



NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

Contact:

Hillary Wasserman 212 784 5726
hwasserman@groupgordon.com

Fair Play Lobby Day Brings New York City Public School Students to City Hall to Demand Equity in Access to Sports Teams

After participating in legislative advocacy workshops, and before using their new skills to meet with members of City Council, students will gather on the steps of City Hall to demand an end to racially discriminatory sports team allocations by the Public School Athletic League.

New York, NY – December 11 – Impatient with slow progress to counter racial discrimination by the Department of Education, Black and Latino High School students from across New York City will be spending the day at City Hall, lobbying members of City Council to support Intro 242-A, a bill that would require transparency in how the Public School Athletic League allocates sports teams and resources.

The Fair Play Lobby Day will kick off with a rally on the steps of City Hall at 9:30 a.m.

For years, advocates have been questioning how the Public School Athletic League (PSAL) makes its decisions to grant teams citywide, alleging that the PSAL's policies have resulted in an inequitable system to the detriment of Black and Latino students. Many of PSAL's policies, procedures, resource-allocation and decision-making has not been publicly available, raising questions.

Intro 242-A, introduced by Council Member Antonio Reynoso, would require this information to be made public, and shed further light on the inequality in access to sports amongst public high school students. A hearing on the bill took place before the Education Committee on December 3.

Councilmember Reynoso said: "Currently, Black and Brown public school students are being deprived of equal access to sports teams and resources. This inequity stems from systemic flaws and inconsistencies in the Department of Education (DOE)'s process for granting and funding sports teams. These disparities deny students of color the opportunity to access the transformative power of sports and run counter to New York City's goal of becoming the 'Fairer Big City in America'. My bill, Intro 242, would require the DOE to provide a report on how they fund school athletics. This will allow for greater transparency regarding how schools are currently being funded and will enable us to hold the DOE accountable in providing all NYC students with equal access to sports."

Advocates contend that the average Black or Latino high school student has access to approximately 10 fewer teams than the average student of other races. This inequity has spurred students, parents, teachers and advocates to form the Fair Play coalition to demand the system be reformed to provide equal access to all students, irrespective of race, geographic location, size of school, age of school, or language ability.

NYLPI attorney and Fair Play member Melissa Iachan said: “This past fall, students from all over the city attended workshops to learn how to advocate for policies they care about, and it’s inspiring to see them take to City Hall today, learning how to raise their voices for justice—and asking for changes that will directly impact their lives and the lives of their peers.”

Civil rights advocacy group New York Lawyers for the Public Interest filed a class action lawsuit in June, representing student-led organization IntegrateNYC and Black and Latino students denied equal access to New York City public high school sports. The suit charges that the Department of Education (DOE) and PSAL have engaged in racial discrimination by denying Black and Latino students equal opportunity to play high school sports.

Thousands of Black and Latino New York City public high school students attend schools that offer no team sports whatsoever, and Black and Latino students are twice as likely as students of other races to attend schools without sports teams.

Intro 242-A would require the Department to post required information on their website, including data with respect to funding for coaches, referees, athletic directors, equipment, uniforms, and transportation. The bill would also require reporting on student demographic information, athletic team requests, and athletic facilities used for after school athletics.

David Garcia-Rosen, educator and founder of Let ‘Em Play, said: “The power of sports to transform the academic and behavioral outcomes for our students is too great for us to let one more day pass without bold steps being taken to fix the failed systems and leadership at the PSAL. Intro 242 A will bring us one step closer to every student in New York City having equitable access to the Public Schools Athletic League.”

Amanda Daniella Garcia, Co-Leader of Organizing for Equity New York (OFENY), said: “Change occurs when people with a common interest come together and work towards a goal. Right now, it is pivotal that we come together as fellow New Yorkers and demand equity for our students, especially when it comes to having sports readily and abundantly available at each of their schools. Engaging in sport is more than a physical activity. Sports allows us to provide a holistic approach, where communities are built and support systems are found. Providing this access to ALL students will directly impact suspension rates and keep our kids in school!”

