnson, Mendez, Richards, Reynoso, Rosenthal and Levin

Whereas, There are nine Specialized High Schools in New York City that serve the needs of academically and artistically gifted students; and

Whereas, For eight of these schools, admission is based solely on the score attained on the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHSAT), while for Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts (LaGuardia), acceptance is based on an audition and a review of a student's academic records; and

Whereas, A 1971 State law, known as the Hecht-Calandra Act, makes the SHSAT exam the only measure that can be used to admit students to Stuyvesant High School, the Bronx High School of Science and Brooklyn Technical High School; and

Whereas, Civil rights advocates have long complained about the relatively small number of black and Hispanic students in these most selective high schools; and

Whereas, According to a June 2014 *New York Times* article, in the 2013-14 school year black students were offered only 5% of the seats at the eight schools and Hispanics 7%, even though 70% of the city's public school students are black or Hispanic. Asians were offered 53% of the seats, while whites were offered 26%; and

Whereas, In September 2012, a coalition of educational and civil rights groups, including the NAACP

Legal Defense and Educational Fund, filed a federal complaint saying that black and Hispanic students were disproportionately excluded from New York City's most selective high schools because of a single-test admittance policy that is racially discriminatory; and

Whereas, The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education policy group, researched 165 selective high schools around the country and found that New York City's specialized schools were the only ones that used a single test as the sole admission criterion, while others use multiple factors including grades, teacher recommendations, essays and interviews; and

Whereas, Similarly, college admissions generally do not rely on a single test score, but rather a variety of factors which may include SAT or ACT test scores as well as grades, teacher recommendations, essays and interviews; and

Whereas, Furthermore the three leading organizations in the area of educational test measurement-the American Psychological Association, the American Educational Research Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education-have concluded that a high-stakes decision with a major impact on a student's educational opportunities, such as admission to a specialized or gifted/talented program, should not depend on the results of a single test; and

Whereas, S.7738, sponsored by Senator Felder, and its companion bill A.9979, sponsored by Assemblymember Camara, would establish procedures and standards for admission to the special high schools of New York City which will consist of multiple objective measures of student merit including grade point averages, school attendance records, school admission test scores and state test scores; and

Whereas, Further, S.7738 and A.9979 would require the City Board of Education or Chancellor to provide written explanation of the weightings of the factors selected and make such explanation publicly available; and

Whereas, S.7738 and A.9979 would also require the Chancellor to conspicuously post notice of the special high schools' entrance examination; and

Whereas, S.7738 and A.9979 would also provide that the principal of a special high school may admit a student who has satisfactorily completed a Discovery Program; and

Whereas, A Discovery Program provides disadvantaged students with exam scores just below the admissions cutoff a chance to study over the summer and earn slots at the 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.7738/ A.9979, to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools.

LS# 3004  
JA  
10/17/14