



Legislation Text

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**File #:** Res 0855-2007, **Version:** \*

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Res. No. 855

Resolution calling upon the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Education to mandate that courses in African and African-American history be taught in all high schools and that all students must complete such courses to graduate.

By Council Members Barron, Dickens, Foster, Mealy and James

Whereas, According to the New York State Education Department (“SED”), Black students constitute nearly 20% of the public school population in New York State, and over 30% of public school students in New York City; and

Whereas, Despite these statistics, there is no comprehensive school curriculum in New York State devoted to the history of people of African ancestry; and

Whereas, As a result, the vital contribution that people of African ancestry had, and continue to have, on the economic, social and political fabric of the United States has not been fully conveyed to New York public school students; and

Whereas, Creating a State-wide curriculum on African and African-American history would fill this gap, and would also help to give students a more comprehensive sense of the history of racial discrimination and of the civil rights movement in the United States; and

Whereas, In addition, according to Black New Yorkers for Education Excellence, many studies have concluded that the teaching of Black History is related to enhancing Black children’s self-esteem and overall academic success; and

Whereas, This is vitally important in New York State, where, according to the SED, Black students have among the highest dropout rates and lowest graduation rates in the City; and

Whereas, According to a 2006 report called *Silent Epidemic*, which was funded by the Gates Foundation, many students who have dropped out of school have reported that a major cause of their disengagement stemmed from feeling uninspired by the curriculum taught in their schools; and

Whereas, Teaching African and African-American history would make the curriculum taught in public high schools more engaging for all students, and in particular for Black students; and

Whereas, Teaching African and African-American history in New York schools would also help to forge closer ties between Black students and their school communities by promoting a more culturally sensitive learning environment; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Education to mandate that courses in African and African-American history be taught in all high schools and that all students must complete such courses to graduate.

LS #2731  
SS  
5/1/07