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A.514 (Peoples-Stokes)

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BILL A.514 (Peoples-Stokes)
SUBJECT Relates to Expanding Access to Advanced Courses to Improve Educational Equity
DATE February 27, 2023
SUPPORT

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The Business Council of New York State, Inc. strongly supports A.514 (Peoples-Stokes) which would expand access to advanced courses in order to improve educational equity in New York state. This legislation would enable more students of color, students who are low-income, and other historically underserved groups of students to enroll and succeed in advanced middle and high school courses that will prepare them for college, careers, and civic engagement.

In 2018 and 2019, New York’s education system was approximately twice as likely on average 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; 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 proficiently 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 address these disparities in two important ways. Firstly, it would ensure 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. This would include the benefits of enrolling in advanced courses and the support available.

Secondly, the bill would enable automatic enrollment in the next available advanced course for students who demonstrate readiness using one of multiple metrics. Families would always have the right to decline this automatic enrollment. 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 percent, and for the first time the district’s ethnic diversity is reflected within these classes.”³

This legislation is important because of the unnecessary and inequitable barriers which many school districts currently have in place. 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 New York's workforce has the qualifications necessary to further grow our economy. As such, the Business Council supports A.514(Peoples-Stokes), which would expand equitable access to advanced courses for all students, regardless of their race/ethnicity or socioeconomic status.

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.