

Exhibit 5

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

CHRISTA MCAULIFFE
INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL PTO, INC., et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

BILL DE BLASIO, in his official capacity
as mayor of New York, et al.,

Defendants,

and

TEENS TAKE CHARGE, et al.,

*Defendant-
Intervenors.*

Case No. 1:18-cv-11657

DECLARATION OF LAUREN R. MAHONEY

Lauren R. Mahoney, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, declares the following:

1. My name is Lauren Rebekah Mahoney, I am over 18 years of age, and I am fully competent to make this declaration.
2. I was born on Long Island, New York, and now live in the Bronx, New York. I have lived in the Bronx for 10 years.
3. My son and daughter, N.E.F. and N.D.F. respectively, are eighth-grade students at St. HOPE Academy (St. HOPE). They both recently took the SHSAT. N.E.F. and N.D.F. are both eligible for free lunch at St. HOPE.
4. While at St. HOPE, N.D.F. has maintained a grade point average 3.0. or higher. She currently has a 4 in Math, which is the highest possible mark for a course.

5. N.E.F. has also been academically successful at St. HOPE and enjoys Math and U.S. History.
6. N.E.F. is extremely athletic – he is on St. HOPE’s football team, takes afterschool fencing lessons with one of his teachers, and plays basketball recreationally.
7. N.D.F. is artistically inclined and enjoys drawing as well as dancing; she is hoping to one day become a choreographer. N.D.F. is also plays on the girls’ basketball team.
8. N.E.F. and N.D.F. are both involved in the Green Team at St. Hope, a school program that teaches students about waste reduction, recycling, and composting.
9. I have known about New York’s Specialized High Schools and the SHSAT for quite some time – specifically, since I took the test myself. I was reintroduced to the Specialized High Schools and the SHSAT when teachers invited my children to join an afterschool SHSAT preparatory program (the “prep program”).
10. In preparation for the SHSAT exam, N.E.F. and N.D.F. enrolled in the prep program in the seventh grade and remained in the program up until the date of the October 2018 SHSAT exam. While school for most students ended at 4 PM each day, the prep program ended at 5 PM; thus, in addition to extra homework, prep program students such as N.E.F. and N.D.F. attended school for an additional hour each day. N.E.F. and N.D.F. were willing to take the

two-hour course and forgo an elective course, because they wanted to get into good schools receive a stellar education.

11. N.E.F. thought that the SHSAT exam was extremely challenging. He had a fever the day of the test but still took the exam – he was determined to get into a Specialized High School. He felt that the testing environment was much different than his classroom setting, where he knew all of the students. He was unable to answer a few of the questions towards the end of the exam because he ran out of time. N.E.F. felt that the questions were more difficult than those reviewed in the prep program. Also, N.E.F. believed that if he had been better prepared, his score would have been much higher – because he would have been able to develop better skills for resolving questions and would have been able to work on timing.
12. Similarly, N.D.F. felt that the SHSAT was harder and longer than the state Regents tests, and that the prep program offered at St. HOPE provided preparation, but that the preparation was not extensive and did not make her feel prepared for the SHSAT.
13. Students should not be better prepared than others to take the SHSAT just because they have access to more intensive test prep services or exposure to more of the material tested on the exam than many students, including my children, do not have. The Discovery Program gives opportunities to students like mine who have not had the same educational opportunities that some other applicants may have had.

14. I believe that N.E.F. and N.D.F. would get a better education at a Specialized High School than they would at another high school. I want them to get the benefits of the high level of education that Specialized High Schools provide.
15. N.E.F. and N.D.F.'s older sister participated in Prep for Prep, a leadership program that prepares students for independent schools, and then attended an independent school. I was able to see the benefits of this program.
16. N.E.F. and N.D.F. would like to attend Specialized High Schools because they believe that the schools are exceptional, and they want a great education. They both feel that the Specialized High Schools push students to do more, and they both do well in challenging environments. They also hope to attend Specialized High Schools because they want to take advantage of the extracurricular activities.
17. N.E.F. and N.D.F. also would like to attend Specialized High Schools because they would like to learn from students who come from different backgrounds.
18. N.E.F. and N.D.F. have also stated that the Discovery Program is a wonderful program, because it could allow them the opportunity to receive a high-quality education, which would help them get further in life. They would both like to attend college and believe that attending a Specialized High School would prepare them for college.
19. N.E.F. and N.D.F. received their SHSAT scores on March 18, 2019 and found out that they did not score high enough to be admitted to any of the Specialized High Schools through the test alone. This is not reflective of how smart they

- are. The Discovery Program is now their only chance of being admitted to one of the Specialized High Schools for the 2019-2020 school year.
20. While I am pleased that N.E.F. and N.D.F. were assigned to Belmont Preparatory High School in the Bronx, I still hope that they can attend one of the Specialized High Schools through the Discovery Program. I want the best education for them.
21. The expansion of the Discovery Program is a good thing which will provide more opportunity for disadvantaged students. It would be upsetting if expansion was taken away, because the Specialized High Schools are not reflective of the New York City public school student population. Specialized High Schools are public and should be more diverse like the New York City public school system as a whole.
22. I am concerned that the Specialized High Schools are not currently diverse enough. If N.E.F. or N.D.F. are admitted through the Discovery Program, I would not want them to be one of very few Black or Latino students in the school because I do not want them to feel that they are less than anyone else. My older daughter was one of eight students of color at her independent high school. This isolating environment was demeaning for her. She was picked on a few times because of the texture of her hair. The students also tried to convince her that she was less than because she was “not among the richest 1% in America.” I am concerned that if N.E.F. or N.D.F. attend a Specialized High School, they might be faced with a similarly isolating environment.

23. N.E.F. and N.D.F. feel that they would be appreciative if the Specialized High Schools were to become more diverse. They believe that it would be good to have more Black and Latino kids in attendance because the school atmosphere would be more balanced. Recently, N.E.F. told me that he would like it if there were more Black students in the Specialized High Schools, because he would be able to relate to them about his heritage and connect with them about issues that Black students encounter in predominately white spaces.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed this 28 of March, 2019

By: Lauren R Mahoney
Lauren R. Mahoney