

Coalition Supporting Specialized High Schools
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PRESS RELEASE

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Majority of Asian American Students to be Affected by
SHSAT Diversity Initiative

John Liu's position for changing the admission policy to the specialized high schools is not just a position about testing, but is mostly a position that targets and harms Asian American interests at top schools.

According to researchers from the New School, 60% of Asian American students apply to the specialized high schools versus 41% of Whites, 24.6% of Blacks and 17.4% of Hispanics. This means that most Asian American students and families will be affected by how John Liu, if elected, will vote in January on the proposed bill to change the exam-only admission policy.

The origin of the proposal to do away with the exam-only policy was an NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) Legal Defense Fund's complaint to the US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights claiming the exam-only policy was biased against Black and Latinos. Rather than support better education in the lower grades, it proposed to get rid of the exam for entrance.

Queens as a whole sends 1,800 students a year to these schools. This is over 35% of all students admitted per year to the Specialized High Schools. Most of these students are Asian American. A change to include criteria such as school rank, interviews, essays, extracurricular activities, recommendations, race, ethnicity, family background, income, etc. will hurt many Asian American students.

Discrimination against Asians still exists in this country; there is increasing evidence that top colleges and medical schools have imposed quotas on Asian American student admissions. An exam-only policy is one of the few things that can guarantee that students will be admitted based on their hard work rather than based on the wishes of a government that wants to admit students by other criteria unrelated to performance.

In addition, while 60% of Asian American students apply to the specialized high schools, 95% of 8th graders in Charter Schools are Black and Latino. It appears that it is a matter of freedom of choice--students choose to focus their efforts on different schools.

Students and families of all colors and races have benefited from these specialized high schools and their unique rigor that results from the admission policy. For almost one hundred years or since inception of these schools, admissions has been solely by objective academic achievement tests. This is what produced fourteen Nobel Prize winners and generations of other contributors to society in fashion, law, and business. The tradition of admissions by examination for these schools has existed for generations here in NYC, and is very much American.

John Liu's family has benefited from these American institutions--these examinations and the education afforded by these Specialized High Schools. John Liu himself attended Bronx Science, his wife attended Brooklyn Tech, and now his son will attend Stuyvesant. Others, such as disadvantaged immigrants, will find it harder to travel this "Liu" path to success if the bill he supports passes.

As a Comptroller and mayoral candidate, his concern for the majority interests in the city is understandable as he is pandering for votes. However, as a candidate for the NY State Senate, aside from the basic issues of fairness and conscience, he should be aware that his district, of all districts in the state, sends the most students to the 3 largest specialized high schools.

John Liu needs to realize that he is not running for citywide office and to consider the needs of the local community he wants to represent. If he is not sensitive to the needs of

the Asian Americans in his local community, how can we rely on him to represent Asian Americans on wider issues? John Liu will vote to get rid of the SHSAT as sole admissions criterion. This is something for all Queens parents, students, and voters to consider this fall.

About the Coalition

The Coalition Supporting Specialized High Schools is made up of alumni, students, and parents who support the finest traditions of these schools and who support the present admission policy. We gathered over 6,000 signatures in a petition supporting our cause in under 2 weeks. There are over 75,000 families who are preparing their children to take the SHSAT in the next few years and 100,000 interested alumni from these schools. Keeping the SHSAT is an important issue for residents of New York City, and a particularly important issue for residents in Queens due to the high number of its students in the Specialized Schools and due to its high population of Asians.