

1 BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE  
2 STANDING COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
-----

3 PUBLIC HEARING:

4 EXAMINATION OF THE COST OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION  
5 AND ITS EFFECT ON STUDENT FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS,  
6 STATE SUPPORT, TAP/GAP, STUDENT BORROWING, AND OTHER  
7 CHALLENGES TO AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY  
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8 Brooklyn College  
9 2705 Campus Road  
10 Brooklyn, New York

11 Date: October 24, 2019  
12 Time: 11:35 a.m.

13 PRESIDING:

14 Senator Toby Ann Stavisky  
15 Chair

16 PRESENT:

17 Senator Simcha Felder  
18 Senator Andrew Gounardes (Co-Sponsor and Co-Host)  
19 Senator Robert Jackson  
20 Senator Zellnor Myrie  
21 Senator Roxanne J. Persaud  
22 Senator Julia Salazar (Co-Sponsor)  
23 Assemblymember Harvey Epstein

24 ALSO PRESENT:

25 Una Clarke  
CUNY Trustee (Brooklyn)

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1           SENATOR STAVISKY: All right, we're going to  
2 start in just a moment.

3           So if people can take their seats, it would  
4 be appreciated.

5           Okay, wow.

6           You expect that in the library, but...

7           Good morning, and I'd like to thank everybody  
8 for coming to this hearing of the Senate Higher  
9 Education Committee being held at Brooklyn -- at  
10 Brooklyn College.

11           Today is October 24, 2019, and the time is  
12 11:35.

13           Joining me today are two new members of the  
14 state Senate, Senators Andrew Gounardes and  
15 Julia Salazar.

16           And I would like to welcome  
17 Assemblymember Harvey Epstein as well.

18           Would you like to say -- Andrew.

19           SENATOR GOUNARDES: Sure.

20           Thank you, Senator Stavisky.

21           Good morning, everyone.

22           It's great to be here to talk about a very,  
23 very important topic, you know, the future of higher  
24 education -- public higher education here in  
25 New York City and New York State.

1           And I say that as someone whose parents met  
2           at the Greek Club in Brooklyn College, not so long  
3           ago, and, as a graduate of CUNY myself. I'm a  
4           graduate of Hunter College.

5           [Applause.]

6           SENATOR GOUNARDES: That's right.

7           My brother is a graduate of Brooklyn College.

8           And I am currently teaching at Hunter College  
9           as well.

10          So CUNY means so much to me, more than just,  
11          you know, today's hearing.

12          So I'm very excited to be here and to talk  
13          about this topic, and to do everything we can to  
14          make sure that CUNY and SUNY students, you know, our  
15          public higher-education students, get the  
16          world-class education that they rightfully deserve.

17          So, thank you.

18          SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Salazar.

19          SENATOR SALAZAR: Thank you.

20          Good morning, or -- or nearly afternoon,  
21          everyone.

22          I'm really thrilled to be here today to talk  
23          about the critical issue of higher education, and  
24          especially making higher education more accessible  
25          and affordable in New York State.

1           The underfunding of our public higher  
2           education in our SUNY and CUNY system has led to a  
3           system that isn't working for most New Yorkers, and  
4           especially for working New Yorkers and -- and  
5           students with families.

6           We need to make the needs of students and  
7           faculty members the top priority in the decisions  
8           that we make in the upcoming session.

9           And I'm looking forward to working to fully  
10          invest in our public university system, and to  
11          hearing testimony from students and faculty and  
12          stakeholders today.

13          SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

14          And we've been joined by  
15          Senator Simcha Felder.

16          Would you like to say a few words?

17          SENATOR FELDER: Well, I came late, I'm  
18          punished.

19          [Laughter.]

20          SENATOR STAVISKY: We do not have detention  
21          anymore.

22          [Laughter.]

23          SENATOR STAVISKY: Assemblymember Epstein.

24          ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Just quickly, so I'm  
25          a CUNY alum too, like Senator Gounardes.

1           My dad went to Brooklyn College. He did not  
2 meet my mother here, but he did go to  
3 Brooklyn College.

4           So what we need to do this year around CUNYs  
5 and SUNYs, and, you know, advancing public  
6 education, is a critical thing to us here.

7           And we need to hear from you all, figure out  
8 what we can do together.

9           So, thank you.

10          SENATOR STAVISKY: As long as we're giving  
11 our -- our pedigree, I have graduate -- 15 graduate  
12 credits from Hunter, and 15 from Queens College.

13          However, I too have a family history.

14          My husband was a very proud graduate of  
15 City College. And he always said that, without  
16 City College, he could never have gone on to get a  
17 master's and Ph.D. in history from Columbia.

18          And, in fact, he taught at Brooklyn College  
19 and at Kingsborough.

20          And my son is a Queens College grad as well.

21          Let me just add one other aspect, and that  
22 is, I truly want to thank Brooklyn College for their  
23 hospitality in hosting us.

24          And I want to thank Senator Gounardes for  
25 being the co-host for this hearing, and his staff

1 for helping with the arrangements.

2 And my staff is here too.

3 In no order, we have:

4 Sabiel Chapnick, who is my -- the legislative  
5 person in Albany. But, Sabiel just passed the bar.

6 [Applause.]

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: And outside we have  
8 Marilyn Dyer, who has been with the Senate since  
9 1984.

10 And my chief of staff, Mike Favilla, who  
11 knows this area very well.

12 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: We love you, Mike.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: "We love you, Mike."

14 That sounded like Charmaine.

15 I also want to thank the Senate media  
16 services. We have Pete and Brian here.

17 And we have Tidy [ph.] from the Senate  
18 Finance Committee.

19 So we thank you all for coming down from  
20 Albany.

21 The purpose of the hearing today, very  
22 briefly, is to examine the cost of public higher  
23 education and its effect on student financial-aid  
24 programs; as well as State support, TAP gap, student  
25 borrowing, and other challenges that students face



1 to providing an affordable and accessible and  
2 high-quality education.

3 And I look forward to the testimony from  
4 everyone.

5 But I ask that we remain respectful as others  
6 are speaking, and that the witnesses adhere to the  
7 time limits.

8 And Mr. Chapnick will be the official  
9 timekeeper.

10 Our first panel will consist of:

11 Dr. Claudia Schrader;

12 President Russell Hotzler of New York --

13 She's the president, obviously, of  
14 Community -- Kingsborough Community College.

15 -- President Hotzler from New York City Tech,  
16 former interim president of Queens College, I might  
17 add, which is in my district.

18 We have Sunday Coward, university dean for  
19 special programs at CUNY;

20 And, Elaine Pimentel, deputy director, office  
21 of student financial assistance at CUNY.

22 If they could come up together as a group.

23 And the second group will be, you can be  
24 ready, are the students, because, to me, this  
25 hearing really is about the students and the

1 services that we provide.

2 And it will be Mr. Henderson,  
3 Melanie Kruevelis, Fay Yanofsky, and Leonard Blades.

4 Who's going to go first?

5 ELAINE PIMENTEL: Good morning to the members  
6 of the Senate Higher Education Committee, staff, and  
7 guests.

8 I am Elaine Pimentel, university executive  
9 director of financial aid for the City University of  
10 New York.

11 I am delighted to share with you today some  
12 updates on recent progress in regards to  
13 financial-aid processing at CUNY.

14 We are truly grateful to Governor Cuomo and  
15 the Legislature for the steadfast commitment to  
16 keeping public higher education affordable,  
17 especially in comparison with other states.

18 CUNY relatively low tuition, generous  
19 financial aid, and programs like Excelsior  
20 Scholarship, combined with tax credits, enabled  
21 66 percent of CUNY undergraduate full-time residents  
22 to -- with no loans, to receive -- and attend CUNY  
23 tuition-free.

24 For award year 2019-2020, full-time  
25 undergraduate tuition at CUNY senior colleges is

1       \$3,465 per term, and \$2,400 per term at the  
2       community colleges.

3               Fees and indirect costs, such as  
4       transportation, books and supplies and meals, among  
5       others, may increase the cost of education to  
6       approximately \$10,000 per year for students living  
7       with parents.

8               The annual generous TAP maximum full-time  
9       award is 5,165, or, \$2,582.50 for a term.

10              And the maximum annual federal Pell grant  
11       award for a full-time student with a zero estimated  
12       family contribution is 6,195, or, \$3,097.50 per  
13       term.

14              Other awards may vary in amounts, student's  
15       needs, or academic achievements.

16              In award-year '17-'18, nearly 3,300 CUNY  
17       students earned the Excelsior Scholarship, and with  
18       the higher income limit in the following years, the  
19       numbers have risen.

20              For award-year '18-'19, the number of  
21       students awarded the Excelsior Scholarship was over  
22       4,400, totaling over \$15 million.

23              In spring 2019, Excelsior scholars had higher  
24       GPAs and higher retention rates than non-Excelsior  
25       students.

1           Students who received Excelsior awards were  
2 more likely to complete 30-plus credits in a year  
3 than students who were eligible, but did not receive  
4 awards because they were already fully packaged or  
5 fully awarded with other aid that covered tuition.

6           Students who received Excelsior awards were  
7 significantly more likely to complete 30 credits in  
8 their first year than those who did not receive  
9 awards, and this is true across all race and  
10 ethnicity groups.

11           Compared to students who received Excelsior  
12 awards, students who did not receive  
13 Excelsior Scholarship awards because they were fully  
14 packaged with other aid are less likely to complete  
15 30 credits in a year, or more likely to do so than  
16 those who were not eligible.

17           This difference is also true across race --  
18 all -- all race and ethnicity groups.

19           CUNY students institutional retention rates  
20 were over 11 points higher in year one. And for  
21 year two, institutional retention rate of Excelsior  
22 students was 7 percent points higher than that of  
23 non-Excelsior students. And this is based on  
24 preliminary data.

25           Excelsior students had higher GPAs than

1 non-Excelsior students, based on full-time  
2 first-time freshmen enrolled in the fall of '17, the  
3 spring of '18, and the fall of '18.

4 The percent of full-time first-time freshmen  
5 taking 15 or more credits in the fall of '16 was  
6 30.6 percent, for the fall of '17 was 40.7 percent,  
7 and for the fall '18 was forty-three two percent,  
8 showing a steady increase in numbers.

9 We are also delighted that, on the Dream Act,  
10 eligible undocumented students will now qualify for  
11 TAP, the Excelsior Scholarship, and other forms of  
12 State aid.

13 At CUNY we have thousands of undocumented  
14 students who will be directly -- who will directly  
15 benefit from these actions.

16 And we applaud the Governor and the  
17 Legislature for your national leadership on this  
18 issue.

19 We believe CUNY has about 60 --  
20 6,000 undocumented students registered at our  
21 colleges. Many attend part-time due to cost.

22 We believe the vast majority will attend  
23 full-time with the assistance of TAP and Excelsior.

24 We partnered with the Higher Education  
25 Services Corporation (HESC) to award the state-aid

1 programs for this population and all others, open  
2 receipt, and are excited to produce those awards  
3 this semester for the first time.

4 For award-year '18-'19:

5 59.3 percent of our registered undergraduate  
6 students are Pell recipients, equaling 140,471  
7 students;

8 And 48.9 percent of our registered  
9 undergraduates are TAP recipients, equaling  
10 104,679 CUNY students;

11 Combined, 90,490 registered undergraduate  
12 students received both TAP and Pell at our  
13 university, or, 31.5 percent;

14 110,088 full-time enrolled undergraduate  
15 students received state-aid funds. This number  
16 includes TAP, APTS (Aid for Part-Time Studies),  
17 Excelsior Scholarships, and all other state-aid  
18 scholarships.

19 At CUNY we disbursed \$954,028,607 in federal  
20 aid to full-time undergraduate students, and  
21 398,068,355 in state aid.

22 Over \$1 billion of financial-aid funds are  
23 disbursed annually to our CUNY students.

24 At CUNY, 80 percent of our students graduate  
25 debt-free.

1           We are proud of this, and thankful to the  
2           Governor and Legislature for their funding support  
3           that enables CUNY to remain affordable for so many  
4           young people.

5           CUNY's strengths come from the extraordinary  
6           richness and vibrancy of our large diverse  
7           community.

8           Through financial aid, our students focus on  
9           navigating the college process, completing a degree,  
10          and achieving their dreams.

11          And we thank you for your extraordinary  
12          partnership in this work.

13          SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

14          SENATOR GOUNARDES: Questions?

15          SENATOR STAVISKY: Do you have a question?

16          SENATOR GOUNARDES: Sure, yeah.

17          Thank you very much.

18          I have a few questions.

19          I want to start with one of the last points  
20          you made about, 80 percent of the students are  
21          debt-free.

22          Two questions on that.

23          Number one: By what -- how are we measuring  
24          that; how do we evaluate debt-free?

25          Is it based on -- can you explain how that

1       statistic is derived?

2               ELAINE PIMENTEL:    Sure.

3               We studied our historical borrowing data of  
4       our students.

5               Our students borrow about 40 -- 14,000 in a  
6       given year, in comparison to other universities  
7       outside of -- or, within the state or nationally.

8               But we study borrowing history, and then come  
9       up with that percentage.

10              SENATOR GOUNARDES:   So -- and that's --  
11       that's aggregate over all -- I mean, multiple years?

12              How does -- I mean, is it last year,  
13       80 percent were debt-free?   Was it the last  
14       30 years, debt-free?

15              ELAINE PIMENTEL:    We look at graduation --  
16       graduating class, and then study their borrowing  
17       history, to come up with that number.

18              SENATOR GOUNARDES:   Okay, so that's last  
19       year's number then --

20              ELAINE PIMENTEL:    Correct.

21              SENATOR GOUNARDES:   -- what you report here?

22              Okay.

23              And that accounts for just debt that they  
24       might accrue, just due to taking out a student loan  
25       directly; right?



1 ELAINE PIMENTEL: Right.

2 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Doesn't include other  
3 kinds of debt that they might have to assume to help  
4 support their costs?

5 ELAINE PIMENTEL: No, it's just on the loans.

6 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Just on the loans.

7 ELAINE PIMENTEL: Federal loans.

8 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Okay.

9 And can you break that number down a bit in  
10 terms of full-time -- sorry, senior colleges and  
11 community colleges?

12 Do you have a statistic to break that down?

13 ELAINE PIMENTEL: I should have it with me,  
14 and I can forward that to you.

15 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Okay.

16 And do you have any breakdown in terms of  
17 full-time versus part-time students, and that --  
18 that number as well?

19 ELAINE PIMENTEL: That, we will have to get  
20 back to you, and get you those numbers.

21 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Okay.

22 ELAINE PIMENTEL: But it's easily found.

23 SENATOR GOUNARDES: I'm sorry?

24 ELAINE PIMENTEL: We can compute that very  
25 easily.

1           SENATOR GOUNARDES:   Okay.

2           What -- I know you talk about the Excelsior  
3 program, and you said about 4400 students now,  
4 CUNY-wide, are accessible -- able to access  
5 Excelsior.

6           It's been around for I think three years now?  
7 Two years?

8           ELAINE PIMENTEL:   This is its third year.

9           SENATOR GOUNARDES:   Third year.

10          I -- I assume that administration for that  
11 comes through your office?  Is that -- or --

12          ELAINE PIMENTEL:   Sure.

13          SENATOR GOUNARDES:   Can you kind of -- now  
14 that we've had three years of experience with it,  
15 can you talk about any challenges that might have  
16 arisen, as we look to maybe, potentially, expand and  
17 make it offered to a lot more than 4400 students?

18          Anything that we should know about, how it's  
19 been administered or implemented, that is important  
20 for to us think about as we come into the next  
21 session?

22          ELAINE PIMENTEL:   I mean, Excelsior, it's --  
23 it's a wonderful program.

24          We're very happy that it was instituted, and  
25 that it has allowed -- it has pushed our students to

1 go for 15 credits, and not just those interested in  
2 Excelsior, but the entire university, and having to  
3 maintain progress, you know, as a condition.

4 And so we've seen students are staying  
5 around, you know, retention has increased, and  
6 graduation has increased, as a result.

7 But I -- I would -- one recommendation  
8 I could make is that, for students that would not --  
9 that may lose the award on a given semester for --  
10 for not meeting some of the criteria, at least  
11 retaining it, you know, that award for that  
12 semester. And just, going forward, perhaps not  
13 getting it anymore.

14 Such the way TAP -- TAP (indiscernible) that  
15 way.

16 You keep your TAP award, even if, at the end  
17 of that semester, based on grades, you should have  
18 not. But going forward, you lose the award.

19 That would be one recommendation I would  
20 (indiscernible).

21 SENATOR GOUNARDES: And is there any -- are  
22 you able to track at all how many students would  
23 otherwise be eligible for Excelsior, but -- you  
24 know, say, they're taking 12 credits, and, you know,  
25 not the 15, which is, in some measures, also a

1 full-time load?

2 Do you have a sense of that data?

3 ELAINE PIMENTEL: No, not with me, but we can  
4 get you that (parties cross-talking) --

5 SENATOR GOUNARDES: You can find that out?

6 ELAINE PIMENTEL: -- yes, yes.

7 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Okay.

8 All right, thank you.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

10 Those were some of my questions also.

11 I have a couple more.

12 Anybody have a question?

13 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: I do have a couple.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: All right, let me just  
15 follow up with what Senator Gounardes said.

16 If you were able to make changes in the  
17 programs, what would you do?

18 ELAINE PIMENTEL: In general?

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes -- no, in specifics.

20 ELAINE PIMENTEL: In Excelsior?

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah.

22 ELAINE PIMENTEL: Well, that what I mentioned  
23 is one of them.

24 Moving it to 12 units, as the Senator  
25 suggested, it is a good idea.

1           Also -- oh, I had something else in my mind  
2           and it escaped me.

3           SENATOR STAVISKY:   In other words, less than  
4           full-time, and, therefore --

5           ELAINE PIMENTEL:   Well, full-time --

6           SENATOR STAVISKY:   -- extending the  
7           graduation period --

8           ELAINE PIMENTEL:   -- full-time is 12 units --

9           SENATOR STAVISKY:   -- to five years?

10          ELAINE PIMENTEL:   -- at CUNY.

11          Right now it's -- it's requiring that  
12          students complete 30 units.

13          SENATOR STAVISKY:   That's what -- I know  
14          that, right.

15          ELAINE PIMENTEL:   And so they're doing  
16          15 credits each semester.

17          And if they're not, then they're doing it  
18          over the summer and the winter.

19          So going to 12 units minimum, it is -- it  
20          is -- I remember my other suggestion.

21          Remedial courses.

22          SENATOR STAVISKY:   Ah, that's interesting.

23          What would you do in terms of the remedial?

24          Because I know that CUNY and SUNY both spend  
25          an inordinate amount of money on remediation, things

1 that should be taught in high school.

2 ELAINE PIMENTEL: Right.

3 So, you know, today, the guidance for  
4 Excelsior does not cover for remedial courses.

5 And so, if the students are undergoing any  
6 remediation, they must be taking the additional  
7 towards their degree courses, to really make the  
8 mark in terms of credits.

9 And so, if remedial courses were considered,  
10 students will have an easier load on that end.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: And we are delighted to  
12 welcome CUNY Trustee Una Clarke from Brooklyn.

13 [Applause.]

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: We've known each other a  
15 long time.

16 Are there any other questions? Because we do  
17 have to move on.

18 And may I ask the other witnesses to try to  
19 summarize their testimony rather than read it  
20 verbatim.

21 Do you have a question?

22 SENATOR SALAZAR: Yes.

23 Good morning.

24 I'll keep it brief, but I wanted to ask:  
25 What efforts has CUNY made to reach out to

1 undocumented students to inform them about their new  
2 eligibility to apply for TAP and state-funded aid?

3 ELAINE PIMENTEL: So aside from making it  
4 known through our sites -- our websites, we've sent  
5 global communications to all students at CUNY, to  
6 say that the program was coming, and its  
7 requirements, and where to go to file, and the  
8 expectations.

9 And we are now following, to have more  
10 workshops in-house, to invite students, and locally  
11 at the colleges.

12 I'm speaking from central office.

13 But locally on -- on -- at the colleges, the  
14 colleges also have done their own efforts in  
15 communicating to students about the program.

16 SENATOR SALAZAR: Have any efforts been made  
17 to reach out to high schools or high school seniors?

18 ELAINE PIMENTEL: Right.

19 So we do partner with our K-through-12 groups  
20 at CUNY. And so they have very good relationship  
21 with the (indiscernible), with New York City.

22 And a lot of workshops, and communications  
23 have been sent out to college high school counselors  
24 on how to advertise the program, and point out where  
25 to go to file and the requirements.

1 SENATOR SALAZAR: Thank you.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

3 Anybody else?

4 Yes.

5 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you for that.

6 And I appreciate the -- really, I feel like a  
7 really positive picture you painted.

8 But we hear a lot from students about the  
9 struggles that we have -- we hear from students.

10 I'd love to hear (indiscernible) --

11 [Applause.]

12 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: -- I mean,  
13 I appreciate what we've done, but I think we need to  
14 also think about what we need to be doing.

15 Like, we hear a lot from students about food  
16 insecurity. About -- you know, you might be able to  
17 take 15 credits, but you don't have a metro card to  
18 get to and from school.

19 [Applause.]

20 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: It's a --

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: Can we --

22 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: It's a struggle.

23 So I guess really the question is: What --

24 I think that we're -- we're trying to figure out is,  
25 what steps do we need to take to really strengthen



1 the ability for students to be successful, and to be  
2 able to make it through college, so they can be  
3 successful adults in our society?

4 And so if could I hear another couple ideas.

5 (Indiscernible) should we give  
6 (indiscernible) free metro card for students?

7 Should we be thinking more about food  
8 (indiscernible) insecurity?

9 You know, we help people K through 12 with  
10 food. And then we go to college and we're, like,  
11 you're done.

12 So it would be great to hear -- if you don't  
13 (indiscernible) have ideas today, we'd love to hear  
14 ideas, going forward.

15 ELAINE PIMENTEL: We do appreciate  
16 (indiscernible) university what exists, and all the  
17 existing part-time scholarships and full-time  
18 scholarships and programs.

19 But we are more than open, and welcome, for  
20 programs that go out to part-timers, for programs  
21 that do offer metro cards, and other forms of aid to  
22 students.

23 And so, absolutely, we are more than  
24 welcoming and open to any and all initiatives.

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

1           In other words, you're suggesting the ASAP  
2 program be expanded?

3           ELAINE PIMENTEL: Absolutely.

4           [Applause.]

5           SENATOR STAVISKY: And, in fact, in the --  
6 now, I'm not defending the Governor, but in his  
7 budget he did have a pilot project -- a pilot  
8 program for SUNY to ex -- really, it's an ASAP  
9 program of limited -- limited means to -- for the  
10 State University of New York.

11          Are there any other questions? Or -- yes.

12          SENATOR GOUNARDES: It's not so much a  
13 question as a request.

14          Since this program is only -- Excelsior is  
15 only three years old, we probably won't see this  
16 manifest itself yet, but, you know, I'm concerned  
17 about students not being able -- who might be  
18 otherwise on the track to graduate, 4 years,  
19 15 credits, but can't graduate because they can't  
20 get into a course that they need for a requirement.

21          Are you able to track, or would you be able  
22 to track, moving forward, those students who are in  
23 the program, who are then ineligible because they  
24 can't get a degree requirement in a timely manner?

25          This way, we know how we can, potentially,

1       come back and fix and expand the program, moving  
2       forward, as well.

3               So that's just a request that I would make,  
4       that you guys think about a way to collect that  
5       information thoughtfully.

6               ELAINE PIMENTEL: Thank you.

7               SENATOR STAVISKY: And we've been joined by  
8       Senator Roxanne Persaud from Brooklyn.

9               [Applause.]

10              SENATOR STAVISKY: Do you want to hold our  
11       questions for the --

12              SENATOR PERSAUD: Yeah.

13              SENATOR STAVISKY: Our next speaker will be  
14       President Claudia Schrader of Kingsborough Community  
15       College.

16              DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: Good morning.

17              SENATOR STAVISKY: Good morning.

18              DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: Thank you for giving  
19       me this opportunity to share with you the  
20       Kingsborough I have come to know over the past year,  
21       and share with you a portrait of a vibrant academic  
22       community of faculty and staff who deliver on its  
23       promise to students, and a portrait that highlights  
24       how college affordability, and your investments, and  
25       the investments of the university, make a difference

1 for all our students.

2 The university is committed to providing  
3 citizens of this great city access to an affordable  
4 education. And this commitment is actualized in its  
5 efforts to remove barriers to access; make  
6 investments that support persistence, retention, and  
7 completion; and provides supports that mitigate the  
8 hidden costs of a college degree.

9 At Kingsborough we share in this mission, and  
10 have availed ourselves of all opportunities to do so  
11 through programs like the Excelsior Scholarship and  
12 ASAP, and others as well.

13 Kingsborough's extensive array of student  
14 support services have also positively impacted  
15 student outcomes.

16 The college's understanding of the importance  
17 of supporting the whole student is evident in the  
18 host of programs and initiatives that are woven into  
19 the fabric of the institution and address the most  
20 critical issues facing students: The hidden cost of  
21 a college education, like meals, transportation, and  
22 textbooks.

23 Since 2017, with the support of  
24 Governor Cuomo, CUNY received funding from the  
25 New York State for Open Educational Resources.

