



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0196-2018, **Version:** A

Proposed Res. No. 196-A

Resolution calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign A.10427A/S.8503A, to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools.

By Council Member Barron

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, For the 2017-18 school year, black students were offered only 3.8% of the seats at the eight schools and Hispanics 6.5%, even though 64% of the city's public school students are black or Hispanic. Asians were offered 52.5% of the seats, while whites were offered 28%; 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, A.10427A, sponsored by Assemblymember Barron, and its companion bill S.8503A, sponsored by Senator Parker, would create a new admissions system for the City's specialized high schools that would, over a period of three years, phase out the use of the achievement test and instead offer admission to students attending public middle schools in New York City who rank both in the top of their school's eighth grade and in the top quarter of eighth grade public school students Citywide; and

Whereas, Determination of a public school student's ranking in eighth grade would be made based on a set of criteria, including multiple measures of student achievement, determined by the Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education; and

Whereas, Such criteria would include grades in core academic courses and standardized test scores during seventh grade and could include other measures as well and, based on such criteria, students would be assigned a composite score; and

Whereas, As specified in A.10427A and S.8503A, in the first year under the new system, seats would be reserved in the specialized high schools for students in the top 3% of their eighth grade; in the second year, seats would be reserved for students in the top 5% of their eighth grade; and during the third year and subsequent years, for students who are in the top 5 - 7% of their eighth grade; and

Whereas, A.10427A and S.8503A would also provide that, in the first two years, the remaining seats in the specialized high schools would be filled by students who take the SHSAT and who score at or above the cut-off score for such remaining seats; and

Whereas, Further, A.10427A and S.8503A would also require that, during the third year and subsequent years, the remaining seats at each of the specialized high schools would be filled by a random selection process among eighth grade students from both public and private schools who have a grade point average of at least 3.7; and

Whereas, This new admissions policy is expected to increase diversity in the eight specialized high schools that are currently required to rely on the SHSAT as the sole criterion for admission; 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 A.10427A/S.8503A, to change the admissions criteria for New York City's Specialized High Schools.

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