



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew Gounardes

## Sen. Gounardes Joins Students to Call for an End to Legacy Admissions at New York Colleges

ANDREW GOUNARDES May 21, 2024

| ISSUE: **HIGHER EDUCATION, RACIAL JUSTICE**



*The Fair College Admissions Act would ban unfair, exclusionary legacy admissions practices at all public and private New York colleges.*

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*Watch the video [here](#).*

*View photos [here](#).*

**Albany, NY** - New York State Senator Andrew Gounardes joined over 70 student organizers with the New York Civil Liberties Union's Teen Activist Project at the New York State Capitol yesterday to call for an end to unfair, exclusionary legacy admissions preferences at New York colleges.

Over 40% of all four-year institutions of higher education in New York State provide a legacy preference. The admissions rate at elite US colleges is 37% for legacy students, compared to about 10% for non-legacy students, according to recent data. Nearly a quarter of New York residents are immigrants; legacy preference shuts the door on these applicants and other first-generation college students.

The Fair College Admissions Act (*S.4170A-Gounardes/A.1423A-Walker*) would prohibit legacy preferences in all public and private New York colleges. Schools that continue to use this exclusionary practice would be penalized 10% of their tuition revenue, which would be used to bolster the state's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) for low-income students.

Other states have taken similar action to ban legacy admissions preferences in recent years, including Colorado, Virginia and Maryland, and more than 100 colleges have voluntarily done the same.

“For years and years—decades—colleges have given the family members of alumni an advantage, a leg up, the inside track, when they apply for admissions,” **State Senator Andrew Gounardes** said at the rally. “These legacy admissions favor wealthy, predominately-white families, leading to what we like to call ‘affirmative action for the privileged.’ New York must take bold action to dismantle the systems that perpetuate inequality and racial injustice and bar marginalized students from accessing opportunity.”

“Why should the accomplishments of our parents dictate our access to higher education?” asked **Ishana (Hana) Ira, a NYCLU student ambassador**, at the rally. “Why should the legacy of our family matter for our own potential? As a first-generation student, I faced firsthand the barriers erected by legacy admissions. My parents, immigrants who sacrificed everything for a better future, did not have the privilege of attending prestigious universities, yet their sacrifices should not take away from my ability to follow my aspirations in the same manner as my classmates.”

“A prospective applicant whose father went to Yale is no more worthy than a student whose parents did not attend university,” said **Cassandra Levinson, another NYCLU student ambassador**, at the event. “If both students have the same grades, the legacy student's GPA is not sparklier or more impressive. And yet legacy admissions treat it like it is.”

The rally was organized as part of NYCLU's Teen Activist Project Youth Lobby Day. The student speakers in the video are Ishana (Hana) Ira, Cassandra Levinson and Jayden Kong.

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Do you support this bill?