

**BRONX SCIENCE ALUMNI FOUNDATION
BROOKLYN TECH ALUMNI FOUNDATION
STATEN ISLAND TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
STUYVESANT HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

MEMORANDUM OF OPPOSITION

A10731 (Mosley)

**Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech, Staten Island Tech, and Stuyvesant High School Alumni
oppose proposal to allow NYC to create subjective new admissions criteria**

The Bronx Science Alumni Foundation, Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation, the Staten Island Tech Alumni Organization and the Stuyvesant Alumni Association have consistently voiced support for increasing diversity in the specialized high schools and strongly believe that there is much that can – *and must* – be done to achieve this critically important goal. However, we also believe that the new approach contained in A10731 (Mosley), which simply cedes control of this incredibly complex issue to the NYC Department of Education (DOE), is problematic on a number of levels and does absolutely nothing to address the serious underlying issues of inequality of educational opportunity in the City’s segregated public education system. So, while the legislation’s goal of increasing diversity is obviously well-intended, we oppose A10731 for the following reasons:

1. The bill’s underlying rationale/premise is misplaced and ignores the longer-term need.

The bill’s legislative findings suggest that the lack of diversity in the specialized high schools is solely the “result of the use of this criterion, known as the specialized high school admissions test (SHSAT),” which is a short-sighted and misplaced conclusion. The major, systemic cause is the disparity in the quality of education and opportunities provided in too many Black and Latino communities, which creates an achievement gap reflected in the test’s demographic results. The answer, therefore, is to improve the elementary and middle schools in underrepresented communities, expand educational opportunities for every student in NYC and restore enhanced academics that existed throughout the system when the specialized high schools were far more diverse...not simply scrap the test and hand responsibility for admissions to a NYC Department of Education that has clearly demonstrated no ability or interest in doing this tough work to-date.

2. This outsized focus on specialized high school admissions is a distraction from bigger issues facing countless more NYC students

While specialized high school admissions generate a great deal of media and political attention, the reality is that there are significant issues facing hundreds and hundreds of middle schools and high schools across the City that are being overlooked in this fight over a small handful of specialized schools. Rather than continue to cynically utilize the specialized high schools as a rhetorical/political opportunity, the DOE should re-focus their efforts where significant issues exist and they can have the greatest impact.

3. Why would NYS legislators cede control to the City within the context of this Administration's failure to address systemic inequities?

As noted above, the de Blasio Administration and Chancellor Carranza have not acknowledged the need to do the hard work of improving elementary and middle school educational opportunities as a path to increasing diversity, and, in fact, have taken steps such as eliminating Gifted & Talented programs in communities of color which are antithetical to this longer term goal. And while we recognize that bill's effective date is January 2022 and implementation will fall under the next NYC Mayor, the context of the failure of the DOE to-date should give legislators pause about the ability of the City and DOE bureaucracies to effectuate change in a meaningful manner (and it is simply not reasonable to believe that this current Administration will not be involved in the creation of these new admissions criteria over the next year and a half).

4. If not this bill, then what?

We have been clear from day one that proactive efforts are required to increase diversity and that simply doing nothing is not an option. That is why the Coalition of Specialized High School Alumni Organizations released a comprehensive policy paper last spring detailing nearly a dozen potential programs/initiatives – ranging from accelerated learning opportunities in elementary schools to offering a pre-SHSAT test and free test prep for all – that could effectively “move the needle” on this critically important issue. It is also why our Coalition strongly supports Senate bill S6510 (Comrie), which proactively addresses diversity through a similar range of initiatives, including the creation of new specialized high schools in the boroughs, free test prep and the restoration of gifted & talented programs in underserved communities.

Finally, it is worth noting that the alumni organizations first formally proposed these types of increased academic resources and programs to underrepresented communities back in 2014. If action was actually taken to improve academic success at that time, students would have had six years of improved education by now, and we would have undoubtedly seen an increase in the number of Black and Hispanic students attending our specialized high schools. It is not too late to implement these programs and improve the lives of all students in the NYC school system, rather than abolish a test that highlights the existing deficiencies.

Once again, the goal of any specialized high school diversity initiative must be to address the systemic, long-term educational challenges facing far too many young people in underrepresented communities and help to ensure that all New York City school children have access to the high-quality educational opportunities they deserve. Unfortunately, A10731 will do nothing to help achieve this goal and therefore we urge legislators to reject this bill.

For more information, please contact the Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation's government affairs representatives, Yoswein New York, at 212-233-5700.

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