BRONX BORN SCIENTIST AND EDUCATOR OPPOSE MAYOR DEBLASIO’S SCHOOL REOPENING PLAN NOT BENEFICIAL TO PARENTS OR STUDENTS PARTICULARLY WITH THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

New York, New York – Physicist Stephon Alexander, executive director of The Harlem Gallery of Science and City College of New York Professor Stan Altman oppose Mayor Bill de Blasio’s plan to reopen schools, saying the plan will place serious hardships on working parents, particularly those from low-income communities of color.

De BLASIO’S plan calls for a partial reopening, with classroom attendance limited to one to three days a week in an effort to curb the coronavirus outbreak. Alexander and Altman argue that reopening the NYC economy without a science-based plan fully reopening schools is problematic.

“It creates a situation where parents must choose between working and caring for their child,” said Alexander, who grew up in the Bronx and whose parents worked multiple jobs so he could become a successful scientist.

“Unless supervised activities are provided, kids are more likely to end up in the streets.”

Altman, who heads the Harlem-based Science Arts Engagement New York, says to develop a workable plan all stakeholders need to be part of the process including teachers, parents, bus drivers, custodial staff and community based organizations, CBOs.

“The Department of Education needs to exactly identify which students can be educated remotely in terms of broadband access, equipment and the ability to work independently,” said Altman, who adds that students who are learning English as a second language and pupils with special needs are more likely to suffer from remote learning.

Millions of students in the city already face barriers to their education because of the lack of access to the Internet and tablets/computers.
Alexander and Altman are advocates for engaging all stakeholders in the planning process to reopen NYC schools.

“Anything less than a well-thought our plan is a prescription for sentencing our public-school children to a second-class education,” said Alexander.

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The Harlem Gallery of Science conceived by Science and Arts Engagement New York, Inc, a not for profit organization, working in collaboration with The City College of New York to serve as a vehicle to engage underrepresented youth in pursuing higher education and career pathways in the arts, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

Stephon Alexander is a professor of physics at Brown University, executive director of Harlem Gallery of Science and president of The National Society of Black Physicists.