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Senator Jamaal T. Bailey and Senator Toby Ann Stavisky Announce Legislation to Increase Diversity in Specialized High Schools

(NEW YORK, NY) Senator Jamaal T. Bailey and Senator Toby Ann Stavisky announced a legislative package that is aimed towards increasing the diversity in specialized high schools across New York City. They were joined by Brooklyn Tech Alumni Foundation president, Larry Cary.

Last fall, 28,333 eighth graders sat for the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) to qualify for spots in Stuyvesant, Bronx Science, Brooklyn Tech and five smaller schools, representing an overall 2% increase from last year. The number of black and Latino students taking the test fell by 2%. The corresponding results: Just 10 black students were admitted to a Stuyvesant class of 902, down from 13 admitted last year. The

Latino results dipped from 28 students admitted to 27.

This is due to the fact that over the years the test has evolved to the point where many parents spend large sums of money on special tutoring classes and test prep for their children, thus creating a disadvantage for low-income students, predominantly black and Latino.

Currently, certain initiatives like the discovery program and the DREAM program exist in order to increase diversity. The discovery program allows low income students that fall under the passing score threshold of the exam, to attend a summer program that upon completion will give them a second chance at attending a specialized high school. The DREAM program is an after school or summer program that offers test prep for 6th and 7th graders, at 20 locations across the city.

"Attending Bronx Science opened many doors that led to my success. Income status and ethnic background should not be factors of whether a student has the opportunity to attend these schools. I am proud to introduce this legislative package along with my colleague in

government, Senator Stavisky, that would expand, analyze, and ensure an increase in diversity within these schools," said **Senator Jamaal T. Bailey**.

"The gifted and talented program provides an opportunity to identify students at an early age and tap into their potential for academic excellence. Senate Bill 7984 requires the State Education Commission to screen all students who are entering third grade for gifted and talented programs. Under this proposal, parents can opt out of the program," said **Senator Toby Stavisky (D-Flushing)**. "Hopefully, more children in under-served areas will be identified and given the opportunity for enriched, enhanced academic programs. Studies have shown that many students identified as gifted and talented will be minority children from economically disadvantaged communities. We have to expand our search to identify these children."

The legislation introduced by Senator Bailey and Senator Stavisky will:

Mandate the Discovery Program for all Specialized High Schools: This bill, S.7983, introduced by Senator Bailey, will ensure that all students entering high school have an opportunity to participate in the discovery program to gain access to specialized high schools in the city of New York.

Screen for Gifted and Talented Students: This bill, S.7984, introduced by Senator Stavisky, would mandate every school district to screen for gifted and talented students before entering the third grade. Parents will have the opportunity of opting their child out if they choose to.

Create a Pre-Specialized High School Admissions Test: This bill, S.8212, introduced by Senator Bailey, will implement a pre-specialized high school admissions test (pre-SHSAT) to be administered to students in the sixth grade in order to guide them as they prepare for the SHSAT given to eighth graders. In addition to administering the test, parents and students will also be given a gap analysis to help them determine areas in need of improvement and the opportunity to sign up for test prep programs in time. Additionally, Senator Bailey has introduced legislation that will:

Establish a Commission on Diversity: This bill, S.8004, introduced by Senator Bailey, will establish a "Commission on Diversity in Specialized Schools." The commission would be comprised of 18 members that will provide recommendations and measure the effectiveness of their admissions policies and programs.

"We applaud Senators Bailey and Stavisky for targeting bills that can give students from underrepresented communities a better shot at succeeding on the test and in the schools themselves. A pre-test that identifies areas to be strengthened, along with a redefined Discovery Program, can help ameliorate the unacceptable demographic profiles in the schools while retaining the test as a meritocratic measure for admission to the

schools," said **Larry Cary**.

Senator Bailey and Senator Stavisky are both graduates of Bronx High School of Science and Larry Cary is a graduate of Brooklyn Technical High School.