1           KCC has embraced the development of  
2 OER-supported courses.

3           The college's implementation of the OER  
4 initiative has proved to be a crit -- has proved to  
5 be critical to ensuring that students have access to  
6 zero- or low-cost course materials.

7           Last academic year, 256 sections of KCC  
8 courses used OER, and impacted over 5,000 students,  
9 resulting in a cost savings of \$781,460.

10          This is a significant increase over the  
11 previous year, and we continue to implement OER in  
12 our other courses.

13          Kingsborough also steadily has a number of  
14 courses offered partially and fully online. And  
15 this fall we became the community college in the  
16 university to offer a first fully-online  
17 liberal-arts degree program.

18          We understand the role that technology plays  
19 in helping to educate and prepare a skilled  
20 workforce. And we have a robust laptop-lending  
21 program that is funded through the student  
22 technology fee. And there are currently over  
23 500 laptops and tablets in the lending pool for  
24 students.

25          For 56 years we've been synonomous with

1 excellence.

2 We've been recognized twice by the  
3 Aspen Institute for Community College Excellence.

4 Most recently, we were ranked number two on  
5 NICHE's 20 Best -- 2020 Best Community Colleges in  
6 New York, and we were named a Leader College of  
7 Distinction by the Achieving the Dream Institute.

8 Our learning communities have been recognized  
9 for its focus on learning and positive effect on  
10 student outcomes, and our New Start programs give  
11 students a second chance.

12 Kingsborough was the first community college  
13 to provide Single Stop, a key resource in helping  
14 students access resources that help them to stay to  
15 college and reach their goals.

16 Tuition is only one part of the story of  
17 college affordability, and we're fortunate that the  
18 comm -- at community colleges, tuition is relatively  
19 low.

20 But the other parts of the story are the  
21 hidden costs, and the costs associated with the  
22 business of higher education.

23 I am grateful to our alumni donors and  
24 friends of KCC who help us to address some of our  
25 pressing needs.

1           And we are fortunate to be part of a state, a  
2           city, and a university system that understands that  
3           not addressing these needs will result in the  
4           ultimate cost to students, and that is, the  
5           opportunity to learn -- earn a college degree.

6           I hope that my testimony has provided you  
7           with our view of how Kingsborough, through the work  
8           of dynamic community and the support of the  
9           university, city and state, works to ensure that a  
10          college degree is both accessible and affordable for  
11          those who choose education as a vehicle to transform  
12          their lives.

13          Thank you.

14          [Applause.]

15          SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

16          And I remember the college when it -- in the  
17          early days when it consisted of Quonset huts,  
18          period. Classes were taught in those Quonset huts.

19          And I visited Kingsborough a number of years  
20          ago, and, total transformation.

21          It's like the Phoenix, and we congratulate  
22          you.

23          DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: Thank you.

24          SENATOR STAVISKY: Questions?

25          Oh, we've been joined by

1 Senator Robert Jackson.

2 [Applause.]

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Gounardes.

4 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you very much.

5 I'm proud to say that Kingsborough is in my  
6 district, and we're really thankful to have you be  
7 such a great partner in the community.

8 A couple of questions.

9 Number one: What -- what do you see is --  
10 let me take it -- what percentage of students who  
11 graduate Kingsborough go on to a four-year college?

12 And what percentage use a terminal  
13 associate's degree, and then conclude their  
14 post-secondary training at that point?

15 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: I don't have those  
16 data readily available, but I can get them for you.

17 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Okay. Thank you.

18 And in your estimation -- I saw in your  
19 testimony, the graduation rate, which is high by  
20 CUNY standards, but I think is, unfortunately, low  
21 across the board, you know, by normal standards.

22 In your view as an administrator, what --  
23 what's the biggest challenge to help rise that  
24 graduation rate -- raise that graduation rate?

25 Sorry.



1           And, is it a financial issue?

2           Is it an academic issue?

3           Is it an -- you know, can you give us some --  
4           some clarity, or some -- paint the picture, about,  
5           you know, how that number is -- why we're at that  
6           number, and how we can do better?

7           DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: I think it's -- part  
8           of it are the hidden costs.

9           So the costs associated with, you know,  
10          buying meals. Food insecurity is a big issue.

11          Transportation is a major issue, with the  
12          cost of metro cards rising.

13          If you have to make a choice between having a  
14          meal and getting to campus, it's just very difficult  
15          for students.

16          So I think anything that could support all  
17          the stressors that students have outside of the  
18          classroom, it would make it more -- it would make it  
19          more, I guess, easier for them to attend classes.

20          SENATOR GOUNARDES: And are those students  
21          who are not graduating within three years, are they  
22          staying in school or are they dropping out  
23          altogether?

24          DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: Some go to part-time  
25          status, so they're not necessarily -- it takes a

1 little bit longer because they may have started  
2 full-time, and then they moved to part-time status.

3 But eventually they do graduate, yes.

4 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Do we have a sense of how  
5 many students leave the college for financial  
6 reasons, and then attempt to come back maybe a few  
7 years later?

8 Is that -- is that an actual metric that we  
9 know of? Or --

10 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: I'm sure it's one that  
11 we can get data on.

12 I don't have it right now --

13 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Okay. Thank you.

14 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: -- but I can get that  
15 to you as well.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Jackson.

17 SENATOR JACKSON: Good morning, everyone.

18 It's good morning -- good afternoon.

19 Doctor, let me thank you for your  
20 presentation.

21 I only heard the last two or three minutes,  
22 but I have a couple of questions.

23 So, what percentage of your students graduate  
24 in two years versus three or four?

25 If you have the stats.

1 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: I don't have those  
2 stats readily available.

3 SENATOR JACKSON: What is the average time,  
4 though, it takes a student from your school to  
5 graduate?

6 Average time, give or take.

7 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: Give or take?

8 I would say it depends.

9 I know that Excelsior students are graduating  
10 quicker because they're taking full-time status.

11 Our ASAP students, about two to  
12 three years -- between two to three years.

13 SENATOR JACKSON: The average (parties  
14 cross-talking) --

15 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: The average student?

16 SENATOR JACKSON: -- put all that together,  
17 does it take, two, three, four, years to get a  
18 two-year degree?

19 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: I would say between  
20 three and four.

21 SENATOR JACKSON: And what is the primary  
22 reason for them taking so long, in your opinion?

23 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: I'd say most of it are  
24 the hidden costs; and, their personal lives, that,  
25 they're working, they're heads of households, they

1 have children, they have multiple responsibilities  
2 outside of college.

3 SENATOR JACKSON: Sure, and I'm fully aware  
4 of that, but I wanted you to say that.

5 [Laughter.]

6 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: Okay.

7 SENATOR JACKSON: What this is about is, is  
8 documentation on the needs around the state of  
9 New York in order to get more money.

10 That's what this is about.

11 [Applause.]

12 SENATOR JACKSON: But then let me ask another  
13 direct question.

14 How much money do you need, as the president  
15 of Kingsborough Community College, to make sure that  
16 your students graduate in a timely manner and have  
17 all of the things that they need?

18 In your opinion, how much money?

19 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: 100 million.

20 SENATOR JACKSON: 100 million for  
21 Kingsborough?

22 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: For Kingsborough, uhm,  
23 I need more than I have now, for sure.

24 I need more, so that every student who walks  
25 through the door doesn't have to worry about tuition

1 or metro cards or where they're going to get their  
2 next meal.

3 So I don't have those numbers readily  
4 available, but anything extra would be great.

5 SENATOR JACKSON: And let me just say to you,  
6 that I understand that very much, because I went to  
7 college myself. I went to SUNY New Paltz. It took  
8 me five years to graduate.

9 And my daughter went there also, and I told  
10 her she had to finish in four years.

11 And she said to me, Dad, but you didn't  
12 finish in four. You finished in five.

13 I said, The difference is that I'm paying for  
14 it.

15 [Laughter.]

16 SENATOR JACKSON: That's a big cost factor.

17 So let me thank you, Doctor, all of you, for  
18 coming to give testimony, so that we can have  
19 additional documentation to, hopefully, increase the  
20 amount of funding for higher education.

21 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: Thank you.

22 [Applause.]

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Salazar has a  
24 question.

25 SENATOR SALAZAR: Thank you for your

1 testimony; especially, I appreciate you telling us  
2 about the Single Stop program, and how it's  
3 addressed some of these hidden costs that students  
4 face, particularly food insecurity.

5 Does this program exist at every CUNY and  
6 SUNY campus, or is it unique to Kingsborough?

7 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: It's not unique to  
8 Kingsborough.

9 SENATOR SALAZAR: Okay.

10 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: Many of the campuses  
11 have it.

12 SENATOR SALAZAR: Many, but not all of them?

13 DR. CLAUDIA SCHRADER: I'm not sure.

14 SENATOR SALAZAR: You're not sure.

15 Okay, no problem.

16 Thank you.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: Any other questions?

18 We have testimony from the president of  
19 New York -- of City Tech, Dr. Hotzler.

20 [Applause.]

21 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Thank you.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: He was a terrific interim  
23 acting president of Queens College.

24 [Laughter.]

25 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: I'm still acting, in a

1 different way.

2 Thank you, Senator.

3 I'm going to complement what my colleague  
4 here has said in terms of the needs of our students,  
5 but I want to add another dimension to it.

6 And you have my testimony, so I'll skip to  
7 some pieces that are a bit different here.

8 And from the Technical College's perspective,  
9 I have a point of view here, that what we do for our  
10 students has to be relevant; it has to be relevant  
11 in terms of providing them with the support that  
12 they need, but, also, an education and a degree  
13 program that is going to give them a career and a  
14 future in which they can live out their aspirations,  
15 if you will.

16 This is a complex matter because it's  
17 expensive.

18 And at City Tech, we have 8200 students who  
19 are in what we refer to as "STEM" programs, in the  
20 science and math and technology and engineering.

21 And I have another 2,000 students that are in  
22 health-related programs: clinical, medical imaging,  
23 radiology, nursing, and so on.

24 And these are inherently difficult and  
25 expensive programs to offer.

1           And my concerns revolve around the situation,  
2           or the fact, that, going forward, the cost of  
3           offering these programs, and offering them well, in  
4           the sense that they encompass what the students  
5           need, is an expensive item.

6           And, going forward, we have to make sure that  
7           we're able to provide the support for -- for those  
8           programs.

9           Looking over the horizon, this is only going  
10          to get more difficult because the technology that's  
11          evolving requires us to make heavier investments.

12          In areas of science and technology, that  
13          requires significant program investments going  
14          forward, include, for example, this new transition  
15          to 5G cellular-network technology.

16          It's a technology that's going to enhance our  
17          artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and  
18          promises to initiate a surge of innovation and new  
19          start-ups.

20          And we know here in Brooklyn, that we've seen  
21          a robust movement in the economy as a result of all  
22          of the development, and the new companies and firms  
23          that have moved in that are moving these  
24          technologies forward.

25          And we have to give our students the



1 opportunity to engage and master this work.

2 Another area of -- that's evolving is that of  
3 genomics and DNA science.

4 We all understand, we hear a lot about this  
5 in the press, but we as a university have a very  
6 heavy investment in health care, in -- both in the  
7 clinical and the non-clinical side.

8 And these changes, and the evolving  
9 transformative nature of the discoveries that are  
10 coming up here, are important for us to be able to  
11 provide to our students.

12 And these are going to be expensive items,  
13 going forward.

14 I would mention one thing we've done.

15 We've entered into a partnership with  
16 Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory.

17 Some of you may know, that's a fairly  
18 high-end research facility out on the island, and  
19 they're doing groundbreaking research in molecular  
20 biology and genetics.

21 As a result of that partnership, we're going  
22 to build, in Brooklyn, a DNA learning lab, that they  
23 are investing in, that's going to service the public  
24 and the school system, and, systematically,  
25 supplement the instruction that students would

1 probably not get in school in terms of this evolving  
2 science and technology.

3 And they're doing this on a large scale.

4 We're going to have upwards of twelve to  
5 fifteen thousand students a year that will be  
6 serviced by this DNA learning center. And it's also  
7 going to serve to train the teachers in the school  
8 system.

9 And I simply say this, it's an important  
10 movement for us in the university, and I think it's  
11 the kind of leading-edge technology that we have to  
12 be involved in if we're going to be providing our  
13 students with meaningful career opportunities, going  
14 forward.

15 The sum here is that, this will all add to  
16 costs that we already have, but I think they're  
17 costs that we have to factor in, going forward;  
18 otherwise, we would not be fulfilling the  
19 aspirations of our students and their abilities.

20 I just would say that, while it's easy for us  
21 to think of the university as the largest  
22 institution -- public institution in the northeast,  
23 I'd be remiss if I didn't pause to make it clear,  
24 that the success of CUNY and its colleges is  
25 critical to the success of New York and everyday

1 New Yorkers.

2 City Tech, and all the community colleges,  
3 represent hope for the better future, and provide a  
4 road map to get there.

5 In that regard, City Tech serves as both an  
6 educational institution and a community-development  
7 partner.

8 I thank you for the opportunity to address  
9 you today.

10 [Applause.]

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

12 Any questions for?

13 And we thank, Sunday Coward, but I understand  
14 you are not going to be speaking.

15 SENATOR JACKSON: Madam Chair?

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes.

17 SENATOR JACKSON: I wanted to ask Dr. Hotzler  
18 a question.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes, sir.

20 SENATOR JACKSON: Well, thank you, Doctor,  
21 for coming in and giving your testimony.

22 And you had mentioned, when you said you had  
23 8200 students in STEM programs, and about 2,000 in  
24 health-related fields, and you said that it's  
25 difficult.

1           Is it because your technology or equipment is  
2           outdated and you need new equipment?

3           Or -- or why is it so difficult?

4           DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Well, I think it's  
5           difficult in two levels.

6           First of all, these are difficult subjects  
7           for students. And I think the time that they have  
8           to put in to master this is a little more.

9           They do a lot of lab work. There's a lot of  
10          hands-on. These topics can't be handled in  
11          distance-education formats.

12          So it's expensive in terms of the costs of  
13          instruction.

14          SENATOR JACKSON: The cost of instruction.

15          But do you have the equipment, though, or do  
16          you need to upgrade your equipment?

17          DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Well, we constantly  
18          need to upgrade our equipment.

19          Fortunately, and I should thank the  
20          Legislature and the Governor, we recently opened a  
21          new facility that was 15 years in the making, which  
22          has some state-of-the-practice labs in both the  
23          clinical health area and in the sciences.

24          So we have been managing to keep up on the  
25          equipment side, but the cost of instruction and

1 other amenities related to that, the -- quite  
2 frankly, the maintenance costs on that equipment,  
3 escalate every year.

4 So there is that issue that we have to  
5 contend with.

6 SENATOR JACKSON: I was -- while I was  
7 driving out here, stopping at a red light, I was  
8 reading the newspaper. And I see that adjunct  
9 professors got a raise, in which -- from  
10 3,000-something, to, I think, six thousand-, or  
11 five thousand-something, the first year, and it's  
12 going up.

13 So that's a good thing, because, I tell you,  
14 my understanding, with the adjunct professors, they  
15 were, like, had to work two or three jobs just to  
16 make ends meet.

17 So with respect to that, how many full-time  
18 professors do you have there, versus adjunct  
19 professors, at your school?

20 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Well, I have  
21 approximately 400 full-time faculty, and about  
22 1,000 part-time faculty.

23 SENATOR JACKSON: About 1,000.

24 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Right.

25 And that thousand includes a lot of people

1       who are, by the nature of what I offer, they're --  
2       they're -- many of them are like engineers. They're  
3       people who work in clinical professions.

4               And in order to attract them and keep them as  
5       adjuncts, it's good that we're actually, shall we  
6       say, providing some additional incentive for them to  
7       lend their expertise to our students.

8               SENATOR JACKSON: So, in your opinion, where  
9       is the greatest need?

10              Is it in capital money for you, or is it  
11       operating expense money?

12              And how much do you think you need?

13              DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Well, I think,  
14       fortunately for me, that I just was the beneficiary  
15       of some capital infusion. I wouldn't claim to have  
16       that need at the top of the list.

17              SENATOR JACKSON: Not right now.

18              DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: But my colleagues --  
19       Right.

20              But my colleagues, and the other presidents,  
21       I'm sure could give you a long list of facilities  
22       that they are in need of in order to modernize the  
23       programs.

24              And capital, of course, is continuing.

25              But on the operational side, again, you have

1 something, you have to maintain it.

2 And if you're dealing in the technical areas,  
3 that maintenance is expensive.

4 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Doctor.

5 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: You're quite welcome.  
6 Thank you.

7 SENATOR PERSAUD: I just have one quick  
8 question.

9 Good afternoon, Doctor.

10 How are you?

11 Great to see you.

12 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Good to see you.

13 Thank you.

14 SENATOR PERSAUD: I just -- you know, my  
15 colleague asked the questions I was going to ask,  
16 but I just want to follow up:

17 On the twelve to fifteen thousand students  
18 that you anticipate having, are you working with --  
19 because you say, you know, it takes a lot for these  
20 students to learn what they have to.

21 And so are you saying they're not prepared  
22 when they're not coming in?

23 And are we working with high schools to have  
24 a pipeline, so these students are well prepared, so  
25 they will not need to stay in school extra years to

1 complete the programs?

2 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Well, to the extent  
3 that we can do that, we do it.

4 And, in fact, City Tech has two early-college  
5 high schools that we work with.

6 You're familiar with P-TECH --

7 SENATOR PERSAUD: Yes.

8 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: -- I'm sure.

9 Well, that's us.

10 And we're the college that is providing the  
11 college degrees to the students that are attending  
12 that high school.

13 And we have a second high school that focuses  
14 a little less on the computer side, a little more on  
15 construction and architecture. And they too -- and  
16 then both of these high schools take in students.

17 There's no test.

18 They are, basically, taken in based on their  
19 interest in the subject matter.

20 And, obviously, those students can progress a  
21 lot faster.

22 Jumping ahead here a little bit, somewhere in  
23 that audience back there is my student government  
24 president.

25 And, Timothy, are you here?



1           There (indicating).

2           [Applause.]

3           DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER:   Okay.

4           He was also just elected president of the  
5 university student senate, so he's part of my boss  
6 right now.

7           [Laughter.]

8           SENATOR GOUNARDES:   That's good.

9           DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER:   And I have to -- I have  
10 to -- yeah, I -- I lucked out.

11           But he is a product of one of those  
12 high schools, and that process, if you will, and so  
13 he maybe could fill you in on it.

14           And, obviously, there are 17 high schools now  
15 that are run by the university, and all of them  
16 trying to, you know, accelerate the remedial aspects  
17 of the foundation that our students need.

18           But, City Tech, along with Medgar Evers and  
19 College of Staten Island, are comprehensive  
20 colleges.

21           We accept students into both associates and  
22 baccalaureate programs.

23           So even though our programs may have, in our  
24 case, a higher expectation, we don't close the door.

25           They can come in. They can go into the

1 associate-degree programs, and then seamlessly go  
2 into the baccalaureate program.

3 And, in fact, in two areas, we've developed  
4 what we refer to as a "ladder procedure," where,  
5 I'll give you the one, architecture.

6 You can come into that program, into an  
7 associate-degree program. And then you can go  
8 seamlessly into a "bachelor's of technology in  
9 architecture" program. And then you can go and do  
10 the fifth year, and get your bachelor's in  
11 architecture, which leads directly to licensure.

12 And what I'm really indicating here, is that  
13 the student has the opportunity to progress as far  
14 as they can based on their ability.

15 And at each step in that "ladder," there are  
16 opportunities for them to go into industry, to get a  
17 job, and go on to further education.

18 So if we structure programs like this, we're  
19 not leaving people behind.

20 And we've done the same thing recently in  
21 what we refer to as "data science," which is, like  
22 computer science, focuses on big data sets.

23 And, here, students can come in, they have  
24 remedial needs. They can complete them, they can  
25 get an associate degree in computer systems. They

1 can then progress and get their bachelor's degree in  
2 computer systems and networking. And, go into a  
3 fifth year, where they can actually then get a  
4 degree that's at a higher level.

5 I cannot stress to you strong enough, the  
6 number of job opportunities that are out there for  
7 students in these areas.

8 And we are just overwhelmed.

9 In fact, if I have a problem keeping them,  
10 it's a problem keeping them when they're actually  
11 able to get jobs before they finish their degrees.

12 And two years ago, my student government  
13 president at that time, went out on an internship.

14 He came back three weeks later and he said,  
15 "They're offering me a job for \$50,000. I'm giving  
16 up my presidency, and I'm going to work."

17 And I locked him in a closet until he  
18 actually agreed that he would not leave the college,  
19 and finish his degree.

20 And I convinced him that, when you finish the  
21 degree, they'll actually pay you \$60,000 to start,  
22 not the fifty.

23 [Laughter.]

24 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: So -- but these are --  
25 these are good things.

1           And I hold them out there for the students  
2 because it's hard work. But, at the end of that  
3 road, there is a path for them and a reward.

4           And we want to make sure it stays there.

5           And I thank you for your support.

6           SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you.

7           SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

8           May I -- do you have another the question?

9           SENATOR SALAZAR: I just have one.

10          SENATOR STAVISKY: Sure.

11          I have a couple of questions.

12          SENATOR SALAZAR: Okay.

13          Uhm, thank you, Dr. Hotzler.

14          I appreciate that you mentioned, uhm, that  
15 City Tech has 44 percent women enrollment, because  
16 women are really underrepresented in -- in STEM.

17          What efforts are being made to -- even though  
18 44 percent is an impressive number, what efforts are  
19 being made to maintain that, and to increase that,  
20 to achieve full gender parity?

21          DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: I actually, in the  
22 document, mentioned a number of grants that we've  
23 obtained, and that outreach. And it applies to not  
24 only underrepresented students, but to women as  
25 well.

1           So we have active programs, even in, for  
2           example, construction management.

3           We have a special program that reaches out,  
4           because there is a heavy desire, believe it or not,  
5           in the construction industry, to hire more women,  
6           not simply for the construction itself, but for  
7           management, and for oversight of construction  
8           projects.

9           So we have a number of initiatives in  
10          particular program areas.

11          SENATOR SALAZAR: Thank you.

12          SENATOR STAVISKY: Two quick questions.

13          Do you have articulation agreements with  
14          other institutions where there's a seamless  
15          transition?

16          DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Absolutely.

17          Every one of our baccalaureate programs that  
18          we've developed in the last decade has a -- not only  
19          an articulation, but, in some cases, a seamless  
20          transition, if you will.

21          SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

22          I knew the answer.

23          Any way, my second question, you've talked --  
24          and really, to me, very important:

25          You've talked about how your students are

1 doing so well.

2 What would you estimate the job-placement  
3 percentage to be?

4 Because without a job available (motions)...

5 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Right.

6 You know, our numbers typically run, that we  
7 have about -- well, not roughly -- 95 percent of our  
8 students are either employed or have transferred to  
9 another program within six months to a year of  
10 graduation.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, thank you.

12 Let me just clear up something that one of my  
13 colleagues had asked.

14 We have not had a five-year capital budget  
15 for either CUNY or SUNY since 2008.

16 And, because of that --

17 And CUNY is in a little better position  
18 because they get fund -- they get capital money from  
19 the City, but the State does not, obviously.

20 -- and to explore that issue, we're going to  
21 be holding -- it hasn't been announced yet -- a  
22 hearing in Albany on December 11th, on the need for  
23 a five-year capital program.

24 But, we've been dealing with what has been  
25 called "critical maintenance."

1 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Right.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: And that can't be used to  
3 put a shovel in the ground.

4 It can only be used to patch up a building  
5 that's about to fall apart.

6 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: True.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: And to me that's not the  
8 way we should be proceeding.

9 So, are there any other questions?

10 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: And, Senator, if I just  
11 may?

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah.

13 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: The community colleges  
14 do receive capital money from --

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: That's what I'm talking  
16 about, the community colleges.

17 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Right.

18 -- from the City, not from the State.

19 But the senior colleges --

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: They do not.

21 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: -- we do get some small  
22 amounts, Reso A-type money, a million, two million,  
23 but nothing that allows us to put a shovel in the  
24 ground.

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: That's exactly why, and

1 we're going bring together an unusual group, I hope  
2 to advocate for a capital plan.

3 The last capital plan ran out, you know,  
4 2013.

5 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Right.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: We haven't had any money  
7 since.

8 Senator Gounardes.

9 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you.

10 You raise -- Doctor, you raise a really  
11 interesting point that I think we can't overlook,  
12 and that's the competitiveness of, not just your  
13 institution, but CUNY as a whole.

14 And I appreciate you raising that point  
15 because, you know, CUNY, in many ways, is -- it  
16 wears two hats. Right?

17 It's the university system that educates  
18 75 percent of New York City public school graduates,  
19 but it's also an institution that's producing, you  
20 know, groundbreaking research, and all these, you  
21 know, great accolades and great -- you know, great  
22 programs, et cetera.

23 And it does both, and we should recognize  
24 both, and we can't lose sight of that.

25 So I wanted to ask you a couple of quick



1 questions.

2           Number one: What do you -- and I know it's a  
3 tough question to answer, so be as honest as you  
4 can, and I appreciate -- I would appreciate it.

