

December 7, 2017



STATEMENT BY THE FAIR HOUSING JUSTICE CENTER (FHJC) TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S EDUCATION COMMITTEE AT THE OVERSIGHT HEARING ON "DIVERSITY IN NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS"

My name is Chanera Pierce and I am the Policy Coordinator for the Fair Housing Justice Center (FHJC). The FHJC, a regional civil rights organization based in New York City, works to eliminate housing discrimination and supports policies and programs that foster more open, accessible, and inclusive communities. I speak on behalf of the FHJC to support IntegrateNYC, NY Appleseed, and the Alliance for School Integration and Desegregation (ASID) by affirming policies that reduce school segregation as a means of creating more inclusive communities.

The FHJC applauds the "Five R" framework that the IntegrateNYC students employ to address discrimination and segregation within their schools and we would like to offer up a 6th R: Residential segregation.

Social science research tells us that where you live often dictates what opportunities and access to resources you will have, and it impacts the long-term trajectory of your life. Children who live in high-poverty, racially-isolated communities often face social and economic disadvantages that do not properly equip them to succeed in the classroom. Additionally, these very same students are often overrepresented in lower-performing, under-resourced schools, thus widening the achievement gap and limiting their future mobility. It is difficult to desegregate schools if we do not desegregate our communities as well.¹ Therefore, *education policy is housing policy* and it is critical that we address them together to create and sustain inclusive, high-performing schools in every neighborhood.

Despite the fact that the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (known as the Fair Housing Act) provided tools to eliminate housing discrimination and reduce residential segregation, both persist at alarming levels. Families of color still face significant barriers when attempting to move to areas of opportunities so that their children can attend high-performing schools. These discriminatory barriers not only sustain segregated schools, but they have given NYC the dubious distinction of being the 3rd most segregated city for African-Americans and the 2nd most segregated city for Asians and Latinos in the nation.² We need policies and programs that will expand housing opportunities, such as siting more affordable housing in predominately white, low-poverty neighborhoods; enacting a co-op disclosure law; creating a regional mobility assistance program that would enable families with rental subsidies to move to opportunity-rich areas, and, of course, vigorously enforcing fair housing laws to eliminate persistent and systemic housing discrimination.

¹ Rothstein, Richard. "The Racial Achievement Gap, Segregated Schools, and Segregated Neighborhoods – A Constitutional Insult". *Race and Social Problems* 6 (4), December 2014. Accessed Dec. 2017. <http://www.epi.org/publication/the-racial-achievement-gap-segregated-schools-and-segregated-neighborhoods-a-constitutional-insult/>

² The Persistence of Segregation in the Metropolis: New Findings from the 2010 Census, by John R. Logan (Brown University) and Brian Stutts (Florida State University), March 24, 2011.

We stand with our partners at NY Appleseed, IntegrateNYC, and ASID. Residential segregation is one cause of school segregation, but it is not the only cause. NYC's school choice system reinforces segregation in our public schools through its academic screening processes that allow white and affluent families to attend certain schools while relegating low-income families of color to others. When low-income students of color are limited to under-resourced, segregated elementary & middle schools, they cannot be expected to advance through the high-school screening process and gain access to high-performing high-schools. A discriminatory educational system harms students and segregated schools impede efforts to create more integrated residential living patterns throughout New York City.

Thank you very much.