



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 453

Resolution calling upon the New York City Department of Education to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity and to set it as a priority when making decisions regarding admissions policies and practices, creation of new schools, school rezoning and other pertinent decisions and commit to having a strategy in each district for overcoming impediments to school diversity.

By Council Members Torres, Barron, Lander, Dromm, Rodriguez, Levine, Treyger, Maisel, Chin, Richards, Reynoso, Rosenthal, Kallos, Levin, Rose, Williams, Deutsch, Eugene and Van Bramer

Whereas, 2014 marks the 60th anniversary year of the 1954 landmark United States Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which found that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" and banned separate public schools for black and white students; and

Whereas, Despite this landmark ruling, many schools and districts throughout the United States (U.S.) have been alleged to still be "separate" due, in part, to racially and economically isolated housing patterns in many areas; and

Whereas, According to a 2013 Economic Policy Institute (EPI) report entitled *For Public Schools, Segregation Then, Segregation Since*, "[t]oday, African American students are more isolated than they were 40 years ago, while most education policymakers and reformers have abandoned integration as a cause"; and

Whereas, New York State has the most non-diverse schools in the country, according to a 2014 report by The Civil Rights Project of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) entitled *New York State's Extreme School Segregation: Inequality, Inaction, and a Damaged Future*; and

Whereas, According to the Civil Rights Project (CRP) report, in 2009, black and Latino students in the state had the highest concentration of public schools with less than 10% white enrollment, the lowest exposure to white students, and the most uneven distribution with white students across schools; and

Whereas, Heavily impacting New York State's ranking is New York City, home to the largest and one of the most non-diverse public school systems in the nation, according to the CRP report; and

Whereas, In 2010, New York City students represented nearly 60% of the state's total black students, two-thirds of the total Asian and Latino students, but only 10% of white students; and

Whereas, While the City's public-school population is diverse - currently more than 40% Hispanic, approximately 26% black, 15% white and 16% Asian - the distribution of students across schools is much less so; and

Whereas, A 2012 *New York Times* analysis of schools data for the 2009-10 school year found that more than half the city's schools were at least 90% black and Hispanic; and

Whereas, Furthermore, according to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2010, 93% of public schools in the Bronx, 71% in Brooklyn, 69% in Manhattan, 59% in Queens, and only 8% in Staten Island had less than 10% white students; and

Whereas, Additionally, a 2013 publication by the Independent Budget Office (IBO) found that, while lack of diversity exists at all levels of City schools, elementary schools are the least diverse and high schools the most diverse; and

Whereas, A considerable body of research indicates that racial and economic diversity of schools is one of the few education reforms that is proven to improve the educational achievement and life opportunities of minority and low-income children systemically; and

Whereas, This is primarily because the best way to ensure that public educational resources are equitably distributed among all children is to allow all children access to the same resources in the same schools; and

Whereas, Further, diverse schools promote better educational outcomes and provide benefits for all students; and

Whereas, For example, research confirms that African-American and Hispanic students perform better

on tests in schools that are diverse, while school diversity has no negative impact on the test scores of white students; and

Whereas, In addition, studies have found that prolonged contact with racially diverse students may have significant effects on students' complex thinking and a more diverse classroom environment encourages critical thinking in all students; and

Whereas, Attending diverse schools also improves high school graduation and college matriculation rates for minority students; and

Whereas, Beyond educational benefits, diverse schools provide other societal advantages, including improving cross-racial understanding and reducing racial prejudice; and

Whereas, Diverse schools also improve the potential for reducing residential lack of diversity; and

Whereas, Further, diverse schools are linked to a host of positive learning outcomes for white students as well, including the promotion of critical thinking and problem-solving skills and higher academic achievement; and

Whereas, Attending diverse schools is also linked to social and psychological advantages for white students, including more friendships across racial lines and higher levels of cultural competence, a critical advantage in the modern workplace and today's global economy; and

Whereas, In sum, diverse schools are essential to prepare all children to live and work together in a nation in which Blacks, Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and other non-Whites will collectively comprise the majority of the U.S. population by 2042; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York City Department of Education to officially recognize the importance and benefits of school diversity and to set it as a priority when making decisions regarding admissions policies and practices, creation of new schools, school rezoning and other pertinent decisions and commit to having a strategy in each district for overcoming impediments to school diversity.

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