5           What do you consider your peer cohort in  
6 terms of a technology institution, nationwide?

7           DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Oh, nationwide?

8           That -- that might be a -- a little difficult  
9 to...

10          SENATOR GOUNARDES: Well, someone -- who  
11 would you compare yourself to?

12          DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: We're a -- we're a  
13 technical college. And most state systems have a  
14 technical college, if you will.

15          In SUNY, for example, I guess Farmingdale  
16 would be close in terms of its programmatic  
17 offerings.

18          But, you know, quite frankly, we're -- we're  
19 part of a phenomenal system here in the city.

20          And, in New York City, there are  
21 opportunities that don't necessarily exist  
22 elsewhere, so we look to establish programs that are  
23 relevant to this environment.

24          The City, for example, has been trying to  
25 grow an industry here related to biotechnology, and

1 it's been very hard to do that.

2 So what we do with the college, recognizing  
3 that, we've been developing programs that will  
4 prepare people to work in that industry.

5 And a bioinformatics program is the -- the  
6 one we put in place recently, in anticipation of the  
7 fact that there is going to be a significant need  
8 here.

9 You may have seen just a couple of weeks ago,  
10 Deerfield invested \$650 million in a new  
11 biotechnology building that they're going to put up  
12 in Lower Manhattan.

13 And these are all geared at bringing some of  
14 that start-up industry in -- in biotechnology to  
15 New York, where it has not been necessarily as  
16 expansive as it is in Boston and other places.

17 So that doesn't quite answer your question,  
18 but...

19 SENATOR GOUNARDES: I guess what I really  
20 want to try to get a sense of is, you know, so you  
21 referenced SUNY Farmingdale.

22 Would you -- honestly, do you think you are  
23 as competitive, in the eyes of potential students or  
24 faculty, as a SUNY -- SUNY Farmingdale, or another  
25 technical college that you would compare yourself

1 to?

2 And then the second follow-up question to  
3 that is: Who would you want to be in a cohort group  
4 with; who do you want to be compared to?

5 I want to get a sense as to -- because, to  
6 your point about the competitiveness, we, obviously,  
7 have to do a lot more to support the programming,  
8 and to help support these groundbreaking things  
9 you're doing.

10 Where do we need to -- what I'm trying to  
11 figure out, where on the ladder do you view  
12 yourself, and do you want to view yourself, and how  
13 can we help get you there? -- is my -- I'm giving  
14 away the punch line here.

15 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Okay, well, the other  
16 part of this, I think it's important to -- I --  
17 I don't want to go in a direction where I can't  
18 bring along my students and the university.

19 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Sure.

20 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: So that's why I'm --  
21 I'm -- I'm focused on -- on what's relevant to our  
22 surroundings.

23 If I were the College of Technology in  
24 Pennsylvania, I would be looking around and thinking  
25 differently about how I would build out and what

1 I would do.

2 And so rather than try to give you a direct  
3 comparison, I just feel that we're trying to  
4 position ourselves in a way that we're serving other  
5 students in New York, and -- and -- and New York.

6 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Well, I appreciate that.  
7 Thank you very much.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Can I follow up on that?  
9 Because I know that the City University  
10 really had its origins in --

11 This question is for any of the panelists.  
12 -- in 1847 with the founding of the  
13 Free Academy.

14 And the purpose then was to educate, at that  
15 time, just the sons of immigrants.

16 How are you fulfilling that mission today  
17 with today's immigrants?

18 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Okay, well, let me --

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: It's open to anybody.

20 DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: -- I'll start.

21 A perfect example:

22 City Tech was the first community college in  
23 the city of New York so designated in 1953.

24 And when it started, it was focused on,  
25 largely, handling GIs that were returning from the

1 Second World War, and they were looking to start an  
2 education, and what have you.

3 So we have transferred from that to today's  
4 environment.

5 And the programs that we're talking about now  
6 are for the New Yorkers that are here now. And we  
7 reach out to them, to provide them with those same  
8 types of opportunities, only the programs are a  
9 little bit more advanced.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Any questions?

11 Well, we thank you very much for coming.

12 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Can I --

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Oh, I'm sorry.

14 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: -- Senator?

15 I just -- I really appreciate what you were  
16 saying about the opportunities that creates  
17 (indiscernible).

18 One population of students we don't hear  
19 a lot about are students with disabilities, and the  
20 additional needs that those -- that student  
21 population has.

22 And I'm wondering how you feel you  
23 appropriately serve them, and how -- and what  
24 additional support you might need to further serve a  
25 student population with disabilities.

1           As we all know, people with disabilities --  
2           you know, up to 80 percent of people with  
3           disabilities are unemployed. Even people with CUNY  
4           and SUNY degrees still can't find opportunities.

5           I'm wondering what we all need to do to give  
6           them opportunities?

7           DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Well, let me just say  
8           that we certainly could use more resources to  
9           support those students.

10          And we do have a --

11          ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: What way?

12          Like, what way -- specifically, what kind of  
13          resources would you need to support them?

14          DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: -- well, for example,  
15          they -- we do have many of them in our programs.

16          They come to take computer-science classes,  
17          and they need assistance in the classroom.

18          They need people to help them, in some cases,  
19          take notes.

20          And if they're hearing impaired, they need  
21          assistance as well.

22          So we have that -- that whole set of  
23          expectations to provide them with an environment  
24          that allows them to master the subject matter and  
25          move forward.

1           And we do find that there are job  
2 opportunities for them.

3           The industry that we deal with, we have  
4 fairly robust placement operation. And industries  
5 are looking and open to hiring students that have  
6 disabilities.

7           And we look to expand that.

8           ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: You just don't have  
9 enough resources for, you said, note-taking and  
10 classroom assistance?

11           Is that --

12           DR. RUSSELL HOTZLER: Well, we can -- we  
13 can -- we can -- yes, we don't have enough. We can  
14 always use more.

15           ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you.

16           And anyone else, if they, I don't know, have  
17 had the same experience? Or --

18           ELAINE PIMENTEL: From the State-aid  
19 perspective, we're pleased that the programs,  
20 typically, allowed for students that have any form  
21 of disability to go on a part-time basis.

22           But if I could add, it would be great if  
23 they -- if they have more abilities to appeal, if  
24 they need to stop out any given semester, and be  
25 able to come back and be able to receive any and all

1 of those programs.

2 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: Trustee Clark has a  
4 question.

5 TRUSTEE UNA CLARKE: As the chair of student  
6 affairs, I see the chair of student disabilities  
7 here.

8 Leonard, so you may want to answer the  
9 question?

10 [Applause.]

11 TRUSTEE UNA CLARKE: All right, Lenny?

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: The students, I think, are  
13 scheduled to testify.

14 TRUSTEE UNA CLARKE: Okay.

15 All right, fine.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: They're on the list.

17 TRUSTEE UNA CLARKE: Thank you,  
18 Mr. President.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: But if you want to answer  
20 the question, that's fine.

21 LEONARD BLADES: You know what? I will --  
22 when I speak, I'll definitely be addressing the  
23 needs of special disabilities. So (inaudible).

24 TRUSTEE UNA CLARKE: Go ahead, Lenny.

25 [Applause.]



1           SENATOR STAVISKY: Any other questions?

2           We thank you for coming, and we thank you for  
3 your testimony.

4           We're ready for the next group, which would  
5 be Jamell Henderson, Melanie Kruevelis, Fay Yanofsky,  
6 and Leonard Blades.

7           The order that I have is Jamell Henderson.

8           If any of you would like to leave your -- you  
9 know, we will -- everyone has a copy of your  
10 testimony, so if you could summarize it, it would be  
11 very helpful.

12           JAMELL N.A. HENDERSON: Good afternoon,  
13 everyone.

14           SENATOR GOUNARDES: Good afternoon.

15           SENATOR STAVISKY: Good afternoon.

16           JAMELL N.A. HENDERSON: Truly an honor and  
17 privilege to be here, and it's truly an honor and  
18 privilege to be at one of the four institutions  
19 within this beloved university that I call home.

20           My name is Jamell Henderson, and I am a proud  
21 four-time CUNY graduate, receiving degrees from the  
22 Borough of Manhattan Community College; right here,  
23 Brooklyn College; Baruch; and this year the  
24 Graduate Center.

25           [Applause.]

1           JAMELL N.A. HENDERSON: I'm a proud  
2 African-American man from Brooklyn to have two  
3 masters, a baccalaureate, and associate degrees.

4           I did it during a time, at present, when  
5 I was a proud student here for the past 15 years,  
6 overall, in CUNY, and witnessed tuition go up at  
7 least 9 times.

8           I am here representing many students whose  
9 voices need to be heard, because it's very important  
10 that I bring to you, on behalf of the 600,000-plus  
11 students, alums, and people around the world, that  
12 have come from our university to hear and understand  
13 our experience.

14           You see, the public doesn't realize that what  
15 makes CUNY students so unique is that we are living,  
16 surviving, hustling, and grinding through this  
17 concrete jungle called New York City.

18           There are students who are making decisions  
19 right now, whether or not to pay November's rent or  
20 to use that towards a course to be one step closer  
21 to graduation.

22           There are students who come from  
23 international countries, like Ghana, Grenada,  
24 Barbados, Japan, and such, who decided to look to  
25 our beloved university for an opportunity to not

1       only give back to their society, but to actually  
2       become a possible citizen of our country, and yet  
3       they're paying 10 times as much as the average  
4       resident.

5               There are students who live in public  
6       housing, that are surviving; trying to figure out  
7       ways that they're going to survive the cold winters  
8       to come, and have to work two to three jobs, knowing  
9       that they will not finish, as some of our  
10       predecessors have said, in the average time of  
11       two years for a community college and a four-year --  
12       and four years for a baccalaureate college.

13              There are students right now who are plotting  
14       to hide on our respective campuses, especially here,  
15       to spend the night, being warm, versus being on the  
16       street.

17              There are students who are experiencing  
18       hunger issues right now, that are in class preparing  
19       for their mid-terms.

20              This is the real experience that the public  
21       needs to be aware of.

22              And in spite all of those things, we, being  
23       New Yorkers, still have to find a way to grind  
24       through it all, because we believe that our  
25       education is the opportunity to open doors for not

1       only our households, but for our races, our genders,  
2       our identities, our cultures, and our communities.

3             It is appalling that, in 2019, we are asking  
4       the State of New York, who has the third-largest  
5       budget in the country, behind the State of  
6       California and the United States itself, to fully  
7       fund CUNY.

8             It doesn't make any sense.

9             A history lesson, right here at this campus:

10            A group of student organizers known as the  
11       "BC '19" stood up and defied the administration, and  
12       locked campuses down, and was in unison with those  
13       who were at Queens College, York College, BMCC, and  
14       City, to not only increase enrollment for Black and  
15       Brown students, but to increase the hiring of  
16       faculty and staff that look like the representation  
17       of their communities.

18            And we know that, outside of the unfortunate  
19       fiscal crisis that happened in 1975 and 1976, it was  
20       the increased and unprecedented enrollment numbers  
21       of Black and Brown communities that decided to say  
22       that higher education was going to be the key to our  
23       success.

24            And as a retaliation, tuition was  
25       implemented.

1           This governor blatantly and explicitly lied  
2           and bamboozled and confused so many dreams when he  
3           had the audacity to stand and say that anyone making  
4           under \$125,000 a year can go to school absolutely  
5           free.

6           Yet, you expect a young woman from  
7           Brownsville, who has two children, that she must  
8           take 15 to 18 credits, and she's a bio major, and  
9           maintain a particular GPA?

10          You expect to tell a young man from  
11          Staten Island, that has to come all the way from  
12          Staten Island to City College, that once he  
13          graduates, he must stay here and not venture out and  
14          follow his dreams wherever the wind blows.

15          This makes no sense at all.

16          But yet we sit here and leaders say to us, as  
17          young people and young adults, education is the key  
18          to success.

19          Well, stop giving us a rusted damn key!

20                 [Applause.]

21          JAMELL N.A. HENDERSON: You see, this is the  
22          moment right now where we're going to be  
23          consistently committed to making sure that this  
24          issue of funding CUNY and SUNY be a done deal.

25          This issue should not last any longer,

1 because if we are expected to be the next great  
2 innovators, the movers and shakers, not only of our  
3 governments, but our society, then we should make  
4 higher education fully funded, where  
5 infrastructures, like our classroom labs, are fully  
6 protected; where there is pantries where a student  
7 will never ever have to worry about finding  
8 something to eat; where we have professors that look  
9 more like the reflection of this beloved city; and  
10 that we are able to let these individuals know, our  
11 future scientists who have the cure for HIV in their  
12 heads right now, the future leaders that will create  
13 policies that will dramatically show true  
14 progressivism in this beloved state and city, the  
15 next president of a college that is really going to  
16 change the old traditions of what seems to work,  
17 that doesn't work in 2019.

18 This is our moment.

19 And on behalf of the many organizations  
20 within the CUNY Rising Alliance, the 600,000-plus  
21 students, and the millions of illustrious alums who  
22 have called this place home, fund CUNY now.

23 Thank you.

24 [Applause.]

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: The next speaker is

1           Melanie Kruevelis.

2                   Did I pronounce it right?

3           MELANIE KRUEVELIS:   You did.

4           SENATOR STAVISKY:   Okay.

5           MELANIE KRUEVELIS:   Thank you.

6                   Great.

7                   It's an honor to follow you, Jamell, and also  
8 a little bit intimidating, so, let's get right into  
9 it.

10                   Good morning, everyone.

11           SENATOR STAVISKY:   Please don't feel  
12 intimidated.

13           MELANIE KRUEVELIS:   Don't worry, I'll roll  
14 right through it.

15                   Good morning.

16                   My name is Melanie Kruevelis, and I'm the  
17 senior manager of policy and advocacy at  
18 Young Invincibles. And we are also a proud member  
19 of the CUNY Rising Alliance.

20                   Young Invincibles is a non-profit dedicated  
21 to elevating young adults in the political process.

22                   And I want to thank Senator Toby Ann Stavisky  
23 and the representatives present today for holding  
24 this very important hearing on the cost of public  
25 education here in New York.

1           Today's hearing comes at a critical moment  
2           for New York's college students.

3           Today, 9 out of every 10 jobs created in this  
4           country goes to those with a college degree, and  
5           while there are multiple paths to a living-wage  
6           career, a college degree remains one of the best  
7           options to attaining long-term economic stability;  
8           however, access to that education is not created  
9           equal.

10           Nationally, White, and Asian-American,  
11           Pacific Islander, students graduate from college at  
12           rates nearly twice that of Black students, and about  
13           one-and-a-half times that of Latinx students.

14           Evidence of this racial gap in college  
15           attainment can be seen in our public institutions  
16           right here in New York.

17           More than half of the student population  
18           attending SUNY colleges are White, while, at CUNY,  
19           over half of the students are Black and Brown  
20           students.

21           Across SUNY four-year colleges, the six-year  
22           graduation rate is 68 percent compared with 55 at  
23           CUNY.

24           How then can New York change course and  
25           ensure that its young people have equitable access



1 to educational success?

2 And how can we ensure that taxpayer dollars  
3 are supporting systems that propel more low-income  
4 and more students of color into greater economic  
5 stability?

6 To start, the State can work to ensure that  
7 our systems are actually adequately funded to serve  
8 students who are increasingly entering college from  
9 a variety of backgrounds, whether that's student  
10 parents and working students, to those experiencing  
11 homelessness.

12 Yet, our current paradigm for public  
13 higher-education funding does not support that  
14 vision of post-secondary equity.

15 Consider the curious case of the TAP gap.

16 Since 2011, state law has required that  
17 students with the greatest financial need must be  
18 able to attend SUNY or CUNY tuition-free even when  
19 State disinvestment from TAP means the award no  
20 longer covers tuition.

21 The law requires that the universities, and  
22 not the State, fill the so-called "TAP gap."

23 In recent years, that gap has cost CUNY  
24 \$74 million annually.

25 This unfunded tuition mandate does not serve

1 the state's public institution nor the students they  
2 serve.

3 It's time for the State to eliminate the  
4 TAP gap by indexing the TAP award with tuition, so  
5 tuition no longer exceeds those grants and grows  
6 with the cost of college.

7 [Applause.]

8 MELANIE KRUVELIS: The continued  
9 underinvestment in the TAP award particularly harms  
10 those students on the Independent TAP schedule,  
11 including homeless youth.

12 A 2019 survey of 22,000 CUNY undergraduates  
13 found that nearly 15 percent of those surveyed had  
14 experienced homelessness in a given year. That's  
15 5 percentage points higher than the share of  
16 New York City Department of Education students in  
17 temporary housing.

18 Our state financial-aid system, in short,  
19 does not adequately serve students who lack a  
20 reliable, safe place to stay at night.

21 Under current TAP rules, unaccompanied  
22 homeless youth are classified as  
23 "financially-independent students," which actually  
24 cuts how much TAP aid these students are eligible to  
25 receive by more than \$2,000, maximum, annually.

1           In 2014, New York State amended  
2           dependent-status rules for some youth, including  
3           foster youth, orphans, and wards of the court, to  
4           allow these students to access the state's dependent  
5           status and actually receive a higher amount of aid.

6           Unaccompanied homeless students were not  
7           included in that change.

8           But given the prevalence of homelessness on  
9           our college campuses, the State should expand this  
10          dependency-status change to students who are  
11          experiencing homelessness.

12          Finally, what else can be done to ensure that  
13          New York State honors taxpayers' investment in  
14          public colleges and supports its increasingly  
15          diverse student body?

16          One answer, is to invest in the wraparound  
17          services that both research and students tell us  
18          improve their on-campus experience and increase  
19          their likelihood of completion.

20          Take, for instance, CUNY ASAP.

21          We've already talked a little bit today about  
22          what ASAP does.

23          But among other things, it provides waivers  
24          for tuition and mandatory fees, and some of those  
25          really important supports that some of the first

1 panel mentioned, including metro cards.

2 An MVRC study found that ASAP students had  
3 double the graduation rates of their non-ASAP peers.

4 And given the success of ASAP, CUNY has begun  
5 replicating that program in some of the four-year  
6 institutions as ACE, which is currently piloting at  
7 John Jay and Lehman College.

8 Students that we talk to tell us -- or,  
9 corroborate what the outcomes data show.

10 In focus groups that we held across  
11 New York City, students told us the value that they  
12 see in the ASAP program.

13 "I feel like, in college, ASAP is one of the  
14 best programs anybody can join," one student told  
15 us.

16 "If they brought it to the four-year  
17 colleges, I'd go back to school just to get into  
18 that program."

19 As the state struggles to increase its  
20 graduation rates at public colleges, we should look  
21 at a model that's actually improving those rates.

22 CUNY ASAP is much closer to a vision of free  
23 college than Excelsior is.

24 As the state struggles to increase graduation  
25 rates, it's time to invest that program in programs

1 that move the needle on student completion and  
2 success.

3 New York State should fully cover the cost of  
4 ASAP and ACE at \$100 million, allowing institutions  
5 to double programming across CUNY campuses citywide.

6 I want to thank you all for the opportunity  
7 to testify today, and we look forward with working  
8 with you and your colleagues to tackle the  
9 college-affordability crisis, and ensure that all  
10 New Yorkers have access to a high-quality  
11 post-secondary credential.

12 [Applause.]

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

14 Questions?

15 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Sure. You want to do  
16 questions now? Or do you --

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah -- you know, let's  
18 have the questions after everybody has given their  
19 testimony. This way, it may be helpful.

20 Next we have Fay Yanofsky.

21 FAY YANOFSKY: Are you going to ask the  
22 questions?

23 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: At the end.

24 SENATOR GOUNARDES: No, after all you speak.

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: No.

1           FAY YANOFSKY: Got you.

2           Good afternoon, everybody.

3           My name is Fay Yanofsky. I'm the Brooklyn  
4 College University Student Center representative.

5           I wanted to discuss the issues that I ran on  
6 when I was campaigning because -- before I get into  
7 the other ones related to -- directly to, like,  
8 financial assistance.

9           So I laid out six issues, and I summarized  
10 them, as per your request, Chair Stavisky.

11          So the first problem that students face is  
12 our funding for our school counseling is low.

13          So when -- this is regarding mental health,  
14 there's only three sessions for a counselor and a  
15 student.

16          So that's really an important issue for  
17 students who are stressed out with exams, and who  
18 are facing anxiety for, like, with mid-terms, and  
19 things like that.

20          And then the second issue --

21          Speak louder?

22          OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: Put the mic closer to  
23 your mouth.

24          FAY YANOFSKY: You go it.

25          OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: It's a little hard to

1 hear.

2 FAY YANOFSKY: All right.

3 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: We want everybody up  
4 here to hear you.

5 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: Turn it up.

6 FAY YANOFSKY: Turn it up?

7 JAMELL N.A. HENDERSON: There you go.

8 FAY YANOFSKY: All right.

9 To the second point about adjuncts, an issue  
10 that we raised was, it should be raised to \$7,000 a  
11 course.

12 To your earlier point, Senator Jackson, I was  
13 speaking to the chair of faculty council at  
14 Brooklyn College, and he said that, if the State  
15 doesn't fund this bill, then it's going to come out  
16 of the existing budget within CUNY, which would  
17 bankrupt the colleges.

18 So this really needs to be coming from the  
19 State.

20 [Applause.]

21 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

22 FAY YANOFSKY: Yep.

23 The thirist issue that I wanted to discuss was  
24 the maintenance-of-effort bill.

25 This would be to invest in -- in, I guess, to

1 fix -- like, to get rid of the asbestos on our  
2 campus, to fix the broken elevators. Some  
3 classrooms don't have ceilings, and ceiling tiles  
4 are falling down.

5 So it would just -- that would really  
6 rehabilitate the campuses across CUNY.

7 And when I brought this up to Jamell on the  
8 phone, a lot of people were explaining, and I was  
9 getting some pushback, that, you know, the usual  
10 answer is, that we don't -- like, the State doesn't  
11 have any money for this, because it's a \$3 billion  
12 investment in CUNY, which is too much.

13 But what Jamell brought up, which was a very  
14 interesting point to me, regardless of what you feel  
15 about Amazon, but, the \$3 billion was available for  
16 them. It was not available for us.

17 [Applause.]

18 FAY YANOFSKY: So that was just an important  
19 point.

20 And my fourth point is, regarding the TAP  
21 gap.

22 So just in case, people who don't understand  
23 the TAP gap, TAP is the amount of money that  
24 financial assistance covers, and then there's  
25 tuition. So there's a gap in between TAP and the



1 actual existing condition -- tuition, excuse me.

2 So there is \$74 million that CUNY loses from  
3 that TAP gap.

4 So when we say "close the TAP gap," we're  
5 talking about the gap that exists between TAP and  
6 then the actual cost of tuition.

7 And I also wanted -- I know we're having  
8 a lot of conversations about the Excelsior  
9 Scholarship.

10 The reality is, that it only covers about  
11 1 to 2 percent of the students in this university  
12 system.

13 So, just wanted to lay that out there.

14 And then the sixth point was that, the -- for  
15 the board of trustees.

16 So, we get a lot of tuition increases every  
17 year.

18 So the way that this happens is that, the  
19 board of trustees approves these tuition increases.

20 And the mayor and the governor are directly  
21 responsible for the board of trustees and who gets  
22 appointed.

23 So I think that it's important to understand  
24 that they're indirectly responsible for our tuition  
25 increases.

1           And the last point that I wanted to say is  
2           that, if -- if we wanted to make any progress here  
3           within CUNY, we would need the State -- and the  
4           state Senate and the state Assembly to override, and  
5           then, I guess, the city council to override, the  
6           agenda of the mayor and the governor, whatever it is  
7           that it may be.

8           So, thank you very much.

9           SENATOR STAVISKY: Let the fourth person --  
10          we have one more.

11          SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. Sorry.

12          SENATOR STAVISKY: And then -- the last one  
13          is Leonard Blades, USS Vice Chair for Students with  
14          Disabilities.

15          And we have a great chapter at Queens too.

16          LEONARD BLADES: Thank you, thank you.

17          Good afternoon.

18          SENATOR STAVISKY: Good afternoon.

19          LEONARD BLADES: Chair Stavisky, members of  
20          the State Senate Committee on Higher Education, and  
21          members of the Brooklyn delegation to New York State  
22          Senate, my name is Leonard Blades, and I proudly  
23          serve as the vice chair for disability affairs for  
24          the university student senate, CUNY's official  
25          student government's organization.

1           And as what Trustee Clarke alluded to  
2           earlier, I also am privileged to serve as the  
3           chairperson for the CUNY Coalition for Students with  
4           Disabilities (CCSD).

5           I am currently a graduate student at the CUNY  
6           School of Professional Studies, pursuing my master  
7           of science degree in disability services and higher  
8           education, which I will be graduating and receiving  
9           upon in May of 2020.

10           More --

11           [Applause.]

12           LEONARD BLADES: -- and, moreover, I am a  
13           very proud alumnus of Brooklyn College, and a  
14           lifelong resident of Kings County.

15           Thank you for the invitation to be here and  
16           to testify in today's hearing.

17           I'm here this afternoon to urge you to  
18           enhance access to higher education for thousands of  
19           New Yorkers by supporting our state's college and  
20           university students with disabilities.

21           Students with disabilities have enrolled in  
22           New York State post-secondary institutions in record  
23           numbers.

24           According to the state education department,  
25           there are more than 73,000 students with

1 disabilities currently enrolled at New York State  
2 higher-education institutions.

