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LDF Supports the New York City Council's Proposed Measures to Improve Specialized High School Diversity

This afternoon, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) Assistant Counsel [Liliana Zaragoza](#) will provide testimony at the New York City Council hearing on proposed measures to improve Specialized High School diversity. In her testimony, Liliana will highlight the urgency of addressing the stark racial disparities and racial isolation in New York City's most prestigious public schools.

In addition, Liliana will submit [written testimony](#) offering LDF's support for each of the proposed measures under consideration, including resolutions that would: create a Specialized High School task force focused on addressing racial and ethnic inequities; create working and advisory groups to expand reporting on demographic data; create a school diversity monitor within the Human Rights Commission to address the racial segregation that plagues public schools citywide; and call on the State Legislature to eliminate the single-test admissions process and instead implement a new system, which would admit to the Specialized High Schools the top five to seven percent of students in eighth grade from classes across New York City. LDF believes these measures represent promising first steps from the New York City Council in addressing the hyper-segregation of the Specialized High Schools.

"The current admissions policy, which has no educational justification, locks too many academically strong New York City students out of an important pipeline to opportunity," Liliana notes in her written testimony. "Not only is this unfair to individual students, it also tells a false story about the intelligence and promise of those Black, Latinx, and underrepresented Asian Pacific American students who have persevered and pursued excellence despite difficult circumstances in elementary and middle school. Indeed, the very students disadvantaged by the SHSAT are the same ones who face significant barriers to educational opportunity and would greatly benefit from a Specialized High School education."

LDF has long advocated for the need to address the lack of diversity at New York City's Specialized High Schools, and [first called for a change](#) in the State law that governs admissions in a 2012 federal civil rights complaint filed with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. That complaint – filed along with LatinoJustice and the Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College – alleges that, in addition to being bad education policy, the single-test admissions policy has an unlawful racially disparate impact.

More recently, LDF, along with LatinoJustice, the ACLU, and the New York Civil Liberties Union, [moved to intervene](#) on behalf of students, parents, and community organizations in a federal

lawsuit in order to defend a legal challenge to the recent expansion of the Discovery Program. The request asks the Court to allow these families and organizations to defend New York City's modest efforts to increase access to the Specialized High Schools for disadvantaged students, and redress the systemic racial exclusion caused by the deeply flawed, test-only admissions policy.

Read LDF's testimony [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation's first civil and human rights law organization and has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.

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