



## Community Board 12 - Manhattan Washington Heights & Inwood

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Richard Lewis, Chairperson  
Ebenezer Smith, District Manager

December 31, 2018

Hon. Polly Trottenberg  
Commissioner  
Department of Transportation  
55 Water Street, 9th Floor  
New York, NY 10041

**Re: Resolution regarding Traffic & Safety Conditions Associated with Student Drop-Off & Pick-Up  
Procedures at the Washington Heights Success Academy**

Dear Commissioner Trottenberg:

At the General Meeting, Tuesday, December 18, 2018 Community Board 12 Manhattan, passed the following resolution with a vote of 42 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstention, demanding that Success Academy pay for the incremental cost of public safety services required to mitigate a situation it has created and urging the Success Academy to alter its AM/PM drop-off/pick-up and student arrival/discharge procedures.

Whereas: The Success Academy of Washington Heights (SA/WH), a K-4 elementary school is located in the former premises of the Mother Cabrini High School with a main entrance/exit at 701 Fort Washington Avenue between W. 190<sup>th</sup> Street and Margaret Corbin Circle, and another on Cabrini Boulevard; and

Whereas: The MCHS student body consisted of teens most of whom came to school unaccompanied, by public transit; and

Whereas: SA/WH opened with 100 students in 2014 – subsequent to lobbying New York State to pass legislation that would require the NYC Department of Education to provide space at no cost to SA – with no input or feedback from the community, local elected officials, or the District 6 Community Education Council despite repeated requests, and has since grown to 500 students, with plans to grow still 100 more, to 600 students; and

Whereas: Enrollment at SA/WH is primarily from families beyond walking distance of the school, and as an elementary school serving children age 4-10 years, students cannot travel independently to and from school; and

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Whereas: SA/WH has a strict lateness policy for morning arrival, and admits students beginning at 7:20AM (until 7:30AM) at which time they are admitted into the building, one by one, with a handshake from receiving school personnel. Consequently, cars begin to arrive well before 7AM, with the majority arriving between 7:10-7:15AM, and wait for 7:20AM when doors open, then wait for their child to be admitted; and

Whereas: Numerous passenger vehicles line up each weekday to drop off and pick up children, double-parking both sides of Fort Washington Ave. & Cabrini Blvd., stopping in crosswalks and traffic lanes, blocking hydrants and No Standing Zones, ignoring Stop signs, and honking loudly, resulting in backups and blocked traffic in both directions on Fort Washington Ave. from W. 190<sup>th</sup> Street to Margaret Corbin Circle, on Cabrini Blvd. north of W. 190<sup>th</sup> Street, and on Overlook Terrace from W. 190<sup>th</sup> St. past the Fort Tryon Nursing Home to W. 187<sup>th</sup> St.; and

Whereas: These traffic conditions have created the potential for a perilous environment for pedestrians and vehicles alike. Numerous residents of nearby buildings have observed countless near-misses or have almost been run over themselves. Emergency vehicles, city buses, sanitation trucks, delivery trucks, ambulances, for-hire vehicles, and cars cannot negotiate the street without going into the opposite lane's oncoming traffic, if they can move at all, and the erratic behavior of frustrated drivers is a danger to pedestrians and other vehicles (see attached); and

Whereas: Residents, whether travelling in their own cars or for-hire vehicles or the M4 or M98 bus lines, must adjust their travel times by as much as 30 minutes, to allow time to get through the backups; and

Whereas: These conditions were predicted by residents, elected officials, and representatives of the D6CEC in the spring of 2014 prior to the opening of SA/WH, and both SA & SA/WH ignored these concerns; and

Whereas: Residents have contacted the school, called 311 & 911, attended 34<sup>th</sup> Precinct Community Council meetings (most recently on 11/28/18), contacted CB12M Board members and attended CB12M committee meetings, (most recently on 11/5 & 12/5/18) to express anger and frustration and their wish to have these issues addressed; and

Whereas: SA/WH has refused to take advantage of many opportunities to attend meetings with the community, the Community Board, and elected officials, and has been generally unresponsive except for a single meeting on 11/30/18 between the SA/WH Principal and representatives of an adjacent residential building, a meeting that had been requested in writing and by phone for

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months. Ultimately a representative posed as a school parent in order even to get through on the phone; and

Whereas: SA/WH has referred community complaints to their Corporate Legal Department, and has said that SA will not change or stagger its arrival schedule or further stagger its dismissal schedule, nor has it engaged in any mitigation other than to advise its parents to not double-park outside of the school, which endeavor repeatedly has proven to be utterly ineffective; and

Whereas: Representatives of the 34<sup>th</sup> Precinct have met repeatedly with the school, and recently the Precinct assigned a Traffic Enforcement Agent to the location (in addition to the crossing guard located at W. 190/FWA). The 34<sup>th</sup> Precinct recognizes the situation outside of SA/WH to be a cause of concern, and has allocated resources away from other priorities and to this location to the risk of area residents, and at taxpayers' expense; and

Whereas: Residents have circulated a petition calling on SA/WH to modify its arrival & dismissal procedures to mitigate traffic impacts and to assume financial responsibility for the Maintenance & Protection of Traffic created by these procedures, which petition garnered hundreds of signatures (and counting) in four days; and

Whereas: While SA schools are technically considered public schools inasmuch as they are chartered by the State of New York and receive public funds, SA operates largely as a private entity, and unlike NYC Department of Education schools includes substantial annual line items for CEO salary (\$782k), executive compensation (more than a dozen receiving \$200-300k+), and lobbying (close to \$500k); and

Whereas: It there is ample precedent to charge a private corporation or a non-profit organization to pay for the costs of maintenance & protection of traffic for traffic conditions created by its presence and/or operation; and

Whereas: SA/WH refuses to modify its arrival and dismissal procedures, leaving dedicated NYPD resources as the only way to reduce the physical risk to area residents and visitors; and

Whereas: Such an expenditure of public resources is required only due to SA/WH's presence and SA's procedures, and such cost should not be borne by NYC taxpayers; and

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Whereas: Each year charter schools submit an Application for Charter Renewal which is reviewed by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Charter School Office (CSO), which arranges for evaluators to conduct a Charter Renewal Site Visit which may include evaluation of the school’s operations in additional to the academic program; now, therefore, be it

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan demands that Success Academy pay for the incremental cost of public safety services required to mitigate a situation it has created by opening an elementary school serving an out-of-area student body at a location that cannot handle the high level of traffic volume; and be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan urges the Success Academy to alter its AM/PM drop-off/pick-up and student arrival/discharge procedures, including, but not limited to opening the school well prior to 7:30AM to allow for staggered drop-off times, and dispatching SA/WH staff for batched, curbside “kiss-and-go” drop-off/pick-up, so as to reduce the clustering of waiting cars on the surrounding streets; and be it further

Be it further

Resolved: Community Board 12, Manhattan requests that NYSED Charter School Office conduct an evaluation visit to SA/WH, including a review of the school’s arrival and dismissal procedures.

Sincerely,  
  
Richard Lewis  
Chairperson

- cc: Edward Pincar, DOT Manhattan Borough Commissioner
- Hon. Bill de Blasio, Mayor
- Hon. Public Advocate
- Hon. Scott M. Stringer, Comptroller
- Hon. Adriano Espaillat, Congressman
- Hon. Brian Benjamin, State Senator

- Hon. Robert Jackson, State Senator
- Hon. Al Taylor, Assembly Member
- Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, Assembly Member
- Hon. Ydanis Rodriguez, Council Member
- Hon. Mark Levine, Council Member