3 At CUNY, there are more than  
4 11,000 student -- identified students with  
5 disabilities. That's an increase of 50 percent over  
6 the last 25 years, according to the university's  
7 office of institutional research.

8 Fortunately, thanks to support from the state  
9 Legislature, CUNY has a budget line in its operating  
10 budget specifically for providing services for our  
11 students with disabilities; however, investment in  
12 critical support services has not kept pace with  
13 enrollment.

14 In fact, if you factor inflation, investment  
15 and reasonable accommodations has actually declined.

16 Moreover, CUNY's budget line for disability  
17 services has remained at the same amount, which is  
18 \$2.5 million, since the fiscal year of 1993 to '94.

19 The good news, is that there is now an  
20 opportunity to address this problem.

21 The state education department is advancing a  
22 budget request that would provide supplemental  
23 support for students with disabilities at all four  
24 sectors of higher education in our state: CUNY,  
25 SUNY, private colleges, and proprietary

1 institutions.

2 The initial request for funding the city  
3 program is proposing is \$15 million.

4 Most importantly, the SED funding plan will  
5 not replace existing CUNY funding for our students  
6 with disabilities.

7 Once fully funded, the additional funding  
8 provided by the SED program would nearly double  
9 CUNY's current operating budget for services to  
10 students with disabilities.

11 Some of the areas in which CUNY will be in a  
12 better position to enhance services for our diverse  
13 student population with disabilities include:

14 An expansion of CUNY project reach, which  
15 currently serve the needs of students on the autism  
16 spectrum across five of the university's campuses,  
17 which include Brooklyn College and Kingsborough  
18 Community College;

19 Expansion of CUNY Unlimited, the university's  
20 program to develop a meaningful credential and  
21 provide independent living-skill development and  
22 career readiness in an inclusive (indiscernible) --  
23 an inclusive setting for students with intellectual  
24 disabilities;

25 And, a learning-disabilities assessment

1 project that could potentially expand critical  
2 disability services to hundreds of currently  
3 undiagnosed students with learning disabilities,  
4 annually.

5 Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't take a  
6 moment to thank both Senator Stavisky and  
7 Senator Gounardes for their leadership in this area.

8 Senator Stavisky, you helped champion the  
9 successful legislative effort to fund our CUNY LEADS  
10 program which provides invaluable career and  
11 academic guidance for our students with  
12 disabilities, not to mention enhanced employment  
13 opportunities.

14 Your door has always been open to listen to  
15 our concerns and champion our causes.

16 Senator Gounardes, during only your first  
17 legislative session as a member of the state Senate,  
18 you not only supported the SED funding initiative,  
19 but you co-sponsored our Disability Advocacy Day  
20 rally at the Capitol building last February.

21 More than 200 students with disabilities from  
22 throughout the state participated in that effort to  
23 raise awareness about the needs of New York State  
24 college and university students with disabilities.

25 I would also like to thank state

1 Assemblymember Epstein for being here today.

2 Assemblymember Epstein has been a great  
3 champion for students with disabilities on the  
4 Assembly Committee on Higher Education and the  
5 Assembly Task Force on People with Disabilities.

6 Assemblymember Epstein, thank you so very  
7 much for your leadership in the area of disability  
8 and employment.

9 Your support for adequate funding for  
10 disability services, and for just being the driving  
11 force and encouraging us to organize Disability  
12 Advocacy Day.

13 I'm urging all our friends in the state  
14 Legislature to join us at next February's Advocacy  
15 Day.

16 Yes, there will be a next.

17 Moreover, please advocate in favor of the SED  
18 budget request for enhancing support services for  
19 college and university students with disabilities.

20 Please support this issue in conference, and  
21 urge leadership to make funding for higher education  
22 a budget priority during the upcoming legislative  
23 session.

24 Thank you very much.

25 [Applause.]

1           SENATOR STAVISKY:  If I could add a personal  
2 note to your testimony, we also can't mention that  
3 without mentioning Vice Chancellor Chris Rosa.

4           [Applause.]

5           SENATOR STAVISKY:  Charmaine agrees.

6           CHARMAINE:  I'll tell her.

7           SENATOR STAVISKY:  Questions now, for all of  
8 the panelists.

9           Let's start with the left, down here.

10          Any questions?

11          Let's go right straight down.

12          Assemblyman Epstein.

13          ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN:  Leonard, I really  
14 want to thank you for your words and your comments.

15          But I think we just need to hear more about  
16 what the failings are of providing support for  
17 students with disabilities, and what barriers are in  
18 place, and what opportunities that we need to do in  
19 state government to improve it.

20          I know funding is a critical aspect.

21          And, you know, we're going to be, well, it's  
22 the third down again, see how it goes with the  
23 budget this year, but, I think we're there.

24          But I think we need to hear more, so we can  
25 inform all our colleagues of how important this is



1 for the success of students with disabilities.

2 LEONARD BLADES: Absolutely.

3 Again, as I mentioned, and you just  
4 mentioned, that the budget hasn't been increased for  
5 more than 25 years.

6 And, you know, within that time, while the  
7 budget has remained the same, the enrollment of  
8 students with disabilities has continued to  
9 increase.

10 So it's been -- you can imagine that it's  
11 tough trying to keep pace, you know, with the same  
12 budget line, you know, that provides services, but  
13 also keeping up with the amount of students that  
14 continue to enroll, which, of course, is a very good  
15 thing, because students with disabilities should not  
16 experience any barriers when it comes to higher  
17 education; none whatsoever.

18 And just to mention what our president of  
19 City Tech had alluded to in regards to services, you  
20 know, for note-takers, and just a various amount of  
21 services for students with disabilities in general,  
22 if this budget, you know, is approved, then that  
23 automatically addresses that need, you know, and not  
24 just for students, you know, who may need  
25 note-takers, but just students of various

1 disabilities.

2 You know, like myself, you know, folks who  
3 have physical disabilities, folks who are  
4 learning-impaired, folks who are visually-impaired,  
5 folks who are hearing-impaired, you know, we -- we  
6 have more than 11,000 students with disabilities  
7 throughout CUNY.

8 And this budget request would make such a  
9 difference for them; and also, again, for the more  
10 than 73,000 students throughout New York State.

11 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Gounardes.

13 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you.

14 So many questions come to mind, I'll try to  
15 keep them really brief.

16 You know, I had a -- I had a law school  
17 professor who joked to us once, and said, "If you  
18 die before you pay off your student loans, you win."

19 [Laughter.]

20 SENATOR GOUNARDES: And you know what? He  
21 was absolutely true, and that is so depressing, as  
22 someone who is con -- still making my student-loan  
23 payments, just for law school, not for CUNY.

24 You know, and because of that, and I've  
25 proposed -- this year I proposed an amendment to the

1 New York State Constitution, to make New York the  
2 first state in the country to constitutionally  
3 guarantee free, quality public education from pre-K  
4 through post-secondary.

5 [Applause.]

6 SENATOR GOUNARDES: I think that's -- so the  
7 issue -- it's not lost on me how important, you  
8 know, fully funding CUNY is.

9 And we can talk about the -- you know, to  
10 Jamell's point about some of the -- Jamell's point  
11 about some of the outside factors; the housing, the  
12 food.

13 I want to focus a bit more on the academic  
14 consequences of not having a fully funded system.

15 I want to open it up to all of you.

16 And if you guys can speak to your experiences  
17 with, you know, inability, and I think, Sal [sic],  
18 you touched on it a little bit, like, counseling  
19 services, but more, like, tell me about the classes  
20 you haven't been able to get into because the  
21 universities or the colleges can't offer enough  
22 offerings for you to graduate on time, or students  
23 that can't graduate on time.

24 Talk about some of those types of issues that  
25 affect your ability to succeed academically because

1 of the budgetary constraints that are being forced  
2 on the system, college-wide and university-wide, if  
3 you will.

4 JAMELL N.A. HENDERSON: All right, so I want  
5 to talk from -- I'm going to talk about my recent  
6 experience, because I had the honor of coming back  
7 home to Brooklyn College as an adjunct professor.

8 I'm 34 years old.

9 And so when I was able to teach for the first  
10 time, I just graduated, class of 2015, so I knew  
11 many students and faculty and staff here.

12 And when I had the honor of teaching, first  
13 things first was, the offer. Right?

14 The offer award, \$3200 -- right? -- for a  
15 16-week period.

16 This is someone with two masters. Right?

17 My colleagues who have Ph.D.s, we're all  
18 in the same bracket.

19 It doesn't make sense.

20 In terms of the academic experience:

21 When I was teaching my class, which was civil  
22 rights and Black power, which was a full circle by  
23 my mentor, Dr. Jeanne Theoharis, I was teaching it  
24 in the Roosevelt Hall.

25 And if you've never seen the Roosevelt Hall,

1 it's pretty old.

2 But not only is it old, the air quality is  
3 horrendous.

4 Heating at that time, and I taught in the  
5 spring semester, I had to constantly try to come up  
6 with different excuses until I spoke the truth,  
7 that, you know what? Heating is not working back  
8 here, because, for whatever reason, infrastructures,  
9 like in this building, are not being upgraded.

10 But there are many students who are here at  
11 Brooklyn College who can tell you, and have shared  
12 with me, some of the classrooms that have poor air  
13 quality, poor heating.

14 They're not even upgraded with, you know,  
15 Smart Boards, and things of that such.

16 So there's an academic experience that, as a  
17 professor, the things that we're dealing with, the  
18 challenges that we're dealing with.

19 On top of the fact that I got hired 10 days  
20 before the semester started.

21 So think about how intense, I had to come up  
22 with a 16-week syllabus, to create something that's  
23 going to improve the lives of students to go forth  
24 and be active in their communities.

25 As a student, when I first started at BMCC,

1 I took several remedial courses, because,  
2 unfortunately, the New York City public education  
3 system failed me.

4 And I distinctively remember a professor in  
5 math class, Math 012, at BMCC, asked, "You should  
6 know this work already. Why you still having a  
7 tough time?" -- because I was consistently asking  
8 questions.

9 The answer was: Well, I'm sorry. It's not  
10 my fault that the New York City public education  
11 system didn't create a successful pipeline for  
12 students who look like me to be ahead of the game  
13 with along my colleagues.

14 So there are students who are dealing with  
15 remedial courses, that are having a tough time.

16 Not only are they having a tough time, you  
17 know, with the academic courses, but, they also are  
18 not able to connect with said professors because,  
19 you know, many of the professors that teach in  
20 particular subjects are from other countries, and  
21 their English is not well, and it's not their fault.

22 However, there should be some more  
23 understanding and diversity behind the classes that  
24 are being taught.

25 There are also courses where, in truth, I was

1 the only Black person in the room.

2 And that recently happened at the  
3 Graduate Center, where, every time a constant  
4 conversation about politics and race impacted my  
5 community, everybody looked at me, as if whatever  
6 they say, me, on behalf of the Black delegation,  
7 have to approve.

8 These are real conversations. Right?

9 There are students right now, and -- and in  
10 my own experience, where I paid ridiculous amount of  
11 money for books, just for a new sentence and they  
12 called it the "21st Edition."

13 There are issues that, where, on top of  
14 dealing with the academic struggles and issues  
15 behind the courses that we're being taught, we're  
16 being poorly advised.

17 The ratio is 1,000-to-1.

18 Do you understand that, for every -- think  
19 about that: Every 1,000 students, 1,000 students,  
20 have to, literally, wait another semester just to  
21 take one final course to be the graduating class of  
22 2020. And now they have to wait until 2021.

23 And then they expect us to finish on time, to  
24 do well on time.

25 And so these are just some of the challenges

1 that we're facing.

2 And it's so important that, when we ask for  
3 fully funding of CUNY, that it covers all of those  
4 things.

5 All right?

6 Today's students in New York City are not  
7 graduating in two years on time. They're not  
8 graduating four years on time.

9 We pay rent.

10 We have to take care of jobs.

11 We lead our families.

12 We are take taking care of our little  
13 brothers and sisters, our grandmothers, our  
14 grandparents.

15 So that reality is an exemption to the rule  
16 here in New York City.

17 The only way you are able to do that is  
18 unless you have zero obligations. That means you  
19 ain't doing anything else but school.

20 By a show of hands, who has that obligation?

21 Okay, two -- three?

22 Now, who is working, taking care of a family,  
23 trying to pay rent, survive?

24 Look around (indicating).

25 This is the real New York experience.



1           And I'm so glad you all raised your hands  
2 because now the public is being aware.

3           And we need to continue to work alongside,  
4 and let this governor know that we mean business,  
5 because, guess what?

6           Just like him, everybody that is against this  
7 has to come back to us, and our answers will be  
8 shown in the polls.

9           Thank you.

10           [Applause.]

11           SENATOR STAVISKY: Can we request that--  
12 let's be concise.

13           I'm not saying anything, you know, but there  
14 are other people who need to testify.

15           Senator Gounardes.

16           SENATOR GOUNARDES: No, that --

17           SENATOR STAVISKY: Oh, I thought you had --

18           SENATOR GOUNARDES: -- I asked my I asked my  
19 questions, and I thank you very much.

20           Senator Jackson, do you have --

21           SENATOR JACKSON: Yes, I do.

22           Thank you, Madam Chair.

23           Well, first to the representatives, let me  
24 thank you for your testimony.

25           And, obviously, it's very important to hear

1 from the students themselves, and the activists  
2 themselves, so -- which is totally different from  
3 the president and CUNY from an administrative point  
4 of view.

5 Some of them cannot really say what they  
6 really want to say, but you can, and you have.

7 And so let me thank you.

8 So, I mean, you raise the issue of, you know,  
9 that the Senate and the Assembly have to do their  
10 job, to provide the resources, or at least put it  
11 up.

12 But as you know, there's an Assembly, there's  
13 a Senate, and then there's the 800-pound gorilla in  
14 the room.

15 And when we all have to come together in  
16 order -- whether or not that's in the state or the  
17 city council, doesn't make a difference.

18 The mayor and the governor has a lot of  
19 power.

20 Power dynamics, let's talk about it.

21 And so, with that respect, many of you don't  
22 know, but there was a lawsuit filed called Silver --  
23 Shelly Silver, the former speaker, versus Pataki,  
24 the governor.

25 And that decision that came out, it cut our

1 legs right out of us.

2 You understand?

3 And now the Governor knows he holds the  
4 power.

5 You talked about us working together.

6 I ask you, each one of you, and I can ask  
7 each one of you in here:

8 Do you know who your state assemblymember is?

9 Do you know who your state senator is?

10 Do you know who your city council member is?

11 Are you a registered voter?

12 Or even if you're not eligible to register to  
13 vote, are you advocating for yourself?

14 And these are questions, not only asked of  
15 you here who are the activists, but all of the CUNY  
16 and SUNY students, because, I say to you, that it  
17 takes the Assembly and the Senate coming together  
18 and saying, let's say, this is the amount of money,  
19 let's say it's \$1 billion, and we send it to the  
20 Governor, and the Governor vetoes it.

21 Do we have enough to override a veto in the  
22 Assembly?

23 Yes, in the Assembly.

24 You have 170 Democrats out of 150.

25 If you don't know, now you do know.

1           And in the state Senate, we have 63 state  
2 senators, you need 42 to override a veto.

3           We don't have enough.

4           We only have 40.

5           And do you think the Republicans are going to  
6 give us the votes so they can make us look good?

7           I don't think so!

8           Let me be real.

9           Okay?

10          So we have a job next year, to get more  
11 Democrats, so we can override a Governor veto.

12          Until we can do that, we don't have the power  
13 that we rightfully deserve.

14          That's my message, and I don't have a  
15 question, but you know what the message is.

16          SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

17          In a sentence, what Senator Jackson is  
18 saying, is that the court case from -- this is a  
19 really important point.

20          When the Governor issues his budget, and we  
21 have agreement, we cannot add to that budget.

22          That's the result, the bottom line, of the  
23 Silver v. Pataki lawsuit, which was about 10 years  
24 ago when Pataki was governor.

25          We cannot add a penny to that budget, and

1 that is the root of many of our problems.

2 And I don't know if overriding, because we  
3 tried that 10 years ago, and it was -- it didn't  
4 work.

5 We need that case to be overturned, in my  
6 opinion.

7 Any other questions?

8 Senator Salazar has a question.

9 SENATOR SALAZAR: I did, but I think I lost  
10 it.

11 But I really appreciate hearing directly from  
12 you, you all, as students and former students, and  
13 thank you for your testimony.

14 I'm hopeful that it will directly inform what  
15 we do to finally improve circumstances for CUNY  
16 students, and SUNY students as well.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: Do you have a questions?

18 All right, Senator Gounardes.

19 SENATOR GOUNARDES: This is another question.

20 It's not so much on the cost, but one of the  
21 ideas, you know, I chair the Civil Service and  
22 Pensions Committee in the Senate.

23 And one of the ideas that I'm very interested  
24 in, is thinking about ways we connect our public  
25 universities to our public-sector workforce,

1 especially to create pipelines for job opportunities  
2 and career tracks.

3 And so if, you know, those of you that are  
4 students here -- I think all of you are students  
5 here -- can you talk about any programs that you've  
6 seen be made available to you as a student, whether  
7 it's informational, technical, substantive...  
8 anything.

9 I'm just curious (indiscernible) your sense  
10 as to how you view job opportunities and career  
11 opportunities through the public-sector workforce  
12 during your time at a CUNY campus.

13 FAY YANOFSKY: I could talk about, like  
14 Brooklyn College, for example, has a  
15 Magner Center -- a Magner Career Center. So, that's  
16 part of the student activity fees.

17 So what they do is, they train people how to  
18 interview, and then they connect you directly with  
19 employers.

20 So that's something that I personally  
21 benefited from.

22 I remember, like, when I was a freshman,  
23 getting grilled by the guy in charge, you know, and  
24 you say, you have you to answer this way.

25 You know, and that took some time.

1           But, he really prepared me for intense  
2 interviews, and just things that I need to do well  
3 in, like, post graduation.

4           LEONARD BLADES: Hello.

5           No, but to answer your question in regards to  
6 programs, I just want to -- I'll go to CUNY LEADS,  
7 because, again, it provides, you know, invaluable  
8 career and academic guidance, you know, to students  
9 like myself.

10           And just to talk about my experience,  
11 I remember, at Brooklyn College, in the year of  
12 2012-2013, I met with my CUNY LEADS advisor, and  
13 I needed to update my resume, because there was an  
14 internship to serve as a publicist for Bees and  
15 Butterflies Performing Arts.

16           And for those who know me best, you know, I'm  
17 all about community outreach, and reaching out to  
18 people. And this is something I was definitely  
19 intrigued and interested in doing.

20           But, again, my resume was kind out of whack,  
21 so I need to update that; and I did. The CUNY LEADS  
22 advisor helped me with that. And I used that resume  
23 to apply to that internship.

24           And I feel fortunate enough to say, that  
25 I got it. And, you know, I served as a publicist.

1           And, you know, that's just one of the way  
2 CUNY LEADS helps, you know, students like myself.

3           And just recently --

4           Again, that was 2012-2013.

5           -- it's 2019, so I definitely need to upgrade  
6 my resume again. And this time I met with my  
7 CUNY LEADS advisor at my current school, which is  
8 the CUNY School of Professional Studies, to upgrade  
9 my resume, because, you know, again, I will be  
10 graduating soon. And, you know, the time will come  
11 where it will -- the time will come for me to start,  
12 you know, looking for work.

13           And, you know, the fact that I have my resume  
14 on hand and, you know, that it's ready to go when  
15 that time comes, is definitely a comfort to me.

16           And, you know, it definitely serves, you  
17 know, again, students like myself, you know, not  
18 just with mobility impairments, but just the more  
19 than 11,000 students with disabilities.

20           You know, CUNY LEADS really does make a  
21 difference.

22           And I'm really happy that this program  
23 exists, you know, for students like myself, in the  
24 area of disability employment.

25           SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you.



1 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Salazar.

2 Thank you.

3 Specifically for Jamell, because you  
4 mentioned your experience with the remedial courses,  
5 I have a clarifying question first.

6 The experience that you had with an  
7 instructor who was saying, like, why don't you --  
8 why don't you already know this? You know, that  
9 that should have been taught in high school, or  
10 something like that, was that an experience in a  
11 remedial course, or was that prior to -- does  
12 that --

13 JAMELL N.A. HENDERSON: That was an  
14 experience in a remedial course.

15 SENATOR SALAZAR: Wow.

16 JAMELL N.A. HENDERSON: I was in Math 012 at  
17 that time.

18 SENATOR SALAZAR: Yeah.

19 JAMELL N.A. HENDERSON: And the instructor  
20 blatantly said that in front of the classroom.

21 SENATOR SALAZAR: Yeah, that's really  
22 appalling.

23 Based on your experience, both as a student  
24 and as an educator, what improvements do you think  
25 should be made to the program -- to those programs

1 specifically that ostensibly exist, to try to make  
2 up for the gap in, you know, a student who -- who --  
3 you know -- I -- I actually -- I personally went to  
4 a really poorly-funded public school. And found  
5 that, when I got to college, I -- there weren't  
6 remedial courses.

7 But, I was often, you know, ashamed that  
8 I hadn't had the same curriculum, or even anything  
9 similar to what some of my peers did, coming from  
10 the schools that they came from.

11 And -- and, to a degree, that -- that's  
12 really about our responsibility to equitably fund  
13 our public schools. Right?

14 But, beyond that, and until we actually do  
15 that, what improvements would you recommend to the  
16 programs that exist, to try to make up that gap?

17 JAMELL N.A. HENDERSON: That's a very good  
18 question.

19 I think the first and foremost, I think  
20 remedial classes are unprecedentedly expensive.

21 It doesn't make sense that a student should  
22 be penalized for something that they don't know.

23 If I'm coming in and I don't -- and I wasn't  
24 taught math appropriately, a college should not  
25 penalize me for not knowing that subject.

1           There should be intense boot-camp trainings.

2           There should be math, like, you know, basic  
3           fundamentals.

4           You know, we got to go back to the  
5           fundamentals.

6           I remember growing up -- remember growing up,  
7           watching PBS shows, you learned the fundamentals of  
8           learning?

9           We need to go back to that on the collegiate  
10          levels. There needs to be an introduction to these  
11          courses because, again, you know, no matter what  
12          people say, in our communities, we still have the  
13          poor-quality public school systems that does not  
14          give us the appropriate preparation that we need to  
15          transition into college.

16          So I'm looking at things like, providing boot  
17          camps. Actually, you know, working alongside a  
18          professor to actually experiment those things that  
19          you're doing, because sometimes you have to be  
20          hands-on learning. Everything is not a lecture.  
21          Right?

22          And then -- and I would say, also, that they  
23          teach how these structures or these subjects apply  
24          to everyday life, because you'll be surprised how  
25          many students say, Well, what does pre-algebra have

1 do with me being a political scientist? What does  
2 physics have to do with me, you know, studying  
3 the -- you know, the water, or geology?

4 Like, we need to figure out how these things  
5 all come together because that will spark more  
6 interest.

7 And realizing that, as it aligns with our  
8 career goals, it would be helpful.

9 Right?

10 So I would say, you know, things like boot  
11 camps, really having experiential learning alongside  
12 professors, to show how this applies to everyday  
13 life, but also teaching the fundamentals.

14 And I just want to really quickly add to the  
15 point of the programs that you provide, because,  
16 while we do have some programs that helps, what  
17 we're experiencing now is the "E" word, and that's  
18 called "experience," which is killing us, because  
19 one cannot gain experience without an opportunity.

20 You can't.

21 There are many jobs, that we just graduate  
22 from college, that will say, oh, well, you need  
23 three years of college -- you need three years of  
24 experience in marketing. You need three years of  
25 experience, or five years.

1           How in the world we supposed to get that?

2           I thought our degrees was enough, but yet we  
3 have to compete with that and, therefore, it makes  
4 our challenges even more harder.

5           Prior to getting this position, I've applied  
6 for jobs, from corporate on the vice presidential  
7 levels, even some CEO levels, all the way down to  
8 trying to work at Wendy's, just to get by.

9           That was the reality of myself, and many  
10 other students who understand what that experience  
11 is like.

12           So we need to provide more programs that's  
13 going give students the experience through  
14 opportunities, to understand the workforce that  
15 they're getting ready to get involved in.

16           I just wanted to leave it at that.

17           SENATOR STAVISKY: Anybody else?

18           Okay, well, we thank you very much for  
19 coming.

20           Thank you.

21           [Applause.]

22           SENATOR STAVISKY: I've always said that the  
23 students should be at the top of the testimony,  
24 period, not at the bottom.

25           And I think we demonstrated that today.

1           Sorry to keep you waiting.

2           Next we have:

3           Fred Kowal, the president of UUP;

4           Rowena Blackman-Stroud, UUP Downstate

5           Medical;

6           Julieta Schiffino, UUP System Administrator;

7           And -- they're not going to be asked in this  
8           order, but...

9           And Roberta -- excuse me -- Elins, president,  
10          United College Employees of FIT.

11          I know Professor Kowal has to leave, so we'll  
12          call you first, and Roberta second.

13          FREDERICK E. KOWAL:   Okay.

14          Okay, first, thank you, Chairperson Stavisky,  
15          and for -- to all of the members of the Senate and  
16          the Assembly and the Board of Trustees of CUNY.

