



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

Offered by Councilors Kim Janey and Andrea Campbell

ORDER FOR A HEARING ON ADMISSION TO BOSTON'S EXAM SCHOOLS

- WHEREAS:** Entrance into Boston's exam schools (Boston Latin School, Boston Latin Academy, and the John D. O'Bryant School of Mathematics and Science) is currently determined exclusively by performance on the Independent School Entrance Exam (ISEE) and by students' grades in 5th and 6th grades; and,
- WHEREAS:** Black and Hispanic students make up nearly 75% of students in Boston Public Schools, but account for only 40% of students at its exam schools, and only 20% of enrollment at the Boston Latin School; and,
- WHEREAS:** The ISEE includes material not covered by the BPS curriculum in 5th and 6th grades, including algebra, and such concepts are therefore only accessible to those students able to prepare for the exam outside of school; and,
- WHEREAS:** A recent report by the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government suggests that using MCAS scores for admission, rather than the ISEE, could increase the enrollment of Black and Hispanic students by up to 50%; and,
- WHEREAS:** The report found that Black and Hispanic students are less likely to take the ISEE than their White and Asian peers, and are less likely to be offered admission to an exam school; and,
- WHEREAS:** Students enrolled in Advanced Work Classes are more likely to enter the exam schools; and,
- WHEREAS:** The 2016 Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Policy, unanimously adopted by the Boston School Committee, calls for the revision of "admissions policies for Exam Schools to increase opportunities for admission by students of color;" and,
- WHEREAS:** The recent EY-Parthenon report, "Equity and Excellence for All: Unlocking opportunities for off-track youth in Boston Public Schools," showed that there are substantial inequities in Boston's high schools; and,
- WHEREAS:** According to "A Broken Mirror: Exam School Admissions Fail to Reflect Boston's Diversity" (May 2017), students from majority-white ZIP codes have an acceptance rate of over 50%, majority Black and Latino ZIP codes had acceptance rates below 50%; and,
- WHEREAS:** The grading system used by BPS elementary schools is different than the system used at most private schools, and may leave BPS elementary and middle school students at a disadvantage in getting into selective exam schools. **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**
- ORDERED:** That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council hold a hearing on the admissions policies of Boston's exam schools. Representatives from the City of Boston, Boston Public Schools, education advocates, parents, students, and other interested parties shall be invited to testify.