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## TJAAG ENDORSES THE FCPS MERIT LOTTERY SYSTEM FOR TJHSST

**The Thomas Jefferson Alumni Action Group (TJAAG) proudly supports** Fairfax County Public Schools and their proposed merit lottery for Thomas Jefferson High School for Science & Technology (TJHSST) admissions. The plan allows the school to welcome previously untapped talent in Northern Virginia, considerably increasing the representation of Black, Latinx, and economically disadvantaged students, and distributing STEM opportunities throughout the region.

Makya Little, President of TJAAG said, “This change is long overdue. The underrepresented are not underqualified, they don’t apply to TJ because they don’t feel welcome. Establishing a merit lottery levels the playing field in a way that creates a healthier culture and a stronger sense of belonging.”

Decades of previous reform efforts have failed to fix the lack of representative diversity in the Jefferson student population, as the FCPS board’s own data showed. It is time for more comprehensive reform. TJAAG believes that instituting a merit lottery is the bold move needed to fix a chronic problem.

TJAAG Vice President and Sully District resident Andrew Hayes, PhD says, “This new process will raise TJHSST’s standards. A merit lottery will bring in talent that will thrive at Jefferson but can’t afford years of test prep.”

Says Jorge Torrico, a leader within TJAAG who is also a Burke resident and father of three FCPS students, “There has never been a better chance to remedy the diversity issues at TJHSST. This is the moment - this is the time. Let’s move our community forward, no longer fighting in a competition for resources, but hand in hand in cooperation.”

Malaika Addae, TJAAG leader and 2007 alumna, added, “In top academic institutions and leading tech companies, representation matters. The proposed admissions process can create access to life-changing opportunities for underrepresented groups who have traditionally been excluded from TJ’s amazing educational offerings.”

*The Thomas Jefferson Alumni Action Group is a group of more than 1,000 TJ alumni advocating for an admissions policy at TJHSST that promotes student representation, reflects its draw districts, and creates an improved anti-racist student culture that provides the quality educational experience needed to grow future STEM leaders.*

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