17          It is a great honor to be here to represent  
18          the 37,000 faculty and professional staff in UUP,  
19          which is the largest higher-ed unit in the country,  
20          representing campuses across New York State.

21          And, in fact, within New York City, we have  
22          Maritime College, the College of Optometry,  
23          Empire State, and, also, Downstate Medical, a  
24          teaching hospital and an important medical school.

25          It is vital for all of us to realize that, as

1 demographics change, SUNY itself is becoming much  
2 more of a city-centered institution as well, or,  
3 perhaps, downstate-centered.

4 Right now, 57 percent of the students in SUNY  
5 come from the five boroughs, from Suffolk County,  
6 and Nassau County, and fewer and fewer students are  
7 coming from upstate communities, making a real  
8 challenge for those institutions that are upstate to  
9 get the students they need to maintain their  
10 financial viability.

11 Unfortunately, the reality is, as you have  
12 heard, more and more of the burden falls on tuition  
13 as opposed to State support, despite the great  
14 efforts by many of you in the state Legislature.

15 And I know, from my six years as UUP  
16 president, how hard that you all have struggled to  
17 defend the SUNY hospitals and to put public funding  
18 into SUNY.

19 And we're looking forward to a better year  
20 this year, let's hope.

21 When we talk about the cost of education, one  
22 of the things that I want to emphasize, and the  
23 students before us did it so well, there's so much  
24 attention placed on tuition, and the way that  
25 tuition has been reduced through various programs,

1           whether it's Excelsior or not.

2                     The reality, though, is that 75 percent of  
3           the cost of education for a student now is  
4           non-tuition-related.

5                     It's fees.

6                     It's room and board.

7                     It's the transportation that a student from  
8           the Bronx has to pay to get to Fredonia, or to  
9           Buffalo.

10                    And those costs continue to rise.

11                    Right now, for an EOP student, the incredibly  
12           successful Educational Opportunity Program, right  
13           now, for an EOP student who is getting the full EOP  
14           award and the other financial support, has to come  
15           up with \$4,000 a year in order to pay for their  
16           education.

17                    And these include students who, according to  
18           the FAFSA analysis, don't need to contribute  
19           anything because they can't afford to.

20                    As the fees and other costs continue to rise,  
21           we are going to start to see a SUNY system, and  
22           CUNY, that begins to discriminate against those who  
23           come from underresourced communities because of  
24           these rising costs.

25                    So we need to get State funding allocated to



1 public higher education.

2 I know that I'm preaching to the converted,  
3 but I think it's important for us to think about  
4 these issues.

5 The --

6 Oh, thank you, Rowena.

7 The other part of the tuition equation that  
8 I think is important too is the macro equation.

9 There was a time in 2008-2009, right around  
10 the time of the Great Recession, where the share of  
11 the cost for education was, about 25 percent came  
12 from students through tuition and fees.

13 Now it's over 65 percent in SUNY.

14 In fact, I was just at the University at  
15 Albany a couple days ago, and they had just been  
16 briefed by their administration that the University  
17 at Albany has a deficit this year of \$11.5 million.

18 At this point, 78 percent of the cost of the  
19 education at the University at Albany is being paid  
20 by tuition.

21 And that's what we're seeing across the  
22 system.

23 We're going to have to adjust that 65 percent  
24 figure upwards.

25 What it's starting to appear like is that we

1 don't have a public university system. We have some  
2 public support for a private university system, and  
3 the "private" is the tuition dollars.

4 You have heard about the programmatic  
5 difficulties at CUNY.

6 They exist at SUNY as well, from Fredonia; to  
7 Stony Brook; from Albany, as I just mentioned; to  
8 Plattsburgh, where they are facing severe financial  
9 crises.

10 We need the support.

11 We need to have the TAP gap addressed. That  
12 is a clear and direct fashion to inject over  
13 \$70 million into SUNY.

14 And as we look forward, that gap will only  
15 grow.

16 Here is our concern:

17 As the gap continues to grow, will there  
18 become -- will there be an incentive for campuses  
19 that are heavily invested in TAP students?

20 Those are the campuses that tend to be in the  
21 worst financial condition.

22 Will they reach a point where they start to  
23 say, well, we want to diminish the number of TAP  
24 students we're bringing in because it's costing us  
25 too much money?

1           We see that in places like Morrisville in  
2 their severe financial difficulty. Well, they have  
3 the highest percentage of full-TAP awardees.

4           So you have this unfortunate circumstance  
5 that could lead to a negative incentive.

6           Finally, I want to mention something  
7 important about our SUNY medical schools, and  
8 I shouldn't say "our," because they don't belong to  
9 the union.

10           They belong to the people of New York.

11           We often refer to them as the "SUNY  
12 hospitals" or "public hospitals" or the "state  
13 hospitals."

14           They're the people's hospitals.

15           And as we talk about where we might be going  
16 with single-payer, which UUP supports, we always  
17 have, the question that I have is: Regardless of  
18 how we pay for an individual's health coverage, the  
19 question is, will they be able to get health care?

20           I come from Upstate New York where getting a  
21 physician is becoming nearly impossible in rural  
22 counties.

23           A similar situation exists in many areas in  
24 New York City.

25           And when we look at Central Brooklyn, how

1 crucial Downstate is, both in terms of health care,  
2 but as health-care educators.

3 These are teaching hospitals.

4 These are the people's hospitals.

5 So I urge you to think about the SUNY  
6 hospitals in that way, and, continue, please, to  
7 support the work that we do collectively.

8 And, also, I would appreciate very much if  
9 you would ask some difficult questions of the  
10 administrators of SUNY who are not here today,  
11 unfortunately.

12 We need to hear that they are going to  
13 advocate aggressively for the university they lead.

14 So thank you very much.

15 [Applause.]

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: I brought with me a  
17 presentation about the SUNY hospitals, and my notes  
18 from the meeting.

19 And I am well aware that this is a serious  
20 problem, whether it be the debt service, which we  
21 were trying to get the State to absorb in our lack  
22 of a capital budget.

23 And then the second point was, the  
24 \$50 million in bonds.

25 And, lastly, the DSH discrepancies for the

1 SUNY hospitals.

2 There are four medical schools run by SUNY,  
3 three of them have hospitals.

4 And it's the hospitals, each one of them --  
5 Buffalo does not -- that are heavily in the red.

6 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yes.

7 And in part, it's because they subsidize the  
8 medical school education that's going on.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes.

10 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: And with that, I'll  
11 (parties cross-talking) --

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Why don't we have  
13 everybody, Roberta Elins from FIT.

14 ROBERTA ELINS: Thank you.

15 Chairperson Stavisky, honorable members of  
16 the Legislature, and distinguished staff, I am  
17 Roberta Elins. I'm the president of the  
18 United College Employees of FIT. I am also NYSED's  
19 ED 39 director, which represents NYSED's  
20 30 community colleges.

21 Since we've all been doing geography this  
22 morning, I'm also of a proud graduate of  
23 New York City public schools, and I lived in  
24 Brooklyn for my entire growing-up life.

25 I'm also a college professor of 32 years, and

1 I am still in the classroom.

2 And I bring that to you because I've been  
3 listening to the students this morning, and  
4 everything they are telling you is true.

5 And I love hearing their voices, as I'm sure  
6 you do.

7 Today I'm testifying on behalf of  
8 New York State United Teachers and its 600,000  
9 members.

10 I'm going to cut my remarks a little shorter  
11 because so many people have made some of the remarks  
12 that I would have made.

13 But, a student's ability to attend public  
14 institution of higher education, and complete their  
15 degree on time, depends on a number of factors, and  
16 most of which involve financial resources, as well  
17 as student and academic support.

18 You've heard about both SUNY's EOP program  
19 and CUNY's ASAP program, both of which are fabulous  
20 programs.

21 I have EOP students in my classes all the  
22 time.

23 Nobody, none of my students, are any more  
24 dedicated than those students coming out of EOP, but  
25 there is not enough money for either EOP or for

1       ASAP.

2               But, really, I'm here to discuss the  
3       community colleges.

4               Community colleges educate all types of  
5       students, they come from all areas.

6               Many people got their first start at a  
7       community college before they went to a four-year  
8       school.

9               Community colleges advance a social mobility  
10      and they're located where students live and work.

11              State education law stipulates that the State  
12      shall pay 40 percent of the operating courses of  
13      these campuses, notwithstanding.

14              It has been not withstood for how many years  
15      now?

16              But it is the law; the State is supposed to  
17      pay 40 percent of these campuses.

18              In order for our campuses to maintain and  
19      enhance academic program and support, this funding  
20      needs to be increased and it needs to be stabilized.

21              Even though enrollment on some campuses have  
22      dropped with the community colleges, the operational  
23      costs have gone up.

24              Reductions in community college enrollments  
25      are based on an economy that's doing well.   Okay?

1           When the economy is doing well, fewer people  
2           enroll in community colleges, and, also, a decrease  
3           in the state population, which is projected to  
4           continue to decline.

5           Our campuses rely on the State funding.

6           In the absence of predictable funding, it's  
7           very hard for us to -- look, we're forced to raise  
8           tuition on our students.

9           My good colleague Fred really said it, when  
10          we're starting to look like private institutions,  
11          even at the community college level.

12          The 2019-2020 New York State enacted budget  
13          provided community colleges with the greater of a  
14          \$100 FTE increase or an established floor of  
15          98 percent of the 2018-2019 funding.

16          We very much appreciate the Legislature's  
17          work and continued support in including the  
18          language, which is a good step to address the issues  
19          about declining enrollment.

20          While this year's budget did enact a funding  
21          floor, unfortunately, it did not insulate all of  
22          SUNY community colleges from enrollment declines.

23          As a result, a number of our community  
24          colleges, to be exact, 17 out of 30 of our community  
25          colleges, budgets were lower than they were in 2017



1 and 2018, with cuts ranging up to \$2.5 million to  
2 one campus, and an overall cut to the campuses of  
3 \$5.5 million.

4 NYSED continues to advocate for the adoption  
5 of a hybrid FTE funding methodology, as proposed by  
6 SUNY for their community colleges.

7 During budget negotiations earlier in the  
8 year, SUNY and NYSED reached an agreement on  
9 statutory language to codify the hybrid methodology.

10 The language and proposed methodology would  
11 provide SUNY community colleges with a greater level  
12 of support, using a three-year average, not just  
13 that one year, because, face it, and this is what  
14 happened, you can have one really lousy year and  
15 that's going to impact your budget.

16 Just to give you some idea: Last year, this  
17 methodology would have required an additional  
18 \$18.5 million in funding.

19 The last thing I'd like to speak about is  
20 TAP, but TAP in terms of the community colleges.

21 When we've discussed the TAP gap in the past,  
22 we focused on four-year campuses because, usually,  
23 the community colleges' tuition was not high.

24 However, this is now becoming an issue at  
25 SUNY's community colleges as tuition at some of the

1 campuses have pierced the TAP gap of 5165.

2 We raise this issue because we expect  
3 additional campuses to also increase the TAP gap.

4 While the law regarding the tuition credit  
5 only applies to four-year colleges, it's unclear as  
6 to who will be responsible for covering this  
7 difference at the community college level.

8 At my home institution at FIT, the tuition  
9 was increased to \$5,190, which is \$25 over the  
10 maximum TAP award.

11 While this amount seems relatively small, as  
12 tuition is increased in the future, the difference  
13 (inaudible) between the two will increase.

14 I also would like to reiterate that we can't  
15 just keep talking about tuition.

16 Our students have fees: student activity  
17 fees, registration fees, technology fees.

18 I like to call it, "Are you going to let them  
19 breathe" fee?

20 And their fee, if you look at a student's  
21 tuition bill, it says "tuition." That's one line.

22 And then the fees just keep going on and on  
23 and on.

24 Without funding to address these operational  
25 costs, including the TAP gap, we are endangering

1 student affordability and access to public higher  
2 education; therefore, a significant State investment  
3 is needed to reverse this trend.

4 And I really very much thank you for this  
5 opportunity to speak.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

7 Our next speaker is Rowena Blackman-Stroud  
8 from Downstate.

9 ROWENA BLACKMAN-STROUD: Good afternoon,  
10 Chairperson Stavisky and distinguished members of  
11 the Senate Assembly, and, also, Una Clarke.

12 I want to -- Chairman Stavisky made a couple  
13 of remarks with regard to some of the issues that  
14 the hospitals have confronted.

15 And I think all of you on the podium are  
16 familiar with our issues over the years, including  
17 Una Clark who was city councilwoman at the time, and  
18 have to -- so everybody is familiar with our plight.

19 And I want to start by saying that, you know,  
20 we've made the case all along to stem off many  
21 attempts to close SUNY Downstate.

22 But I'm here today, and also our statewide  
23 president, to talk really about the need for  
24 funding.

25 So having said that, let me introduce myself.

1 I'm Rowena Blackman-Stroud, and I'm a  
2 longtime resident of Brooklyn.

3 My family and I have utilized the health-care  
4 services provided by SUNY Downstate.

5 In fact, my son was born at SUNY Downstate  
6 many years ago.

7 I'm also president of the SUNY Downstate  
8 Center Chapter of United University Professions.

9 And there are more than 2,500 members in UUP  
10 SUNY Downstate Chapter, including those who work as  
11 doctors, medical technicians, researchers,  
12 assistants, therapists, professors, and clinical  
13 instructors.

14 More than 6,000 people work at Downstate,  
15 which is Brooklyn's fourth-largest employer.

16 And research has shown that every dollar  
17 invested in Downstate returns about \$12 to the local  
18 community.

19 We've had conversations all along, and  
20 Senator Stavisky talked about the debt service, the  
21 Medicaid DSH, and we are trying to address that with  
22 our representatives in Washington, and that's huge.

23 That's the Medicaid disproportionate share  
24 monies that hospitals take for getting -- for taking  
25 care of the uninsured and the underinsured.

1           And for us as a public hospital, it's a  
2           mandate. We cannot turn patients away.

3           But Downstate has multiple roles, but, my  
4           testimony today is going to focus on the medical  
5           center as a safety-net hospital, serving all who  
6           walk through their doors regardless of their ability  
7           to pay, and as a teaching hospital that provides an  
8           accessible, affordable medical education to student  
9           doctors and medical professionals.

10          The medical center and the medical school  
11          have a symbiotic relationship; both rely on each  
12          other to survive.

13          And on occasion we've heard, well, okay, the  
14          Governor, and sometimes even some of the  
15          legislators, will say to us, We need the school --  
16          the medical school, yeah, but maybe we can do  
17          without the hospital.

18          And I'm here, really, to stress the  
19          importance of both, but talk about how they're  
20          intertwined; that both depend on each other, and  
21          neither can survive without the other.

22          As part of its mission, Downstate is the  
23          anchor for training, roughly, 1,000 residents and  
24          fellows and 800 medical students each year.

25          These students, residents, and fellows rotate

1 among 15 area hospitals.

2 And that's like a well-kept secret.

3 I don't think that even the patients who  
4 utilize the facilities realize that the residents  
5 that they see at the VA or Coney Island Hospital,  
6 for example, are faculty who are on the payroll at  
7 SUNY Downstate.

8 These physicians in training take care of  
9 patients 24 hours a day.

10 So, it's so important that this service  
11 continue, since the hospitals in the community  
12 cannot continue to survive without the faculty and  
13 services that our members bring to the table.

14 Downstate is the only State-operated medical  
15 school in the five boroughs, and as such, has become  
16 a pipeline of doctors and medical staff to  
17 New York City.

18 More New York State city physicians have  
19 trained at Downstate than at any other medical  
20 school.

21 67 percent of its students are New York City  
22 residents.

23 More than half of Brooklyn's physicians in  
24 certain specialty areas have trained at Downstate.

25 They are astounding numbers, and show the

1 critical importance of SUNY Downstate to the  
2 health-care needs of New York.

3 I just want to brag a bit, if you will.

4 Downstate Medical Center ranks fourth among  
5 medical schools nationwide with graduates who hold  
6 an active license to practice medicine.

7 It is 12th among American medical schools  
8 in the number of graduates and faculty positions at  
9 U.S. medical colleges.

10 In February of this year, SUNY Downstate  
11 Medical School was ranked fourth nationwide by  
12 Castle Connolly Medical for training next-generation  
13 physicians.

14 So that's huge.

15 In 2017, the State decided to eliminate the  
16 \$87 million subsidy hos -- to the three SUNY  
17 hospitals.

18 In 20 -- 2007-2008, the subsidy to the  
19 three SUNY hospitals was 153 million. And that  
20 subsidy helped to offset costs associated with the  
21 caring of a large uninsured and underinsured  
22 patients.

23 The show of support from the State wasn't  
24 without a price.

25 In return, the subsidies, SUNY's academic

1 medical centers pay for their fringe benefits and  
2 debt-service cost, a total annual expense nearing  
3 500 million.

4 That's a huge cost.

5 Of the three hospitals are treated, unlike  
6 the other SUNY campuses where the State pays their  
7 fringe benefits, in our case, in the three SUNY  
8 hospitals, we have to pay our fringe benefits.

9 I think you are well aware of the diverse  
10 population that SUNY Downstate serves.

11 The area is highly diverse.

12 About two-thirds of Central Brooklyn's  
13 community members are Black and Brown.

14 According to the U.S. census, more than half  
15 of Central Brooklyn, families live below the poverty  
16 line, and many of the working poor are without  
17 health insurance.

18 More than half of Downstate's inpatients have  
19 Medicaid, and one in three patients have Medicare.

20 Just one out of every eight patients have  
21 private insurance, yet Downstate turns no one away,  
22 even if they can't pay for care.

23 My testimony that you have in front of you  
24 outlines the services that Downstate provides, the  
25 specialty services.



1           And the concern here is that, if the funding  
2           isn't restored, that's \$87 million that we're  
3           requesting, it's very possible that Downstate staff  
4           and departments will have to -- could be  
5           reconfigured.

6           Downsizing Downstate would force tens of  
7           thousands of people who need specialized ongoing  
8           care into already overcrowded waiting rooms of local  
9           emergency departments.

10          And I want to talk a little bit about  
11          Kings County, because even though you may think that  
12          Kings County is across the street, and, therefore,  
13          if we're downsized, our patient population will be  
14          taken care of.

15          That's not the case.

16          The case is that, right now, Kings County is  
17          running a huge deficit, and so is Downstate.

18          And that, for services, patients I know in --  
19          who have tried to access services at Kings County,  
20          orthopedic services, for example, the wait period at  
21          Kings County is one year, sometimes more.

22          So we're talking about an area where chronic  
23          diseases are prevalent, diseases like diabetes,  
24          heart diseases, et cetera.

25          It's a very poor population as I mentioned

1 earlier. It's the people of color who live in the  
2 community.

3 And we're here to ask that the Senate  
4 supports the reinstatement of the \$87 million.

5 And this really is a very real point:

6 Early on, as I mentioned, in 2006-2007, the  
7 subsidy was much more. And over the years, it's  
8 decreased.

9 At its high point, 2007-2008, it was  
10 \$153 million.

11 This year, for the first time, the subsidy  
12 was eliminated.

13 And it's critical.

14 We are unsure that we will continue to keep  
15 our doors open.

16 Why?

17 Because as Senator Stavisky mentioned, we're  
18 confronted with the challenge of DSH -- Medicaid DSH  
19 payments to the hospital.

20 On an annual basis, Downstate may receive up  
21 to \$150 million, which helps to pay personnel costs,  
22 but also provides services to the community.

23 And now we're confronted this year with the  
24 removal of the subsidy, not the just for Downstate,  
25 but for the two other SUNY hospitals as well.

1 That's Upstate Medical and Stony Brook Health  
2 Science Center.

3 So we're concerned that if this continues,  
4 that Downstate could be reconfigured, our doors  
5 could be closed.

6 And we're asking you to advocate for us, to  
7 consider in the upcoming state budget to  
8 appropriate.

9 We're asking \$87 million.

10 But depending on the monies that are  
11 available, you may want to consider providing more  
12 money.

13 But I just want to, if you look at the last  
14 paragraph of the testimony, it talks about a number  
15 of patients that we see on an annual basis.

16 So I want to thank you for the opportunity.

17 And I hope that you will continue to be  
18 advocates for SUNY Downstate and the other two SUNY  
19 hospitals.

20 Thank you.

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

22 The last speaker on this panel is  
23 Julieta Schiffino, the UUP System Administrator.

24 JULIETA SCHIFFINO: Correct.

25 Hi.

1           Thank you all for taking the time today to  
2           listen to this important issue about higher  
3           education and funding higher education.

4           My name is Julieta Schiffino. I am the  
5           associate director of financial-aid services at the  
6           SUNY Welcome Center for SUNY system administration.

7           Our office is located in New York City.

8           We help students learn about the 64 campuses  
9           within the SUNY system.

10          We work closely with student families,  
11          community organizations, high school guidance  
12          counselors, allowing students and families to be  
13          aware of all that SUNY has to offer, allowing  
14          New York City students to have more access to higher  
15          education.

16          We provide students information about  
17          different majors, application requirements, and  
18          about the over 4,500 undergraduate degrees and  
19          certificate programs.

20          We offer a variety of workshops on college  
21          preparation, host open houses, do on-the-spot  
22          admissions. And we also have placement testing and  
23          bus trips.

24          We visit high schools, attend college fairs,  
25          and provide training and update high school

1 counselors and community-based organizations.

2 Students and families can also make  
3 one-on-one appointments to come to our office.

4 We also provide financial-aid awareness  
5 events, workshops, financial-aid completion events,  
6 and we provide financial-literacy workshops.

7 We train high school guidance counselors and  
8 community organizations on financial aid, and we are  
9 educating New York City students and families on the  
10 new Jose Peralta Dream Act.

11 There are approximately 30,000 students --  
12 undocumented students graduating from New York State  
13 high schools.

14 We are doing outreach to make sure all our  
15 campuses are prepared to welcome undocumented  
16 students on their campuses, and we act as a liaison  
17 for students living in New York City to all SUNY  
18 campuses.

19 Approximately 19 percent of New York City  
20 students' households live below the poverty level.

21 The median household income is about \$50,000,  
22 as opposed to \$55,000 for the rest of the --  
23 New York State.

24 The cost of living in New York City is higher  
25 than the rest of New York State.

1           Most of New York City students choosing to  
2 attend SUNY school would have to live on campus.

3           The cost of housing is over double the  
4 tuition and fees. And the fees are about 1,060 --  
5 1,600 per year.

6           Students with a zero expected family  
7 contribution, that comes from filling out the  
8 FAFSA -- okay? -- zero, that would mean that their  
9 family really cannot contribute to their education,  
10 would need to borrow the maximum student loan per  
11 year of direct student loans, which should be 5,500,  
12 and it would still not allow them to cover the cost  
13 of attending a SUNY school.

14           Their parents would need to borrow a PLUS  
15 loan. These are families with zero EFCs.

16           The same student could attend a CUNY school  
17 if they're living at home -- if they're a dependent  
18 student living at home, but not -- CUNY should not  
19 be their only option.

20           I am a -- I am a two-time graduate of CUNY.

21           I graduated from Brooklyn College. This is  
22 my alma mater.

23           I also have a graduate degree from  
24 Baruch-Zicklin School of Business.

25           But we need to offer students more options.

1           Also, sometimes students are living in an  
2 environment at home which is not the optimal  
3 environment for them to be learning in.

4           How can -- how are we expected to do more  
5 with less?

6           I could tell you, currently, our office only  
7 has two admission advisors, one director, and me as  
8 the associate director.

9           There are no -- there are zero financial-aid  
10 advisors.

11           The growing population, their changing  
12 demographics, we have many first-generation students  
13 going to college. They need more support, not less.

14           We need to increase the supports that our  
15 office is offering, not lessen it.

16           We should be able to be a home away from home  
17 for students that are from New York City, going to a  
18 SUNY school, for when they have questions or need  
19 extra support services.

20           There's an increasing -- there's an  
21 increasing income inequality in America, especially  
22 for those without a college degree.

23           Help SUNY provide access to more students and  
24 start eroding income inequality.

25           [Applause.]

1           SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

2           Questions?

3           Senator Jackson.

4           SENATOR JACKSON: Well, first, let me thank  
5 all of you for coming in and giving testimony, and  
6 especially on behalf of the employees that work at  
7 various higher-education institutes.

8           Obviously, UUP (United University Professors)  
9 with respect to SUNY, but, also, you have FIT and  
10 the other schools. You have Downstate Medical  
11 Center and the others.

12           To me, listening to the other panels from  
13 CUNY, and now listening to UUP, and, obviously,  
14 Julieta, you know, you don't have a financial  
15 advisor?

16           I mean, how -- people -- you know, you say,  
17 well, we throw the fish in there. Either you swim  
18 or you drown.

19           And, unfortunately, we don't want anyone to  
20 drown; we want everyone to swim.

21           But -- so as a systems administrator --  
22 right? -- when you say that have you X amount of  
23 staff, is that at a central location where they have  
24 to call you or go online, or is it at every campus?

25           JULIETA SCHIFFINO: This is our -- so we



1 represent all of the SUNY schools here in  
2 New York City. So we only have this one office  
3 doing that.

