

New York City Residents Alliance (NYCRA)
May 25, 2021



To: NY State Assembly Education Committee Members
Re: NY State bill A7510

We are aware that Assembly Member Michael Benedetto (along with co-sponsors AM Charles Barron and AM Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn), proposed a bill, **A7510**, to repeal the 1971 Hecht-Calandra Act (which requires New York City to utilize the Specialized High School Admissions Test (“SHSAT”) as the sole criterion for admission) and eliminate the Discovery program admissions process.

This is yet another underhanded attempt to discriminate against Asian American students in a most egregious and unfair manner. A large number of students who did well on the SHSAT and thus, were offered seats at these prestigious high schools are Asian American and the Discovery program was designed to benefit disadvantaged students from low-income communities in New York City by allowing students who score just below the SHSAT cutoff to earn admission to the Specialized High Schools by attending a summer program. This is an attack on low-income Asian American minority students, just as physical and as traumatic as the anti-Asian hate assaults we have been experiencing here in New York City as well as in other Asian American populated cities.

As reported in the media, certain politicians and current Chancellor Meisha Porter have stated that Asian students are “overrepresented” and the demographics of the school as “unacceptable.” The relentless attack, particularly on Stuyvesant High School where education is focused on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics and the student population is 74% Asian American is, not only an attack on education and students at these schools but also one rooted in racism as it implies that there are too many Asian students and this problem must be corrected.

We will not stand idly by while Asian American children are being told they do not belong, that there are too many of them occupying space at the Specialized High Schools. The SHSAT does not ask about your race; it is color blind. That there are so few Black and Hispanic students who score high enough to be offered a seat is an indictment of the quality of education they have received from the New York City Department of Education, namely the lack of Gifted & Talented programs in underserved areas. The Gifted & Talented programs provide educational opportunity for students to do accelerated coursework in elementary and middle schools. This is a failure on the part of the NYC’s school system under Mayoral Control. We believe increasing access to opportunity with quality programs/curriculum will enable more Black and Hispanic students to better prepare themselves for the rigor of the SHSAT schools.

The attacks on Asian Americans and on merit and excellence must stop. This bill must not be allowed to pass.

Thank you.
Donghui Zang, President of NYCRA