Honorable legislators,

The proposed Assembly Bill A10731 is a terrible piece of legislation and should be voted down.

It asserts that the SHSAT is the reason why Black and Latino students are not proportionately represented in the Specialized High schools (SHS). If the SHSAT does that, then how is it that from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, for twenty solid years, Brooklyn Technical High School, by far the largest of the SHS, was majority Black and Latino -- all the while using the SHSAT as the sole criterion for admissions? The assertion is nonsense.

It further asserts that the SHSAT is the reason why the SHS do not reflect the diversity of the City's student population. Since we already debunked the claim about Black and Latino students, let's talk about the other major form of diversity, economic diversity, a fancy term for having poor students. Comparing the SHS to generally acknowledged top non-Specialized high schools -- whether you use SAT averages, Regents performance, or private rankings like Niche -- the SHS have at least comparable, and often far more, poor students that those other schools whose admissions, it should be noted, are fully controlled by the City. So much for the "diversity" assertion.

The logic in the bill that the SHSAT harms Black and Latino students is as fallacious as blaming the thermometer for the patient's illness and does not belong in the law. What really hurts the City's Black and Latino students is the colossal educational malpractice perpetuated by the City's Department of Education, which fails to achieve grade-level proficiency for two out of every three Black and Latino students. Burying the SHSAT doesn't change that dismal reality. The only way to change that reality is to change that reality -- by returning Gifted and Talented programs and Honors classes to neighborhoods that don't have them, which are predominantly Black and Latino, by creating at least two new SHS per borough, and by ridding our education establishment of the increasingly prevalent bigotry of lower expectations.

To copy university admissions practices for the SHS is ludicrous. Universities have specific reasons why each does what each does, not all of which are praiseworthy. Suffice it to say that a year-long study by the faculty of the University of California released in 2020 reported that the SAT is the best predictor of first-year GPA and a number of other academic metrics, especially for Black, Latino, first-generation, and poor students, and world-renowned cognitive psychologist Steve Pinker advocates, with supporting research, that Harvard use the SAT as the sole admissions criterion.

In sum, none of the justifications for this proposal are valid. They should not be written into law.

The proposed bill concludes with the requirement for the City to develop admissions criteria to ensure that high-performing and talented students across all five boroughs have the opportunity to attend the SHS, but it never spells out precisely what that means. It doesn't give a mechanism for the City to follow in the new admissions criteria, and it doesn't give performance metrics for the City to test outcomes against. So neither the State nor the City can ever tell whether the City complies with this part of the bill. That is terrible legislation, especially since the City's recent track record demonstrates abundant need for the State to watch over how the City runs the schools.

As it is, the current SHSAT admissions criterion already achieves what the proposed bill seeks. The SHSAT provably does not discriminate against Black and Latino students. It provably does not discriminate against poor students. It may be unique among school districts in New York State or even all of US, but then, so is its accomplishment of producing 14 Nobel Prize science winners and multitudes of highly honored brilliant scientists. And, as a scholastic exam open to every student, it ensures that high-performing and talented students across all five boroughs have the opportunity to

compete for seats. What the proposed bill wants is what we already have, so why replace it? The proposed bill makes no sense.

Please kill this bill.

Sincerely,

<Your Name>
<Your Address>