4 Each individual campus has admissions reps,  
5 which are very different from the job that we're  
6 doing.

7 SENATOR JACKSON: And where is your office  
8 located?

9 JULIETA SCHIFFINO: It's located on  
10 42nd Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenue.

11 SENATOR JACKSON: You know, this is my first  
12 year on the New York State Senate.

13 And as many of you know, I have been a parent  
14 activist since 1980, when my oldest daughter, who is  
15 now 44, went to SUNY New Paltz, and is an M.D.

16 But, also, my involvement at the city council  
17 is totally different than the State, obviously, you  
18 know.

19 But the testimony that you're giving,  
20 basically, I've heard this testimony, when the joint  
21 budget hearings were had, where leaders of the  
22 unions, leaders of the universities, leaders of  
23 school districts, all came in and expressed  
24 themselves.

25 And, as you know, Shelley Mayer, who is the

1 Chair of the Senate Education Committee, and  
2 Brian Benjamin, the Chair of the Budget and Revenue  
3 Committee, they're holding roundtable discussions  
4 around the state also, to get information, more so  
5 than the 5 or 10 minutes that they may take at a  
6 joint budget hearing, to discuss, and express to the  
7 senators that are there and others, the need for  
8 funding.

9 But can you -- I'm going to ask a question  
10 and maybe you can help me.

11 Our governor has put forward a spending cap  
12 of 2 percent.

13 Our governor put forward, and we passed,  
14 meaning, "we," meaning the State [sic] and the  
15 Assembly, a 2 percent property -- permanent property  
16 tax cap.

17 And so -- and as a budget of \$175 billion,  
18 the state last year, people say, where are we going  
19 to get the money?

20 That's what they ask.

21 So I ask you that question, knowing, for  
22 example, the -- I'm a member of The Caucus up in  
23 Albany; that is, the Black, Puerto Rican, Latino,  
24 Asian, Caucus.

25 Many of you know that it's called

1 "The Caucus."

2 And the last workshop that we had on  
3 Wednesday afternoon was from the Fiscal Policy  
4 Institute.

5 And I'm sure that you're aware of that.

6 And I have what they gave out, and there's so  
7 many ways that we can raise revenue.

8 But the question is: Is there the will of  
9 the members of the Assembly, members of the Senate,  
10 and the Governor to get it done?

11 You heard what I said about, you know, the  
12 necessary to override any veto.

13 So -- and you heard, you were here earlier,  
14 when I talked about the fact that every individual  
15 here, especially the students, must know who their  
16 representatives are, in order so that, basically, we  
17 need to build that unity, that political power, in  
18 order to get the job done.

19 So, in your opinion, you know, what do you  
20 see as far as the needs, as far as money is  
21 concerned, one thing?

22 And then, if you have any comments on  
23 anything that the Fiscal Policy Institute is talking  
24 about.

25 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: First, on the ladder, on

1 the Fiscal Policy Institute, I haven't seen it, so  
2 I wouldn't be able to comment on that. But I'm  
3 aware of their traditional stance on various issues.

4 And I think that, to begin with, what  
5 New York State needs, just like the entire  
6 United States needs, is a much more progressive tax  
7 system.

8 When our economy was booming in the 1950s,  
9 '60s, and '70s, the tax system was far more  
10 progressive.

11 It didn't seem to harm our economic growth  
12 then, and neither would it do so now.

13 We need a middle-class to be built, and  
14 taxing those who have the ability to pay, absolutely  
15 an absolute requirement.

16 Now having said that, the other thing that is  
17 now an absolute priority for us in UUP, is that we  
18 need to build coalitions and communities so that,  
19 across the state of New York, people in New York  
20 take ownership of our state university systems.

21 What has happened over the years is, unless  
22 you have a family member going to SUNY, SUNY is a  
23 distant and, perhaps, unknown entity. Or, if you  
24 need to go to upstate or downstate for medical care.

25 But other than that, there isn't the deep

1 connection as there is, for instance, at  
2 P-through-12 school systems, where everyone is aware  
3 of their local school, and so forth, there's a real  
4 deep connection.

5 We need to build that in SUNY, so that people  
6 feel that it's a priority, and that spending becomes  
7 a priority. And then you get the votes and you get  
8 the political pressure on those with power, or the  
9 few with the power, to put it into his budget  
10 proposal.

11 It is a -- it's a -- it's a long struggle and  
12 it's a long fight, but that's because the damage  
13 that has occurred has taken place over a long period  
14 of time as well, going back to the time of the  
15 Great Recession.

16 ROWENA BLACKMAN-STROUD: I think -- I just  
17 want to add a little bit about the hospital.

18 I think the theory that public hospitals  
19 should be self-sufficient is something that I know,  
20 our patients, but more than that, our community,  
21 doesn't agree with.

22 I think it's, health care.

23 And right now, at the federal level, we're  
24 having conversations.

25 I know that the candidates who are running

1 for president are engaged in conversations, whether  
2 it's Medicaid for All.

3 But the reality is, it's right.

4 The concern here is that, when you look at  
5 SUNY Downstate, and you look at the population that  
6 we serve, it's not only a poor population.

7 It's an immigrant population.

8 It's a Black and Brown population.

9 And when you have conversations with the  
10 leaders in the community, and also patients, they  
11 feel that they're left behind, that the nobody  
12 cares.

13 And, you know, I'm here, and we're all here,  
14 to say, that we know that you cared in the past.

15 And it's important that that be a priority;  
16 that health care be a priority.

17 So the fact that the subsidy was  
18 eliminated -- the subsidy of \$87 million for  
19 three SUNY hospitals was eliminated in this year's  
20 budget, to me, is an insult.

21 It's a message; it's a negative message.

22 And, therefore, we're asking for a more  
23 positive message, that, minimally, in next year's  
24 budget, that that money be reinstated, because it  
25 sends a message to a disenfranchised community that

1 you -- that nobody cares; that you don't care, that  
2 the Governor doesn't care.

3 So we're here.

4 My testimony talks to that effect, for the  
5 needs for those monies.

6 ROBERTA ELINS: One thing that I would like  
7 to add is, of course I would like to see the  
8 40 percent funding that's in the state law.

9 But I really would like you to look at the  
10 hybrid methodology, and that three -- you know, that  
11 three-year averaging instead of just one averaging.

12 NYSED and SUNY has worked it -- you know,  
13 NYSED and SUNY has worked it out.

14 So, it's really now up to the Legislature to  
15 make this happen.

16 The other thing I just want to end with is,  
17 again, to remember the community colleges sometime  
18 serve the hardest population to teach, to reach, so  
19 that we often have a need for many, many support  
20 services.

21 And one -- you know, one that I don't think  
22 I heard -- I heard it briefly today, mental-health  
23 services.

24 Again, I said earlier, I've been doing this  
25 for 32 years.

1           The rise in the need for mental-health  
2 services is alarming -- okay? -- but it has to be --  
3 it has to be addressed.

4           And so there are so many parts of our  
5 operations that didn't even come on the funding  
6 table, 10, 20 years ago, that people have to think,  
7 it's a new system, it's just -- you know, it's a new  
8 world.

9           And we have to -- we have to give these  
10 students what they always got out of SUNY, whether  
11 it was four-year or community college or the  
12 hospitals.

13           We have a very proud tradition, and we would  
14 like to be able to continue that.

15           SENATOR JACKSON: Madam Chair, so let me  
16 first say this to all of you, especially to you,  
17 Mr. President of UUP:

18           There is another hearing, in which  
19 Chair Stavisky is having around the state, more than  
20 one, but at SUNY New Paltz on Monday.

21           Now, I know you are the president of a large  
22 union.

23           I don't know whether you're going to be  
24 there. But if you can have other representatives  
25 from your union, from a local point of view --



1           Yeah.

2           SENATOR STAVISKY:   Have a list.

3           SENATOR JACKSON:   -- local point of view, so  
4           that we can hear from them also, that would be very,  
5           very good to hear their individual concerns in their  
6           jurisdictions.

7           And, Madam Chair, let me thank you for  
8           putting this hearing together.

9           Unfortunately, I have other commitments and  
10          I have to leave after this here -- after this  
11          session here.

12          And I just wanted to say, thank you.

13          SENATOR STAVISKY:   Thank you.

14          No, we have hearings in Buffalo on the  
15          30th, Syracuse on the 31st, and then  
16          Nassau Community College.

17          FREDERICK E. KOWAL:   And we will have members  
18          at all of those.   And I will be there too.

19          SENATOR STAVISKY:   That's what I was about to  
20          say, that UUP has.

21          And the administration will be at a number of  
22          them.

23          It's a broad spectrum of folks coming.

24          Thank you.

25          Any other questions?

1 Thank you.

2 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Thank you.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: You know, it's  
4 interesting.

5 We're all in this together.

6 And it -- have you noticed the commonality of  
7 interests, that we're all fighting?

8 The next group will be:

9 Andrew Dobbyn from CWA, District 1;

10 And, Andrea Vasquez, first vice-president,  
11 Professional Staff Congress, who is the happiest  
12 person in the room today.

13 [Applause.]

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: And we congratulate you  
15 on --

16 ANDREA ADES VASQUEZ: Thank you.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- on --

18 ANDREA ADES VASQUEZ: Good afternoon,  
19 everyone.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- achieving a contract.  
21 Why don't you start.

22 ANDREA ADES VASQUEZ: Thank you, thank you.

23 I will say something.

24 Sorry?

25 SENATOR JACKSON: (Inaudible.)

1           ANDREA ADES VASQUEZ: Oh, yes, yes.

2           I'm Andrea Ades Vasquez, first vice-president  
3 of the Professional Staff Congress.

4           Can you hear me?

5           Yes? Good.

6           And I've asked James Davis, who is the PSC  
7 Chair of the Brooklyn College Chapter, to sit by me  
8 for questions later.

9           And this is Kate Pfordresher, the policy  
10 director from the PSC.

11          So, good afternoon.

12          I know it's been a long morning, and it's  
13 been great to hear from so many students and others  
14 in the room.

15          I gave you a written version, a longer  
16 version, of this testimony.

17          I actually am going to be much more brief  
18 than what you have in front of you.

19          So, good morning, everyone.

20          And I --

21          SENATOR STAVISKY: Sorry, my mistake.

22          We have Senator Zellnor Myrie from  
23 Brooklyn --

24                 [Applause.]

25          SENATOR STAVISKY: -- one of the stars of the

1       freshman class.

2               ANDREA ADES VASQUEZ:   And President Bowen  
3       sends her regrets that she cannot be here.   She's  
4       actually down in D.C.

5               So I want to thank you for this opportunity  
6       to address the crisis in public funding for CUNY and  
7       SUNY caused partially by the TAP gap.

8               Last week, CUNY announced that freshman  
9       enrollment has bucked the national trend and reached  
10      another high.

11              This continues the pattern of the past  
12      18 years at CUNY, when enrollment increased by  
13      almost 80,000 students, a 41 percent increase in the  
14      student body.

15              As the increased enrollment at CUNY  
16      indicates, the demand for access to higher education  
17      at a public university has never been greater.

18              Unfortunately, the public investment has not  
19      kept pace.

20              Public funding for the full-time faculty,  
21      staff, and services needed to improve graduation  
22      rates and ensure student success are simply  
23      inadequate.

24              For example, between 2008 and 2018, the  
25      State's inflation-adjusted investment per

1 FTE student at CUNY senior colleges declined  
2 18 percent.

3 As a very first -- as a first step in  
4 addressing the public underinvestment in CUNY,  
5 I urge you to close CUNY's TAP gap in the next  
6 public higher-education budget.

7 The TAP gap, again, is the difference between  
8 the \$5,000 ceiling legislatively imposed for  
9 tuition-assistance reimbursement to CUNY from  
10 New York State and the real cost of CUNY's tuition,  
11 \$6,930.

12 For every student receiving the maximum TAP  
13 award, CUNY loses \$1,930.

14 In total, the TAP gap will cost CUNY  
15 \$82 million this year, eating up revenue that might  
16 otherwise be dedicated to student success.

17 I commend the Legislature and the Governor  
18 for making the Dream Act a reality.

19 The PSC strongly advocated for its passage,  
20 but the welcome addition of thousands of CUNY  
21 Dreamers to the number of students eligible for TAP  
22 will make the TAP gap even larger.

23 CUNY needs that money now if it's to be able  
24 to meet the growing needs of its students.

25 Presently, senior colleges, like Brooklyn and

1 Queens, face severe staff shortages, rationing of  
2 supplies and equipment, reduced hours for writing  
3 and tutoring centers, and for libraries.

4 Across CUNY, course sections that students  
5 need to graduate are being cut.

6 Funding the TAP gap would help alleviate  
7 these serious problems.

8 The second, and more ambitious, step for  
9 New York State to invest, is for New York State to  
10 invest in a new deal for CUNY, a new deal for public  
11 higher education, over the next three years to make  
12 it possible for future generations to receive the  
13 quality free public higher education that was,  
14 historically, available to students of this  
15 university.

16 "Free college" has become a rallying cry in  
17 the national Presidential campaign and here at CUNY.

18 Other components of an ambitious longer-term  
19 campaign are:

20 Improvements to the full-time  
21 faculty-to-student ratio, and the full-time  
22 professional staff-to-student ratio.

23 We have seen the success of the ASAP program,  
24 that you've heard about earlier, that has boosted  
25 graduation rates more than twofold.

1           It's no mystery that students find success  
2 when they have smaller classes, more time with their  
3 teachers, counselors, and advisors, and more  
4 material support, like free metro cards to buy --  
5 and aid to buy books.

6           A fully-funded CUNY would allow for scaling  
7 up of ASAP without diluting it.

8           As you may have heard, just yesterday, we  
9 announced a tentative PSC contract agreement.

10          It provides --

11                 [Applause.]

12          ANDREA ADES VASQUEZ: Thank you, yes.

13          It provides fair raises for all, and goes a  
14 long way in addressing the near-poverty wages of  
15 CUNY's 12,000 teaching adjuncts, paying them for  
16 more time with students; thereby, improving student  
17 success.

18          But, of course, students need much more.

19          We thank the Governor, the Mayor, and CUNY  
20 for their hard work in reaching this agreement and  
21 for the funding they provided.

22          We hope to build on the commitment shown by  
23 Albany for our contract by setting a new agenda for  
24 CUNY funding, and a new era for working jointly to  
25 achieve even more together.

1 I conclude by saying that:

2 PSC members urge you to address the funding  
3 crisis at CUNY with the same urgency with which you  
4 approached the New York Dream Act, rent regulation,  
5 and environmental protections.

6 Support a new deal for CUNY with a commitment  
7 to fill the \$82 million TAP gap.

8 We looking forward -- we look forward to  
9 working with you this year on this.

10 Thank you very much.

11 [Applause.]

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

13 And we have -- we had to switch the order  
14 around for the people, that's why.

15 And we have Andrew Dobbyn from Communication  
16 Workers of America, District 1 (CWA).

17 ANDREW DOBBYN: Yes, but, paradoxically,  
18 while I am communication worker, I'm actually an  
19 educator.

20 So, my name is Andrew Dobbyn. I'm completing  
21 my Ph.D. in philosophy at Stony Brook University.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: At where?

23 ANDREW DOBBYN: Stony Brook University.

24 I'm also the elected head of the chapter of  
25 the Graduate Student Employees Union at Stony Brook



1 University, and we are part of CWA Local 1104 and,  
2 thus, District 1, CWA.

3 So we represent approximately 5,000 GAs,  
4 TAs, and RAs across the SUNY system; that means  
5 teaching assistants, graduate assistants, and  
6 research assistants.

7 And, basically, we are the people who do the  
8 teaching, lab research, and grading that makes SUNY  
9 function. In fact, it is vital to the function of  
10 SUNY.

11 An independent audit found that approximately  
12 60 percent of all instruction at Stony Brook  
13 University, so, my campus, was done by teaching  
14 assistants.

15 So while the stereotype is that these  
16 gray-haired professors, kind of, you know, staring  
17 off into space, are the ones teaching your children  
18 or your constituents' children, this is, in fact,  
19 false.

20 For the most part, it is people like myself,  
21 who are finishing their Ph.D.s, who are advanced  
22 graduate students.

23 In addition to instruction, we also provide  
24 the majority of labor for research; all the labs,  
25 all the laboratory research that produces patents

1 and other kinds of leading-edge developments in  
2 technology, that, again, comes primarily from  
3 overworked grad students.

4 So why am I here today?

5 Well, I'm here because we face dire financial  
6 challenges, and we face dire financial challenges  
7 because of compulsory fees.

8 You've heard from SUNY, our comrades in SUNY  
9 UUP, who have also talked about this, the problem of  
10 rising fees.

11 The problem is that, because we occupy this  
12 very strange position as both student and worker, we  
13 are, basically, forced to, as part of our employment  
14 package, try to get both a tuition waiver and a  
15 stipend.

16 And usually that's what happens, we get a  
17 tuition waiver and we get a stipend.

18 But as things stand right now, we do not get  
19 any kind of waiver for the compulsory fees that we  
20 have to pay, and these compulsory fees can be quite  
21 high.

22 So, fees are different across the SUNY system  
23 because each SUNY campus sets their own fees.

24 But, generally speaking, at the four  
25 university centers where most of our members

1       preside, they usually exceed about \$2,000 per  
2       academic year.

3               At University of Buffalo, which has the  
4       highest fees in the SUNY system, domestic grad  
5       students pay up to 2600 per academic year in fees,  
6       and international students at UB can pay as much as  
7       2800 per academic year.

8               At Stony Brook, for example, it's currently  
9       about 2,000 per academic year.

10              So graduate students employed by SUNY as  
11      teaching and research assistants, we're not exempt  
12      from these fees.

13              And as you can assume, these can constitute  
14      somewhere around 25 percent of our annual wages that  
15      we have to pay back to the university.

16              For some folks making the contractual  
17      minimum, which is about \$10,000, it is about  
18      25 percent.

19              For those of us making the average in the  
20      university system, it's about, hmm, anywhere between  
21      10 to 17 percent.

22              So, this system of fees means that we,  
23      essentially, have to pay an employer-levied tax in  
24      order for our ability to work.

25              This fee is something we have to pay up front

1 at the beginning of the academic year.

2 And if we do not have the money to pay for  
3 fees at the beginning of the academic year, we have  
4 to go on a payment plan, and this payment plan is  
5 more fees.

6 So, in a sense, we owe a large amount to the  
7 university, and then we have to take out a loan from  
8 the university to pay it off.

9 Now, this is a problem because we already are  
10 impoverished; we already don't make nearly enough  
11 money to get by.

12 So when we are hit with these fees and we are  
13 hit with these large expenses, we are forced to do  
14 things, like, go to grandma and grandpa for money,  
15 max out credit cards, and my personal favorite, go  
16 down to the blood-plasma place and get the  
17 phlebotomist to inject you -- or, stick you with a  
18 needle and sell some blood plasma.

19 We have stories of people skipping meals, we  
20 have stories of people sleeping in their cars,  
21 because they can't make rent.

22 This is a problem that needs to end.

23 And that why is we ask you to support the  
24 bill that we have in the state Legislature that will  
25 abolish fees for all graduate workers.

1           First of all, we ask to you support S3916,  
2           which is filed by Chairwoman Stavisky, as well as  
3           Assembly Bill 7241, which is filed by  
4           Assemblymember Pichardo.

5           This bill would waive fees, and would make it  
6           possible for us to do the work that is necessary to  
7           make the SUNY system a world-class university  
8           system, and to do the work that will actually drive  
9           growth, innovation, and civic responsibility in the  
10          state of New York.

11          Thank you.

12          [Applause.]

13          SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

14          (Indiscernible), I have the minutes from the  
15          SUNY Trustee meeting.

16          It's my recollection that the increase in  
17          graduate fee -- an increase in fees this year did  
18          not apply to graduate students.

19          ANDREW DOBBYN: That would be false.

20          SENATOR STAVISKY: That is false.

21          ANDREW DOBBYN: We had an increase in fees of  
22          approximately 1 percent of pay at Stony Brook.

23          And when we communicated this problem to the  
24          dean of students at Stony Brook, he told us, Well,  
25          you know, there is a food pantry on campus. You can

1 use that.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, right.

3 ANDREW DOBBYN: Uh-huh.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: Because they were bragging  
5 about the fact that there was a special situation  
6 with the graduate students.

7 We'll check it out.

8 Questions?

9 Good.

10 Well, we -- is there anybody else?

11 SENATOR JACKSON: I just --

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Oh, yes, Senator Jackson.

13 SENATOR JACKSON: So, first, let me thank you  
14 for coming in.

15 Even though, up in Albany, with the joint  
16 budget hearings, I heard a lot from a holistic point  
17 of view.

18 But to hear the specific areas, and  
19 Senator Persaud showed me page 3 of your testimony.

20 And for those who haven't seen it, I'm going  
21 to read from one sentence, and it says, "The English  
22 department at Queens" --

23 I assume Queens College; is that correct?

24 -- "which was ordered to cut its budget by  
25 \$67,000 in the spring of 2020" --

1           That's coming up; right?

2           -- "plan to eliminate 800 out of  
3           1,000 students' seats in required writing courses."

4           I'm sorry, 800 out of a 1,000 seats they're  
5           going to have to eliminate because, the fact that  
6           they have to cut sixty -- where are the students  
7           going to get their writing courses from?

8           OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: Exactly.

9           SENATOR JACKSON: Are they going have to stay  
10          another year or two?

11          I mean, this is -- this is -- it's -- it's --  
12          it's a shame.

13          It's a shame, that, basically, we're begging,  
14          we're begging, for resources in order to make sure  
15          that our college students, our future leaders, get a  
16          good education.

17          ANDREA ADES VASQUEZ: You know, you point --

18          SENATOR JACKSON: It's shameful.

19          ANDREA ADES VASQUEZ: -- it's a crisis, it's  
20          a crisis, and that's one example.

21          And you heard others today of the dilemma,  
22          and the challenge, that we have that we're facing.

23          And we've often -- I've often used the word  
24          "unsustainable," because it is -- we cannot  
25          continue, year after year, to sustain these cuts and

1 have more and more students enter the university.

2 We welcome them into the university.

3 The faculty, part-time and full-time, work  
4 their hearts out; the professional staff work their  
5 hearts out, to meet the needs of students, and yet  
6 the budget is cut every year, and yet these kinds of  
7 problems, basic, basic problems, are facing the  
8 university.

9 It's really unsustainable.

10 And that's why we put forward both a  
11 short-term plan and a long-term plan.

12 Like many people who spoke here, I'm a native  
13 New Yorker. You can probably tell I'm from  
14 Brooklyn.

15 But I'm in your district now,  
16 Senator Jackson.

17 But my parents went to CUNY.

18 I graduated from CUNY.

19 Two of my kids went to CUNY.

20 We are New York.

21 We have to be responsible to the young people  
22 and the people who need CUNY.

23 People need this for the future of New York.

24 CUNY PSC members, CUNY students, just are a  
25 vibrant part of this city. Right?



1           I mean, the role that we play in the future,  
2 intellectual life, the economic life, the political  
3 life, of this city is huge.

4           We see it here, we see it when we travel to  
5 Albany, how important the universities are at CUNY  
6 and SUNY.

7           So it's really a crisis. It's a shame that  
8 we have to fix.

9           We have to do something different and  
10 stronger.

11           And you heard from the CUNY Rising Alliance  
12 earlier, our wonderful collaborators, who feel that  
13 we must be united in our fight to say that CUNY's  
14 needs cannot be ignored.

15           We know we agree on so many things about  
16 this, but we must behave differently, we must be  
17 stronger -- and I speak for all of us, I think, we  
18 must be stronger and louder and more firm, that this  
19 cannot go ignored for another year because it's an  
20 unsustainable situation.

21           Thank you.

22           [Applause.]

23           SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

24           Would you introduce the other folks on the  
25 panel?

1           ANDREA ADES VASQUEZ:  Yes.

2           Well, this is James Davis.  I said earlier,  
3 he is the PSC Chair at the Brooklyn College Chapter.

4           And this is Kate Pfordresher, who is the  
5 policy director of the PSC.

6           And I asked them to sit with me in case they  
7 wanted to answer any questions.

8           SENATOR STAVISKY:  Thank you all for coming.

9           ANDREA ADES VASQUEZ:  Thank you.

10           [Applause.]

11           SENATOR STAVISKY:  Sorry to keep everybody  
12 waiting.

13           The next group is Timothy --

14           I need the optometrist.

15           -- Timothy Hunter, president and --

16 New York City College of Technology Student  
17 Government, and, the new president, I believe, of  
18 USS.

19           [Applause.]

20           SENATOR STAVISKY:  For the record, my son was  
21 student association president at Queens College.

22           Wayne Dawkins from York College;

23           Jane Guskin from the CUNY Graduate School;

24           Dylan Rice, chief of staff, FIT Student

25 Government;

1           And, Kevin Rogers, deputy, legislative  
2           affairs, Student Assembly.

3           Timothy, since you're the new head of USS,  
4           why don't you start.

5           TIMOTHY HUNTER: Well, I mean, it's always a  
6           "we" thing.

7           And I appreciate all the USS members that  
8           came out to show some support today. We had a nice  
9           rally outside Brooklyn College.

10          And I think that -- I don't even know where  
11          to start right now.

12          I'm just a little bit, like -- like, uh,  
13          disappointed that we have to come here.

14          But, first, let me thank the Senators that  
15          did come out today, Senator Stavisky,  
16          Senator Persaud, Senator Jackson, Senator Myrie,  
17          and, Una Clarke, the honorable.

