

February 13, 2018

**STATEMENT OF THE NEW YORK LANDMARKS CONSERVANCY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGARDING THE PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN HIGH SCHOOL (NOW THE MANHATTAN SCHOOL FOR SCIENCE AND MATH), 500-528 EAST 116<sup>TH</sup> STREET, MANHATTAN AS AN INDIVIDUAL LANDMARK**

Good day, Chair Srinivasan and Commissioners. I am Andrea Goldwyn speaking on behalf of the New York Landmarks Conservancy. The Conservancy is pleased to support designation of the Benjamin Franklin High School as an individual landmark for both its architecture and associations with New York history.

This school is a contributing building to the East Harlem Historic District eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places. A 2011 Columbia Graduate School study of East Harlem called for its designation as an individual landmark.

The school building features many typical qualities of Georgian Revival architecture, which was often used in civic buildings in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The sprawling brick and limestone structure has a pronounced symmetry, temple fronts on the east and west facades, a central portico with monumental Corinthian columns and pilasters and a towering cupola. This majestic building and its grand classical architecture symbolized a commitment to this community. There have been some minor alterations, but the building maintains its powerful massing, with much intact historic fabric.

The school also played a critical role in East Harlem's mid-century history. It represents the era of the "Community School" movement, which focused on social change and community-based solutions to neighborhood challenges. The educators and politicians who planned the school intended it to be a beacon of learning and community engagement. As neighborhood demographics changed, it fulfilled those goals as a center for the Puerto Rican community which settled there. The progressive experiment did not last, but the building which houses several active schools, is both a focus of the neighborhood now and a connection to its history.

Thank you for the opportunity to express the Conservancy's views.