



S.1111-A (Liu) / A.4407-A (Peoples-Stokes)

STAFF CONTACT : Amber Rangel Mooney | Director, Workforce Development | 518.694.4465

BILL S.1111-A (Liu) / A.4407-A (Peoples-Stokes)
SUBJECT Relates to Expanding Access to Advanced Courses to Improve Educational Equity
DATE March 11, 2022
SUPPORT

The Business Council of New York State, Inc. supports S.1111-A (Liu) / A.4407-A (Peoples-Stokes) which would create more awareness of advanced coursework in order to improve educational equity and career and college readiness. This legislation would require schools to notify parents of the opportunities available to their students through advanced coursework, courses that are aligned with career and college readiness, and the benefits of exposing students to challenging courses.

In 2018-19, New York's education system was, on average, approximately twice as likely to enroll White and non-low-income students in a diverse range of advanced classes in high school than their Black, Latinx, and low-income peers. These advanced classes include physics, calculus, Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses, computer science, advanced foreign languages, and music. This is because students who are low-income and students of color were less likely to attend schools where these courses were offered and even when they attended schools that had the classes, these student groups were less likely to be given access.¹

In fact, even when students who are low-income and students of color scored proficient on the state math assessment in grade 7, they were less likely than their non-low-income and White peers to be enrolled in an advanced math class in grade 9. Enrollment in advanced math was 22% higher for proficient students who are not low-income compared to students who are low-income, 16% higher for White students compared to their Black peers who were also proficient, and 20% higher for White students compared to their Latinx peers who were also proficient.²

The passage of this bill would begin to address these disparities by ensuring that school districts provide every family with clear and concise information, in multiple languages, beginning in the late elementary grades about the courses their child can take in middle and high school to prepare for college, careers,

and civic engagement - including the benefits of enrolling in advanced courses and the support available.

New York also has an opportunity to enable automatic enrollment in the next available advanced course for students who demonstrate readiness using one of multiple measures. Several states, including North Carolina, Washington, and Colorado have enacted their own automatic enrollment policies to improve equity in advanced course access. For example, when one school district in Washington adopted automatic enrollment before their new state law went into effect, “the number of students enrolled in advanced courses has increased by 70%, and for the first time the district’s ethnic diversity is reflected within these classes.”³

This legislation is an important first step to address some of the unnecessary and inequitable barriers that many school districts currently have in place, but automatic enrollment would further strengthen it. The New York Equity Coalition, of which The Business Council is a member, undertook a review of thousands of pages of documents detailing enrollment practices, support services, and methods of communicating with students and families in the 100 largest school districts in the state plus 10 rural high-need districts and found that:

- Only 12 school districts provided examples of positive messaging that encouraged all students to enroll in gatekeeper and advanced courses and signaled high expectations for all students;
- Only 33 school districts provided examples of multiple entry points to advanced coursework in at least one subject area at the high school level, and in some cases a student had to be deemed “accelerated” as early as middle school in order to be eligible for course opportunities later in their academic career;
- 68 school districts provided examples of heavy reliance on GPA requirements and teacher recommendations at the high school level, which can reflect implicit bias;
- 42 school districts provided examples of a large number of nonessential course prerequisites at the high school level; and
- Only four school districts provided examples of information made available to families in multiple languages about accelerated or advanced courses.⁴

The Business Council strongly supports policies that ensure equitable access to educational opportunities which ensure that New York has the qualified workforce necessary to further grow our economy. As such, the Business Council supports S.1111-A (Liu) / A.4407-A (Peoples-Stokes), which would

require schools to notify parents of the opportunities available to their students through advanced coursework, courses that are aligned with career and college readiness.

1. The New York Equity Coalition. See www.EquityInEdNY.org/PassedOver for additional details.
2. Ibid.
3. The Huffington Post, “Advanced Students In Federal Way, Wash. Automatically Enrolled In AP, IB And Cambridge Programs” (June 2, 2011; updated December 6, 2017). Available at: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/advanced-students-federal-way_n_869487.
4. The New York Equity Coalition, “The Gatekeepers” (New York, NY: November 2019). Available at: <https://equityinedny.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2019/11/Gatekeepers.pdf>. Based on documents requested in Summer 2018.