18          And I think that what we're here for isn't  
19          something that we need to take the days off of  
20          school, the time away from our kids, the, like  
21          classes.

22          Like Wayne right next to me is missing class  
23          to be here.

24          I didn't tell my supervisor I was leaving.  
25          Maybe, if she sees this tape, I'm going to get in

1 trouble.

2 But, I think that there's something that's  
3 much bigger at stake here, and I just want the  
4 Senate and the Assembly to realize this.

5 I'm really upset that not everybody got a  
6 chance to stay, but I think that there's some things  
7 that we need to address.

8 First, I want to, like, thank  
9 Senator Gounardes for what he's trying to do with  
10 the State Constitution. I know that takes a while  
11 to get through.

12 But I think that's something that, if it  
13 does, it frees up a lot of things that we want to do  
14 here, not only just for CUNY, but also for our SUNY  
15 counterparts that definitely need the help and the  
16 assistance.

17 So I thank them for being here.

18 But I just want to -- I just want us to  
19 recollect the past.

20 So I was born and raised in Brookdale  
21 Hospital. You know, I live in Brownsville. Not one  
22 of the best neighborhoods for those that know it.

23 My mom is a graduate of Medgar Evers College.  
24 She also did her graduate school at SUNY New Paltz.

25 So I am, like, you know, public education

1 through and through. And I've seen what happens  
2 when our elected officials decide to turn their  
3 backs on public education.

4 And we see what's happening in Chicago right  
5 now. Right? We see all these movements that are  
6 picking up speed across the nation.

7 And if New York is supposed to be the beacon  
8 of light and of progressivism that they say that  
9 they're going to be, you know, 10 months in, I know  
10 you guys have just got started, but this is the  
11 chance for you all to make real change happen.

12 You know, public education, like, you know,  
13 the ball is in your court as elected officials. And  
14 it's time, like, when you all go back to Albany,  
15 even on the city council, we have to hold them  
16 accountable too.

17 But this is something that shouldn't take us  
18 coming here, having rallies, voicing our opinions.

19 This is something that all of us are  
20 benefactors of.

21 The people that you cast votes and ballots  
22 next to have benefited from CUNY and SUNY education.

23 Why are we having this conversation over and  
24 over?

25 Right?

1           There are people that sat there at this table  
2 and spoke to us, that have graduated from CUNY and  
3 SUNY schools, and have made their careers off of  
4 CUNY and SUNY educations.

5           This shouldn't take us coming here, us, like,  
6 leaving our jobs and our children to be here.

7           Right?

8           There's a couple things I want to talk about.  
9           Things like the TAP gap, of course.

10          I'm pretty sure you heard it, but, all of our  
11 universities, even though it's happy when it's on a  
12 brochure, and it's great when we're, like,  
13 mentioning all these great statistics, they're set  
14 up to fail right now.

15          I just want to -- I just want to put that in  
16 perspective for you all.

17          Even though I'm really glad the adjuncts are  
18 now getting the pay that they need, if the State  
19 doesn't input support, that is all going to come off  
20 the backs of students.

21          Tuition has increased -- right? -- every  
22 single year, every single year for the past, I think  
23 it was, what, like, eight out of the past  
24 nine years, and it's the last year of a predictable  
25 tuition plan.

1           And I'm just saying it as it is.

2           If we don't do something now, this is going  
3 to be something that's going to crumble -- right? --  
4 not only for CUNY, but also for SUNY.

5           And I think that what we need to do, moving  
6 forward, is have more meetings like this, with more  
7 students that understand the situation that's at  
8 hand.

9           Because, as far as I know, this is the first  
10 full student panel. Right?

11           And all the other students that were here  
12 amongst us --

13           If you were here earlier, you would have saw  
14 the room was a little bit -- it was packed. Right?

15           -- everybody had to go to class.

16           Everybody had to go to work.

17           People have kids.

18           Right?

19           And then people say, oh, like, you know,  
20 well, if you have problems paying for graduate --  
21 graduate, you know, whatever, whatever, go to the  
22 food pantry.

23           I don't have a food pantry on my campus.

24           Governor Cuomo thinks we do, though. That's  
25 was he says all the time. Right?

1           And I think this is something that we have to  
2 really take a real comprehensive look at. Right?

3           I didn't say I was going to be USS Chair to,  
4 like, do all the greasing hands and everything.

5           I'm here to make real change happen.

6           And I think that, if we don't work together,  
7 moving forward -- right? -- I'm just putting this  
8 into perspective for you all, like, my friends  
9 I graduated high school with -- right? -- we all  
10 live in The Ville. Right? They're in your  
11 district.

12           None of them are in college.

13           None of them.

14           It's real tough out here.

15           It's real.

16           Like, why -- I'm on a retreat out here,  
17 talking about student leadership. And then, like,  
18 you got people getting shot at the park a couple  
19 blocks from my house.

20           Like, this isn't something that, like, I'm  
21 coming here to, like, just be, like, oh, like,  
22 let's -- let's make -- we need to make real change  
23 happen.

24           And if we don't fund public higher education,  
25 my friends that go up to Albany, my friends that go



1 to Buffalo, if we don't make this something that can  
2 be sustained -- right? -- even when you all leave,  
3 like, the people that we were friendly with, what's  
4 going to happen if you're not there?

5 Who's going to support us?

6 Who's going to save us when we need saving?

7 Right?

8 This is why we put you here.

9 You know, this is why we elected everyone  
10 here.

11 Right?

12 I think that it's important that we keep that  
13 on the table of our hearts when we go back up to  
14 Albany.

15 And when 55 million, or whatever the price  
16 tag is up there, and when the three people go into  
17 the room, I hope that we're all holding our leaders  
18 in the Senate and the Assembly, and also our  
19 Governor, accountable.

20 I had, like, a lot of things I wanted to say  
21 in my testimony.

22 You can read it through.

23 I'm sorry I had to get a little bit emotional  
24 here, but this is -- it's real.

25 Thank you.

1 [Applause.]

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

3 Everybody has a copy of everybody's  
4 testimony. And there's a link where you can  
5 download it online.

6 Okay, this is the order -- there's no  
7 particular order, I got to tell you.

8 Wayne Dawkins from York College in Queens.

9 WAYNE DAWKINS: Blessings.

10 Pretty much the same, I think.

11 You know, we coming from places where the  
12 same people around us don't actively get the chances  
13 we do.

14 And I'm here because two of -- I wasn't  
15 supposed to be here this year, I almost didn't make  
16 to it college this year, simply because the  
17 Excelsior Scholarship backfired on me.

18 It back-charged me \$6,000.

19 I had to beg, borrow, just to, you know, be  
20 back here this year, and advocate for students on,  
21 like, or behalf.

22 And the fact is, two of my friends, really  
23 close friends, who were there with me through and  
24 through last year, they're not here with me this  
25 year.

1           (Indiscernible) they're not here with me this  
2 year.

3           The development that we went through, like,  
4 talking on the train, people used to stop  
5 (indiscernible), like, Oh, you guys, you guys look  
6 different, you guys sound different.

7           Now because, like, we felt like we growing  
8 up. Like, the conversations we had in college, we  
9 were just growing up, and we're getting better.

10           And I feel like that is the benefit of higher  
11 education, but we're not getting that through, like,  
12 Excelsior Scholarship.

13           We have to, you know, have second jobs. We  
14 have to have two jobs. Most of us have -- we have  
15 two jobs.

16           We do work study, and we try to get a next  
17 job somewhere else.

18           Like, it's not easy for, like, students here  
19 at college, especially when the college looks like a  
20 school that is underfunded.

21           We have one room that looks like this.

22           And every other room, there is a hole in the  
23 ceiling. Like, if you look in the -- if you look  
24 through the holes in the ceiling, something could  
25 probably drop out.

1           And -- and -- and, like, it's just not a  
2 place where -- you can see that it's underfunded.

3           The escalators don't work.

4           The elevators are actively being upgraded.

5           There's a whole building that's shut down  
6 because we have molds in -- in that building.

7           And now, the performing arts, we don't have a  
8 place where we can have -- we don't have a place  
9 where we can have all our theater stuff. We don't  
10 have a place where we can have performances.

11           I wanted to, you know, have people speak  
12 about, you know, progressive ideas, and, like, have  
13 conversations at school, where we can, like, find  
14 new creative ways through arts to, you know, develop  
15 ourselves.

16           But that won't be happening this year because  
17 we have a whole building that is shut down.

18           And it's not just a year at college.

19           I mean, library hours, it's the same thing.

20           At Timothy's school, the same thing at other  
21 schools, at -- you know.

22           Within CUNY, when I was running for USS,  
23 I visited other schools.

24           At City College, one of the beacons of,  
25 like -- one of the best CUNY schools, they have not

1 just mice, but they have lice in their library.

2 And that is a fact.

3 Like, there is -- a lot goes down.

4 At BCC, they have a beautiful campus, but  
5 they're worried that there are people that are  
6 sleeping on campus.

7 Like, it is deep.

8 When I go there and I check out the issues  
9 that are happening at different places, it's pretty  
10 much the same thing over and over and over.

11 We are underfunded.

12 We can see underfunding in, like, the gaps in  
13 our schools.

14 Like, we see a school that, oh, you can walk  
15 through, but then, to a certain point, you see that  
16 this school is underfunded.

17 Like, at York college, since being more  
18 involved, our president has said the number is  
19 \$6 million to get through the year.

20 We started the year at a deficit of  
21 1.5 million.

22 And if rain falls and the roof start leaking,  
23 that deficit goes up because we have to fix it.

24 If anything happens anywhere else in the  
25 building, the deficit goes up, and we have to fix

1 it.

2 So we messaged her, we -- I asked.

3 The deficit is going to be six or seven  
4 million this year, because we started at a deficit  
5 of 1.5.

6 And then the deficit, after three years, will  
7 be \$24 million, and we have no reserves left.

8 Which means York is -- the HBCU in CUNY, and  
9 Medgar Evers, that his mom went to, York is that at  
10 school in south side Jamaica, Queens, that a lot of  
11 people -- I ride my bicycle to school every day  
12 because I can't afford the train.

13 Two days ago, when it rained, and I couldn't  
14 ride back home, I had to get on the bus and beg the  
15 driver a ride home, because that's what I had to do.

16 And most of the students at York College, we  
17 commute pretty close by to school.

18 And that's always been York College, and  
19 York College needs investment.

20 Excelsior Scholarship needs to be fixed.

21 I feel like there is so much we need to do  
22 about affordability, and, just, is it really  
23 accessible, is Excelsior Scholarship accessible, if  
24 only 3 percent of students are getting it?

25 Like, York College, the TAP gap affects us

1 deeply because a lot of students get TAP. A lot of  
2 students do get TAP.

3 And at the end of the day, while we advocate  
4 for students to get the help, we know this gap  
5 continues to underfund us.

6 What do we do?

7 What do we as a college do?

8 What do we as the students who know what the  
9 issues are, do?

10 Especially when these issues affect us  
11 ourselves.

12 I'm a student leader, and I do not know what  
13 to do because the same issues that -- that's it.

14 Thank you.

15 [Applause.]

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

17 Incidentally, I'm meeting with the acting  
18 president next Tuesday.

19 WAYNE DAWKINS: (Inaudible.)

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Huh -- yeah, I'm going to  
21 show him this, and ask him, believe me.

22 Next we have Jane Guskin, CUNY Graduate  
23 Center.

24 JANE GUSKIN: Yeah, hi.

25 So I want to, first, just read quickly,

1 the -- a statement from Daniel Vasquez  
2 Sanabria [ph,] a Brooklyn College student who's  
3 sitting right there, who has his own voice, but was  
4 not allowed to speak here.

5 So I'm just --

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: Everybody was allowed to  
7 speak.

8 All right, continue.

9 JANE GUSKIN: -- yeah, thank you.

10 So Daniel says:

11 "Why are we here?"

12 "Who asked for this hearing?"

13 "Do you really care about anything we have to  
14 say here today?"

15 "Every year, for the past three years, I've  
16 attended every hearing dealing with tuition hikes,  
17 and every year I speak.

18 "Still, every year tuition is raised.

19 "Why are we holding hearings if whatever is  
20 mentioned by students is completely ignored?"

21 "I don't believe in CUNY, I don't believe in  
22 the board of trustees, I don't believe in the  
23 university student senate, and I don't believe in  
24 you here today.

25 "I believe in the professors that are



1 underpaid, the adjuncts, like Dr. Thea Hunter, who  
2 have died because the system doesn't care to provide  
3 health care to professors who haven't seen a filled  
4 refrigerator in years.

5 "I believe in the students who get up every  
6 morning to jump a turnstile, just so they can afford  
7 the ride back to their homes at night.

8 "I believe in the students that work  
9 three full-time jobs and still make it to all of  
10 their classes.

11 "I believe in a free CUNY, where the students  
12 don't need three jobs in order to get a degree.

13 "I believe in a free CUNY, where adjuncts and  
14 professors are not food-insecure or homeless.

15 "I believe in a free CUNY, where people like  
16 you just support what the students, professors,  
17 faculty, and staff need, and not what an underfunded  
18 budget needs, in order to keep a governor happy.

19 "I believe in a free CUNY.

20 "So when you ask me if I want tuition to be  
21 raised? I don't.

22 "I want tuition to be how it was before  
23 people like me were allowed to come into this racist  
24 university system."

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

1 JANE GUSKIN: So that's -- sorry.

2 That was Daniel's part, so that was very  
3 quick.

4 So I just want to add that:

5 So, my father graduated from Brooklyn College  
6 in 1953, when it was free.

7 And I am a CUNY graduate, so I'm a  
8 second-generation CUNY graduate.

9 I am the representative of the Graduate  
10 Center at the university student senate.

11 I'm also an adjunct lecturer at  
12 Queens College.

13 And I just want to mention, because the  
14 proposed contract, the tentative contract, has been  
15 brought up here, that many of us are not in favor of  
16 this contract. And there are various reasons why  
17 we're not in favor of it.

18 Obviously, it does not reach the -- a living  
19 wage in 2022.

20 But, a major reason that some of us are very  
21 opposed to it is precisely because of these budget  
22 cuts that Andrea Vasquez referred to, which  
23 (indiscernible) -- the depth of these budget cuts  
24 cannot be overstated.

25 The -- we just found out recently that, at

1 BMCC, 300 classes are slated to be canceled for the  
2 spring.

3 At Queens College, we found out in September,  
4 that 30 sections of required English class are  
5 slated to be cut.

6 And so these are -- this again goes back to  
7 student retention, graduation, timelines, students'  
8 graduation timelines, are being set back; classes  
9 are being it canceled all across CUNY.

10 And so what this does, not only hurts  
11 students, and we know that it hurts students because  
12 they can't graduate on time, but, also, who among  
13 us, the adjuncts, is even going to benefit from  
14 whatever increases are in the contract?

15 Because we have no job security, and we're  
16 getting laid off because those classes are getting  
17 canceled.

18 So that is one of the main concerns that some  
19 of us have.

20 This funding crisis, this budget-cut crisis,  
21 in CUNY is really bad now.

22 We have people at Queens College who have  
23 been there since the '80s, and they're saying they  
24 haven't seen anything this bad since the '80s.

25 This needs to stop.

1           And everybody here has spoken to all the  
2 reasons why we need funding.

3           And what I've heard you all say up there is  
4 that you can't do anything about it because of the  
5 800-pound gorilla in the room.

6           What are we going to do?

7           Do we have to go on strike, is that what we  
8 have do?

9           Do we have to have students and workers  
10 standing up and shutting this whole system down to  
11 get some attention, from the Governor, from you,  
12 from anybody, to get the funding that CUNY needs?

13          Thank you.

14          [Applause.]

15          SENATOR STAVISKY: Would you leave the first  
16 testimony so we have a complete record, the first  
17 statement you read.

18          JANE GUSKIN: Sure.

19          SENATOR STAVISKY: Next we have Dylan Rice,  
20 chief of staff, FIT Student Government.

21          DYLAN RICE: Hello.

22          Thank you, everyone.

23          Good afternoon to the Committee.

24          I'd like to thank Brooklyn College for  
25 hosting today.

1           And I'd to thank all the people that are  
2 remaining here, that who have stood through this.

3           I know it's a long process, but there is no  
4 change without participation.

5           So everybody here, really, thank you for  
6 staying and participating in this.

7           I have some points I want to make on behalf  
8 of the SUNY Student Assembly.

9           For those who don't know, it's, basically,  
10 the collective student government of all SUNY  
11 campuses.

12           I'm a community college rep.

13           And a lot of people don't know, FIT is  
14 actually a community college. We're the only SUNY  
15 in New York City proper, in Manhattan.

16           And I'm proud to be here representing that.

17           And I'm also represented with five other  
18 members of that caucus.

19           And I would like to also bring up that, with  
20 all the conversation we've had today about quality  
21 of life when pursuing an education, just how  
22 difficult it is for so many people in the state to  
23 do that, because, the fact that public education is  
24 not really public is a little bit concerning for,  
25 I think, a lot of people.

1           Two members of my caucus were homeless. And  
2 they are participating in this organization while  
3 one of them was homeless. And he still came to our  
4 conferences and participated, when his family was  
5 waiting to hear if they could get a house.

6           So just to state that for the record, that  
7 this is not a singular issue among any group,  
8 whether it's CUNY or SUNY, downstate, upstate,  
9 Long Island, Albany, Buffalo... it's everywhere.

10          And, again, before I go into the main topic  
11 I'm here to talk about on behalf of SUNY, to say,  
12 I want to just bring up something that I've been  
13 thinking about all day.

14          It's a line from a spiritual that I usually  
15 look at for guidance.

16          It's -- the line goes, "If religion was a  
17 thing that money could buy, the rich would live and  
18 the poor would die."

19          And so when education is something that  
20 people can buy, are we expected to die; to just wait  
21 for that chance to reach the top?

22          But to have to jump over so many hurdles to  
23 even get that opportunity to rise up and get past  
24 where we came from.

25          I'm blessed. I came from a

1 financially-secure household. My parents were not  
2 poor.

3 Moving, town to town, chased by loan sharks,  
4 asked where their parents are, and bribed with toys,  
5 to get them to say where they were.

6 I didn't expect to get so emotional today.

7 I'm really sorry.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: It's all right. No rush.

9 [Applause.]

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

11 DYLAN RICE: But it's disgusting that this is  
12 the situation in the United States, let alone  
13 New York, that there are people that are deciding  
14 between a chance at a future or a chance to exist.

15 Unacceptable.

16 And I stand in solidarity with everybody who  
17 is going through these issues, with CUNY, with SUNY,  
18 every student that wants to pursue an education.

19 Seriously, it's disgusting that we have to  
20 fight for it.

21 So, just to get that out of the way.

22 I want to talk about another issue involving  
23 the TAP-gap funding that is oft forgotten, which is  
24 the other funding that gets cut because of it.

25 At FIT, I'm at a campus with a population of

1 85 percent female.

2 It's unlike a lot of other college campuses,  
3 I can assure you of that.

4 And one of the main issues on campus is  
5 things like, Title IX services, and counseling  
6 services, which are, basically, naught.

7 Weeks of waiting to get to meet a counselor  
8 when it's needed, left in the dark.

9 Title IX barely able to uphold their ability  
10 to exist as a foundation.

11 I just sat down with Title IX members at FIT,  
12 and we talked. And they couldn't get over the fact  
13 that, when they got their new member, how it didn't  
14 rise them to exceed their ability to do their work,  
15 it met the bear minimum. And they just got that  
16 third worker last year.

17 So when these schools cannot afford things  
18 because of the TAP gap, so much more is lost, which  
19 ruins the ability to find an education  
20 appropriately.

21 I had a close family member drop out because  
22 of a Title IX situation three weeks into school.

23 I didn't even know that's why she left.

24 I thought she just couldn't handle it.

25 But it turns out it was a case that would



1 have been a Title IX situation, and she left.

2 And I can guarantee that that happens every  
3 single day within the SUNY and CUNY systems, any  
4 public school.

5 People that don't think they have a lifeline,  
6 and eject, and settle, and exist in that hole that  
7 they did before they even took the chance to get out  
8 of it.

9 So when we're talking about the TAP gap, it's  
10 not just paying for students to get in.

11 It's the quality that is experienced when  
12 they get into the system.

13 If there is no safety net for people trying  
14 to exist, then what are we doing?

15 What is the point?

16 I walk into places like NYU and I'm (makes  
17 vocal sound). It's amazing, and it's private, and  
18 I love it. It's great; great for people who can  
19 afford it, that's amazing.

20 But I look at public education around the  
21 state, and it's almost like we don't care about it,  
22 and we just expect it to bootstrap ourselves up to  
23 high heaven, and not exist where we can at the  
24 moment.

25 So I ask, of course, and we've all brought

1 this up, I think every single person here has  
2 probably mentioned, the TAP gap.

3 That's a huge issue, but it is an issue of  
4 public funding, in general, and that's just one  
5 small facet of it.

6 So when you think about this type of stuff,  
7 don't think in dollars and cents.

8 Think of students who have dropped out  
9 because they were raped, and they couldn't talk to  
10 somebody about it.

11 Think about students who killed themselves  
12 because they couldn't access a counselor on campus,  
13 because it's just not worth the money.

14 I think I'll rest there before I cry again.

15 [Applause.]

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

17 We have Kevin Rogers, deputy, legislative  
18 affairs, Student Assembly.

19 KEVIN ROGERS: Yes.

20 Good afternoon.

21 My name is Kevin Rogers, and I'm the deputy  
22 director of legislative affairs for the State  
23 University of New York Student Assembly.

24 I would like to thank the Committee, and  
25 especially Committee Chair Senator Stavisky, for

1 hosting this hearing at Brooklyn College, and the  
2 people of CUNY, and everyone in the room.

3 A lot of important personal experiences were  
4 touched on today, including the TAP gap, and the  
5 cutting essential services for these campuses.

6 Now, I would like to bring up that the  
7 campuses that are struggling have been struggling  
8 for quite a long time.

9 You know, this is due to the shortfalls from  
10 the reduced funding of the Great Recession of 2008,  
11 which has resulting in the -- in the cuts to  
12 essential services.

13 And then, that, coupled with the TAP gap, and  
14 all the other increased operating costs on the  
15 campuses, have really impacted these students.

16 There are two axioms in higher education in  
17 New York State that seem to be true: The rising  
18 tuition costs and the widening TAP gap.

19 To put in some numbers, in the last 10 years,  
20 tuition at SUNY campuses has risen 63 percent, which  
21 is also contributing to an increase in the TAP gap,  
22 from \$20 million, to \$65 million in 2018, and that  
23 was the total number.

24 This widening gap has resulted in students  
25 paying more in tuition dollars for less services on

1 their campus.

2 Allocation and operating budgets has  
3 diminished their ability to provide a high-quality  
4 education at an affordable cost.

5 We, the SUNY SA, CUNY, the CUNY Student  
6 Senate, and everyone, urge you to close this gap and  
7 restore funding to these campuses.

8 Increased funding by the State in  
9 institutions of public higher education will allow  
10 students to receive these high-quality services and  
11 mental-health counseling, academic advisement,  
12 LGBTQ+ resources, religious training, and many more.

13 It is of vital importance that the State  
14 invest in SUNY, as students have selected the State  
15 University of New York and the City University of  
16 New York for its commitment to a world-class  
17 education at an affordable price.

18 Now, I would also like to bring up, if you  
19 look at public housing, and the deterioration of  
20 public housing, that can be likened to the  
21 deterioration of the public university systems.

22 It's like they want you to feel like  
23 you're -- you're not accepted, or you're poor.

24 You know, if you look at these public-housing  
25 complexes, there's not one ornate detail, there's

1 not one beautiful thing about it, where you can say,  
2 Wow!

3 And that's turning into the SUNY and CUNY  
4 systems.

5 You know, even at Brooklyn College today, on  
6 the East Campus, if you look up at the rotunda on  
7 the main building, the paint is chipping off.

8 That is a great symbol, that this place used  
9 to be something extraordinary, it used to be  
10 beautiful. And now the neglect has brought  
11 deterioration and a decrease in quality.

12 So we -- we, as students, urge you to act  
13 upon these discussion points that were brought up  
14 today.

15 And I do sincerely thank you all for showing  
16 up and holding these campuses all across the state.

17 It means a lot to us as students.

18 So, thank you.

19 [Applause.]

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

21 Any questions?

22 SENATOR MYRIE: I have a question.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes, Senator Myrie.

24 SENATOR MYRIE: Thank you.

25 Thank you to the Chair for holding this

1 hearing.

2 I want to apologize, one, for being late, and  
3 having to run. I'm dealing with an emergency in one  
4 of our public-housing facilities in the district.

5 But -- so I don't have a question.

6 I really just wanted to thank all of you for  
7 your testimony today, for your vulnerability.

8 I know that it's not easy to share some of  
9 these things.

10 One of the reasons that people do not engage,  
11 as the young man shared through the -- Jane's  
12 testimony, one of the reasons they don't engage is  
13 because they don't see the results.

14 And I -- I just want to thank you for, even  
15 in the face of that, taking your time to come and to  
16 talk to us.

17 I want you to know that it is not falling on  
18 deaf ears.

19 That putting this on the record empowers us  
20 when we walk into this process, that it's not just  
21 going to be anecdotal. It's not just us being  
22 uncharacteristically optimistic.