Julisa Perez, Executive College Director IntegrateNYC, said: “IntegrateNYC is proud to support this day of youth led action. Having resource equity through New York City’s public schools is essential to giving all students an equal opportunity in having a wholistic education. We are thrilled for youth to be at the center of this movement and to have a voice in what will impact them the most.”

“Among the many disparities that exist in our public schools, access to sports is often and unfortunately overlooked,” said Council Member Brad Lander. “The importance of access to sports for kids cannot be

overstated. Sports help promote the health and wellbeing of students, both physically and emotionally, and they can open the door to increased college opportunities. I'm proud of all the students here today to talk to their councilmembers about the glaring lack of equity in school sports, and I'm proud to stand with them in support of Intro 242, of which I am a cosponsor. Thanks to Council Member Reynoso, the New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, and the Fair Play Coalition for their leadership on this issue."

"Team sports is a great way for students to grow and learn lessons they will carry throughout their life. Unfortunately, not all public school students are currently given this opportunity. This is wrong and we must act to make sure that all students are afforded the same athletic opportunities no matter where they live or what the economic status of their neighborhood is," said Council Member Justin Brannan.

"As a former student athlete, I understand how athletic competition builds character, promotes team work and offers chances at academic scholarships and other opportunities for students. For a majority of our Black and Latino children attending public schools, the opportunities are limited because racially discriminatory sports team allocations by the PSAL is a real issue. We must fight inequitable sports funding, which restricts our students of color in public schools who are aspiring to great heights in sportsmanship. By doing so, all our children benefit," said Council Member Andy King, Chair of the Committee on Juvenile Justice.

"Having access to school sports allows our youth the opportunity to get more exercise, spend their free time productively and build critical social skills," said Council Member Donovan Richards. "Inequitable access limits these opportunities for too many young Black and Latino students across New York City. The DOE and PSAL must come together to ensure every student has access to the same sporting programs no matter where they go to school. I'd like to thank these young advocates who are speaking up and organizing around an issue that will change the lives of tens of thousands of students around the City."

"As a former educator, I've seen firsthand how school athletic programs benefit students' physical and mental wellbeing, provide students with valuable life skills, and help open doors toward the pursuit of postsecondary studies. No student in our city's school system should be denied access to these programs and the positive impact they can have on the life of a child or young adult. I'm proud to join Council Member Reynoso, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, and The Fair Play Coalition in welcoming civically-engaged students to City Hall who are ready to stand up and speak out about inequities in our schools," said Council Member Mark Treyger, Chair of the Committee on Education.

[ENDS]

Notes to editors

The bill is here: <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3331913&GUID=D2AF695B-8FE1-42B2-9A7C-3BC69861A301&Options=&Search=>

About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) — Nylpi.org

Founded 40 years ago by leaders of the bar, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest pursues equality and justice for New Yorkers. NYLPI works towards a New York where all people can thrive in their

communities, with quality healthcare and housing, safe jobs, good schools, and healthy neighborhoods. In our vision, all New Yorkers live with dignity and independence, with the access and resources they need to succeed. NYLPI's community-driven approach powers its commitments to civil rights and to health, disability, immigrant, and environmental justice. NYLPI seeks lasting change through litigation, community organizing, policy advocacy, pro bono service, and education.

About the Fair Play Coalition

The Fair Play Coalition stands together for all high school students in New York City public schools to have equitable access the PSAL, and to all athletic fields and courts controlled by the DOE— regardless of the size of the school, the borough in which the school is located, or the demographics of the school. Fair Play embraces all forms of advocacy — including legislative advocacy and lobbying, public education efforts, media and press strategies, organizing through actions, and potential legal recourse — to achieve its goals, which will require demonstrable systemic change within the DOE and PSAL. For more see <https://www.fairplayforall.com>

###