23 This is coming from the students themselves,  
24 and from those who the students have elected to  
25 represent them.

1           And so I really just wanted to thank you for  
2 taking the time out today to share these stories.

3           I suspect that many of you will be on this  
4 side of the table one day.

5           And I just want to thank you again for  
6 stepping up and showing that leadership right now.

7           Thank you.

8           SENATOR STAVISKY: And, obviously, I believe  
9 this is the first such hearing that has been held,  
10 in my service, and that's been a long time, yeah,  
11 because we want to hear from the students, as well  
12 as the other folks who are involved.

13          But you're the clients.

14          SENATOR PERSAUD: I just want to --

15          SENATOR STAVISKY: Question, yeah.

16          SENATOR PERSAUD: -- (inaudible).

17          -- (inaudible) say again, thank you all for  
18 showing up, for bringing it to our attention the  
19 issues that you're facing.

20          When I hear about your college, I am just,  
21 like, shocked, because the things that I have known  
22 of your college, when they -- that the new building  
23 went up, and all of that.

24          And, so, for the building to have  
25 deteriorated in such a short span of time, there's a

1 major issue there.

2 And so I know Senator Stavisky is meeting  
3 with them and will get to the root cause of the  
4 issues.

5 For all of you who -- who -- this is not --  
6 we're not doing this just for publicity; we're not.

7 We're doing this because, across all our  
8 committees in the Senate, we're holding hearings to  
9 hear from the people across New York State, and the  
10 issues that are affecting them; how can we work to  
11 help alleviate the burden that's been placed on our  
12 most vulnerable populations.

13 And so we're listening.

14 When you come to our offices in Albany,  
15 oftentime we ask you questions that you never have  
16 the answers to.

17 And so when we're coming out now, and you're  
18 bringing your testimony to us, we're appreciative of  
19 that.

20 So when you come to us again in Albany in  
21 February, or in January, when you come, we're going  
22 ask you those questions, because we're going to  
23 follow up on some of the things that you've said to  
24 us. And we'll show you what we're putting forward.

25 We expect you to have the answers, because



1 the same way you're going to hold us accountable,  
2 we're doing the same.

3 The question was asked: Why show up?

4 Why show up?

5 Just like in anything, not everyone wins.

6 But if we don't come together and have the  
7 conversations, so that we all understand what the  
8 root causes are, and what the issues are, we will  
9 never be able to move forward.

10 So showing up, it's not just showing up and  
11 sitting there. It's showing up and giving us the  
12 facts.

13 When you give us the facts, you can hold us  
14 accountable, because you're the ones who are sitting  
15 in the classrooms on a daily basis.

16 And I can talk to any of you about higher  
17 education because I was a college registrar; a  
18 college and university registrar.

19 So all the issues that you are bringing to us  
20 today, I know of them.

21 There are students who will walk into my  
22 office, or administrators from across CUNY and SUNY,  
23 and the questions that I will ask them, they say,  
24 No one has ever asked me that.

25 And I say, Because I'm coming from within.

1           And most of the times, when I ask the  
2 questions, there's never the answer.

3           So, I appreciate all of you coming out today  
4 and giving us your perspective, so that we can work  
5 on that.

6           Thank you all very much.

7           SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

8           Before you leave, sorry, Senator Persaud is  
9 extremely knowledgeable on these issues.

10           We happen to sit next to each other in the --  
11 we're laughing -- in the Democratic Conference. And  
12 she is extremely knowledgeable about  
13 higher-education issues because she spent so many  
14 years working in higher education.

15           We have a question from Trustee Una Clarke,  
16 former member of the city council.

17           TRUSTEE UNA CLARKE: It's not -- it's not a  
18 question.

19           I just wanted to say to the -- to  
20 Senator Stavisky, that I am particularly thankful  
21 that you reached out to me directly as Chair of  
22 Student Affairs, to be at this meeting today.

23           And although I don't have many questions,  
24 because the students know who I am, that I am on  
25 their side. That whatever is happening --

1 [Applause.]

2 -- in CUNY, I'm on their side.

3 And because I'm on their side, wherever  
4 there's going to be discussion concerning students,  
5 I like to be there to have my input in.

6 So I want to thank you for having this  
7 hearing here.

8 And to my -- to the senators who have come to  
9 hear you, it's all of us going in the same  
10 direction.

11 And I know, from time to time, you may feel  
12 that what you're doing is useless because there are  
13 not going to be any changes.

14 Sometimes changes don't come automatically.

15 But if we're all moving in the same  
16 direction, we'll get the results that we will.

17 And somebody asked about, why should we even  
18 vote?

19 I just want to say to you, in the Black  
20 community, since I'm Black, if we don't vote, then  
21 we are double -- there's double jeopardy on our side  
22 because they will ignore and say, Well, they  
23 don't -- they didn't vote anyway, so why should we  
24 do something?

25 So we have to keep incrementally working

1 together, understanding, that we are moving to the  
2 same direction to get to the same destination.

3 And if we're all saying the same thing at  
4 different times, somebody will hear us, and we will  
5 move forward.

6 So again to the students that are here, we  
7 heard you, and the elected officials have taken  
8 their notes.

9 And, together, we will see that the changes  
10 that we're looking for will come at the appropriate  
11 time.

12 Thank you.

13 [Applause.]

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

15 And let -- can I add one other thing?

16 I go to a lot of events at colleges.

17 And Trustee Clarke is one of the few people  
18 I see all the time.

19 People don't realize it, but she takes her  
20 job very seriously.

21 And she comes to, I remember, I think it was  
22 Queens College commencement, all the time.

23 She is the trustee who cares very genuinely  
24 and very deeply about student affairs.

25 And if I could ask you one really quick

1 question, if you could keep your answers  
2 (indicating):

3 We heard discussions today about the  
4 Excelsior Scholarship, but we heard it from the  
5 point of view of the administrators.

6 How do you feel we can make the  
7 Excelsior Scholarship more relevant to the people  
8 for whom it was designed?

9 WAYNE DAWKINS: I think Excelsior Scholarship  
10 has to be expanded to be more like ASAP, in all  
11 honesty. Or, just expanded it to be --

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: It's different. It's  
13 really not like ASAP (parties cross-talking) --

14 WAYNE DAWKINS: -- a better program.

15 It is not a good program at all.

16 It's not accessible to all the students.

17 If something happens to you in the middle of  
18 the semester --

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: Exactly.

20 WAYNE DAWKINS: -- you're hit with -- there's  
21 a huge burden that's, like, offset my life.

22 I'm not -- I don't think I am a dumb student.  
23 I try really hard.

24 I had 30 -- I had more than 30 credits, I did  
25 more than the bear minimum, to get what I did.

1           The problem was, that I did one class that  
2 wasn't necessarily towards the major, because  
3 I switched. And that one class cost me \$6,000.

4           I don't think it's fair that, you know, there  
5 is this program that exists that doesn't give us a  
6 chance to, you know, explore different college  
7 options.

8           It really doesn't.

9           SENATOR PERSAUD: And that is true.

10          SENATOR STAVISKY: I know it's true.

11                   (Parties cross-talking.)

12          SENATOR STAVISKY: That's why I asked it.

13          SENATOR PERSAUD: And rarely do students who  
14 start out as Major A graduate with that major, you  
15 know, unless they have the parent who says, you're  
16 going to be a doctor from day one, and you're forced  
17 to do that.

18          But students do shop around majors, and some  
19 of them, you know, three or four times.

20          And that's the problem we have with the  
21 courses that you've taken transferring to each major  
22 so that there's continuity in your degree programs.

23          TIMOTHY HUNTER: I'll keep it brief.

24          I was actually -- I'm an education major.

25          So I remember one day, my assistant principal

1 told me to go with him and the class of high school  
2 seniors to a trip to FIT.

3 And I was very confused as to why we were  
4 going to FIT in the middle of, I think it was  
5 October.

6 And then I remember getting to this  
7 auditorium, and I see this podium that says -- like,  
8 it says, "New York State, free tuition."

9 And then, little did I know, that  
10 Governor Cuomo and Bernie Sanders were going to come  
11 from behind the curtain and talk about this amazing  
12 new program that was going to save New York State  
13 college students.

14 Now, in my head, this is before  
15 (indiscernible), like, what three years ago? two  
16 years ago now?

17 So I didn't think anything of it then.

18 But now when I see it, it's like -- it's like  
19 Russian roulette. You know, it's, like, you spin  
20 it, and then you don't know if it's going to work or  
21 not. And if it does, you don't know how it's going  
22 to work.

23 And let's say, like, if you're a mom, or  
24 anything like that, you don't know how you're going  
25 to, like, raise your kid.

1           And then, living in New York City, it's the  
2 most expensive -- pretty much, the most expensive  
3 city in the whole nation.

4           And we're expecting a student to work enough  
5 to pay rent, and to raise kids. And we don't know  
6 if they have food-insecurity programs that are  
7 supporting them at this college while simultaneously  
8 taking 30 credits?

9           Okay, that's cool.

10          You can take a summer class, and you can a  
11 winter. But then have you to take 30 credits.

12          That's not easy at some of our CUNY schools,  
13 especially if you're a bio major. You're taking a  
14 lab class, and that counts, like, 4 credits. And  
15 then you have to spend extra time.

16          And not only that, but because of the TAP gap  
17 now, we don't even know if we have enough, like,  
18 staff to teach certain classes for that to even fit,  
19 like, into your schedule.

20          So even if you want to take 15 credits, there  
21 are some people that can't.

22          Right?

23          So I think that the real situation here is  
24 that, the Excelsior Scholarship, it may be working.  
25 You're always going to hear administration, no



1 matter what, talk about, like, you know, the great,  
2 the goodness, that it's doing.

3 But just me speaking as a student right now,  
4 I know for a fact that there's always room for  
5 improvement.

6 And if this is working for a select few, you  
7 can look at the numbers any which way you want to,  
8 it's not working for everyone, because we have  
9 someone that received it, and now doesn't receive  
10 it.

11 Like, this is the proof; we have proof.

12 Thank you.

13 SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you all very much.

14 JANE GUSKIN: Yeah, I would just add that it  
15 doesn't work for CUNY students at all. I think  
16 everybody knows that. Right?

17 It's not designed for CUNY students.

18 So you're saying is, how to get it to do what  
19 it's supposed to do.

20 I don't think it's even supposed help CUNY  
21 students.

22 It seems to be set up to help  
23 upper-middle-class students who live with their  
24 parents, whose parents have enough money to pay for  
25 them to not be able to work, so that they can just

1 go to school full-time and finish in four years.

2 That seems to be what it's designed for,  
3 Cuomo's base, I don't know.

4 Right?

5 But that's -- that's -- so it does not serve  
6 CUNY students.

7 And I think the real danger that Timothy  
8 alluded to, is that it creates an illusion that we  
9 have free college in New York State, and so  
10 everybody throws their hands up and say:

11 What are you -- what are you complaining  
12 about? What are you asking for? We have free  
13 college. It's the Excelsior program.

14 No, it isn't.

15 Get rid of it.

16 Let's get real free CUNY and real free SUNY.

17 [Applause.]

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you very much.

19 We're good?

20 Okay.

21 SENATOR PERSAUD: (Inaudible) something --

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: Oh, sorry.

23 KEVIN ROGERS: That's okay.

24 I just side with Timothy. He hit it on the  
25 head.

1           For SUNY, a lot of the qualifications have to  
2 be lowered to, you know, expand the program and  
3 reach a bigger base, as it was intended to.

4           DYLAN RICE: Again, yeah, in agreement.

5           And also just the fact about, credit  
6 situations, this was brought to my attention  
7 by my secretary of academic affairs,  
8 Catherine Pryor [ph.].

9           She made this spreadsheet of credits to hours  
10 at FIT.

11           For those who don't know, it's supposed to be  
12 one credit for one hour.

13           She is a fine-arts major,  
14 Delisha Paris [ph.], who was the secretary of  
15 student affairs on -- at FIT.

16           Her major, if there's 40 credits total, the  
17 hours expected are 77.

18           So when we factor in things like that, we  
19 have no free time for students.

20           She is working a part-time job. She's --  
21 she's barely holding it together.

22           Doing work for the SJA, which is amazing.

23           And she -- I don't know where people find the  
24 time.

25           I don't know where I find time.

1 I'm working too. I'm doing this, I'm doing  
2 the student assembly.

3 And to have these rigid expectations to get  
4 free education, which should be free, it's a radical  
5 idea, but I think that education falls under life,  
6 liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

7 I think it falls under that, in my opinion.

8 So Excelsior is a Band-Aid.

9 We need an operation, and we need to make  
10 sure that education is a guaranteed right for  
11 everyone.

12 [Applause.]

13 WAYNE DAWKINS: When Tim mentioned the high  
14 school, I remember, at York, I work at the Early  
15 College Academy (YECA). And a lot of students  
16 there, they take college classes while they're in  
17 high school, on campus.

18 And one of the problems we're having is, how  
19 does -- how does Excelsior Scholarship affect them?

20 We can't say to them tuition is absolutely  
21 free, if we're not sure that all of their credits  
22 are going to be accepted, and how does this affect  
23 them, like, as soon as they start in the fall.

24 Not all of them get Excelsior Scholarship  
25 because they already have, like, so-and-so credits.

1           And the State is looking at, you know, what  
2           does this mean for them?

3           They don't always get the financial aid that  
4           they should get at that point for the fall semester  
5           when they just start college.

6           It's usually something that they end up  
7           coming back to the academy for, to look at, what  
8           does it mean? And how can they, like, get financial  
9           aid the way that they should?

10          SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay, we thank you very  
11          much.

12          SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you all very much.

13          SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

14          Next on my list I have Santana Alvarado, and  
15          Juvanie Piquant.

16          SANTANA ALVARADO: I can start.

17          SENATOR STAVISKY: Absolutely.

18          We're doing it alphabetically.

19          SANTANA ALVARADO: Hello, my name is  
20          Santana Alvarado, and I'm a Hunter -- I'm a senior  
21          at Hunter College, and alumna of Bronx Community  
22          College, and the Chairperson of the New York Public  
23          Interest Research Group.

24          NYPIRG is a student-directed non-profit  
25          advocacy group with chapters at SUNY, CUNY, and

1 private colleges across the state.

2 Thank you for holding this hearing.

3 I am not in class right now because too many  
4 students are suffering in silence.

5 The State has routinely underfunded CUNY and  
6 SUNY, and costs get pushed onto students and their  
7 family, and we are suffering.

8 Beginning in 2011, nearly constant tuition  
9 hikes have raised tuition rates by more than  
10 42 percent.

11 NYPIRG urges the Legislature to freeze all  
12 tuition at senior and community colleges.

13 It is clear that students cannot afford  
14 rising tuition.

15 We hear from students unable to pay for food,  
16 metro cards, books, and stable housing, like  
17 Andrena [ph.] Martinez who struggled to rent  
18 textbooks, and often still did not have enough money  
19 to eat.

20 NYPIRG urges the Legislature to close the TAP  
21 gap and include mandatory costs in its base funding  
22 equation.

23 Why does the State continue to divest from  
24 higher education?

25 For many students, limited course offerings,

1 overloaded classes with overworked professors, and  
2 limited advisement cause graduation delays, hurting  
3 families and our economy.

4 Nearing graduation, Hunter student  
5 Stephanie Moye [ph.] saw dwindling course  
6 availability, making it harder to finish  
7 requirements for her major.

8 NYPIRG urges the Legislature to provide TAP  
9 and the Excelsior Scholarship during winter and  
10 summer sessions, to expand aid for youths beyond  
11 tuition, and to include graduate students and  
12 incarcerated people in TAP.

13 CUNY opportunity programs, child-care  
14 centers, and campus food pantries also need support.

15 Robust financial-aid programs and student  
16 services exist to safeguard low- and middle-income  
17 students from the financial barriers which impede  
18 college completion.

19 Students should not have to jump through  
20 hoops to receive aid.

21 Our written testimony includes students'  
22 stories highlighting these hoops.

23 The decision is yours.

24 We are bringing you our experiences because  
25 you should be the voice of the students.

1           Be our champion to the Governor ahead of the  
2 executive budget's release, please.

3           We are putting you on notice, and thousands  
4 of students and staff are watching how you move  
5 forward.

6           Represent the people.

7           Thank you.

8           [Applause.]

9           SENATOR PERSAUD: Hey, Juvanie, you're next.

10          JUVANIE PIQUANT: Good afternoon.

11          I've been here since 10 a.m. I'm extremely,  
12 extremely tired.

13          We've had to wait a long time to share our  
14 stories, but we're here now and we're going to share  
15 them.

16          My name is Juvanie Piquant.

17          I am a second-year student at City Tech,  
18 majoring in law and paralegal studies.

19          I'm the alternate senator for the university  
20 student senate, newly-elected vice chair of  
21 legislative affairs, and a NYPIRG state-board  
22 representative.

23          On the behalf of CUNY students and myself, we  
24 are thankful to share the opportunities of our  
25 perspectives on the climate of higher education in



1 the state of New York, and seek ways we can advance  
2 the effectiveness and progression of higher  
3 education.

4 Growing up in Brooklyn, New York, having a  
5 father who worked at this school as an adjunct, has  
6 shown me what CUNY can do for me and what CUNY has  
7 done for others.

8 Fast-forward many years later, I'm here; I'm  
9 inspired, I'm hopeful and driven, and I have -- than  
10 I have ever been in my entire life.

11 It is imperative that the investment into  
12 higher education is taken into serious matters.

13 Every day, CUNY students suffer from many  
14 issues that hinder their progression from pursuing a  
15 degree, issues such as food insecurities; tuition  
16 hikes; lack of campus resources, such as feminine  
17 hygienes that are paid by student activity fees, no  
18 disposable bins in restrooms; dysfunctional  
19 amenities, such as elevators and escalators, affect  
20 us more every day.

21 Allow me to share a testimony from our very  
22 own member, who is my peer at New York City College  
23 of Technology, in regards to feminine hygiene.

24 "I was a freshman. I felt very awkward.  
25 I was putting my pad away. I felt very gross

1 disposing it outside in the garbage that everyone  
2 throws out their stuffing in.

3 "There were other girls, and I know that we  
4 go through the same thing, but it still made me feel  
5 uncomfortable and awkward.

6 "I felt like nobody needs to know that I'm on  
7 my period, nobody needs to know that I'm going  
8 through it.

9 "It's, like, my personal life. It was kind  
10 of messy, it was extremely gross.

11 "It would have been much better if, each time  
12 I went to the bathroom, I had a disposable bin where  
13 I could throw my menstrual pad away.

14 "Also, when you're on your period, it smells.

15 "Why would I, or anyone else, want to put  
16 that outside where everyone else throws their stuff  
17 away?

18 "I also see used tampons and pads on the  
19 toilets because I'm guessing the girls feel  
20 uncomfortable throwing it away in front of people  
21 and outside."

22 That's our reality at CUNY.

23 Budget deficits that result in the  
24 underfunding of CUNY puts the financial burdens on  
25 the backs of students, resulting in various

1 hardships; for example, prolonged graduation rates,  
2 students dropping out due to not being able to  
3 extend, the cost of living, and high tuition costs.

4 Since the start of 2011, tuition hikes have  
5 raised tuition by more than 38 percent.

6 Tuition price per students at senior  
7 colleges, \$6,730 at CUNY four-year schools. The  
8 rising tuition costs outpace the maximum tuition  
9 assistance program, TAP award, that is \$5,065.

10 TAP tuition burdens have risen upon students.

11 New York State has not incorporated funding  
12 or additional imperative costs, such as staff  
13 contracts, and electricity, and more, resulting into  
14 additional gap in the state of funding of mandatory  
15 costs.

16 The City University of New York is a place  
17 where everyone can come with nothing and leave with  
18 everything, and more.

19 It is an institution where you are surrounded  
20 with such driven and hopeful and inspiring  
21 individuals.

22 It is imperative that the investment into  
23 this institution is a topic of conversation and it  
24 is acted upon now.

25 As a student leader, it is my moral

1 obligation to continue standing up for my peers and  
2 myself and this fight for higher education and  
3 funding CUNY.

4 The call of action is now and it is important  
5 for us to answer.

6 Our students are suffering, faculty are not  
7 receiving adequate pay.

8 To the elected officials that claim to be  
9 progressive, they need to be progressive in acting  
10 upon the urgency to the higher-education crisis that  
11 we are going through right now.

12 [Applause.]

13 JUVANIE PIQUANT: Senator Toby Ann Stavisky,  
14 as the Chairperson of the Higher Education  
15 Committee, I expect for our issues and concerns to  
16 be on the front line of your agenda, alongside with  
17 your colleagues.

18 Education is not a problem, it is an  
19 opportunity.

20 Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the  
21 most powerful weapon which you can use to change the  
22 world."

23 We must treat education as such, and provide  
24 every single student at CUNY adequate, fair, and  
25 quality opportunity in achieving an education at the

1 City of The [sic] University of New York, and we  
2 must fund CUNY now.

3 Thank you.

4 [Applause.]

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: And let me thank you,  
6 because I have the report that was issued yesterday.

7 It's a remarkable document that NYPIRG  
8 prepared, and, no argument.

9 We work very closely with Blair Horner in  
10 Albany, and we all do.

11 SENATOR PERSAUD: We all do.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: We all do.

13 And I've discussed this with him -- this  
14 issue with him on many occasions.

15 He knows where I stand.

16 SENATOR PERSAUD: That's it.

17 Thank you.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay? Do you have any  
19 questions?

20 Okay, thank you very much.

21 [Applause.]

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: Next we have  
23 Nikki Oyeyemi --

24 Am I correct? Close?

25 -- the chairperson -- the associate director

1 of the National Association of Social Workers -  
2 New York City.

3 OANIKE (NIKKI) OYEYEMI: Good afternoon.

4 Thank you for allowing the National  
5 Association of Social Workers, New York City  
6 Chapter, to present testimony today.

7 My name is Olanike Oyeyemi, and I'm the  
8 associate director of NASW-NYC.

9 Our executive director,  
10 Dr. Claire Green-Forde, is traveling for a  
11 social-work conference and couldn't be here today.

12 Mr. Benjamin Sher sends greeting on behalf  
13 of the board of directors and over 5,000 members in  
14 New York City.

15 We thank you for this opportunity.

16 Throughout this testimony, we will provide  
17 both personal and professional implications of the  
18 debt, and we urge everyone to consider not only the  
19 financial cost, but the personal and quality-of-life  
20 sacrifices social workers and others make to pay  
21 back their loans.

22 The National Association of Social Workers is  
23 the largest membership organization of professional  
24 social workers in the country, with 55 chapters  
25 representing every state in the union, including

1 Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam, and the  
2 U.S. Virgin Islands.

3 NASW, along with NAS -- NASW-NYC, along with  
4 NASW-New York State, represents over 12,000 social  
5 workers in the state of New York.

6 As I said, these issues are both personal and  
7 professional, because we too are impacted by the  
8 high burden of student-loan debt and the limited,  
9 restrictive, and underfunded loan-forgiveness  
10 options available to social workers.

11 We listen to our members and other social  
12 workers express worry and frustration around the  
13 high student-loan debt;

14 We empathize when young professionals and  
15 students express being disillusioned by the field as  
16 their hard-earned sacrifices don't seem to be  
17 value-based on compensation or workloads;

18 And we try to support those who tell us that  
19 they consider leaving the field altogether for  
20 better-paying jobs so that they can pay their debts  
21 and have some hope of a moderately comfortable life.

22 As the professional body of social workers,  
23 and the largest mental-health providers in this  
24 country, we will be remiss if we did not speak to  
25 the emotional, psychological, mental, and

1 physical-health tolls the stress of financial and  
2 student-loan debt places not just on social workers,  
3 but on everyone; anxiety and depression about making  
4 payments, where will you live, how will you make  
5 ends meet, struggling between paying your loans and  
6 your rent or putting food on the table, and  
7 questioning how you can support your clients while  
8 you yourself may need some of the same supports.

9         Advocating for lower cost of higher education  
10 and loan forgiveness is critical not only for social  
11 workers, but for the larger society, as high college  
12 costs and education funded primarily through student  
13 loans has become a national social issue, draining  
14 both the economy and deterring prospective college  
15 students from applying.

16         Student debt in the United States is  
17 estimated at more than \$1.5 trillion.

18         In fact, more than one-fourth of the  
19 country's 40 million student-loan debtors are in  
20 default of their student loan. And by 2022, college  
21 debt will equal mortgage debt.

22         For NASW, it is critical that the cost of  
23 higher education and student loans be addressed, as  
24 social workers has been identified as one group of  
25 professionals especially burdened by educational



1 debt.

2 According to the United States Department of  
3 Labor, social work is one of the fastest-growing  
4 professions, with a 16 percent increase in jobs over  
5 the next 10 years.

6 These positions will grow particularly in the  
7 health, behavioral health, child, family, and school  
8 and community-based agencies.

9 As the United States population ages, the  
10 need for social work in supporting the elderly and  
11 end of life will grow exponentially.

12 The expected growth and need for social  
13 workers, and the recognition of the unique training  
14 social workers bring, has not translated into living  
15 wages or salaries comparable to the years of  
16 professional training and skills required for a  
17 master's-level social worker.

18 Starting salaries for most MSW-level position  
19 in New York State range from 35,000 to 55,000, with  
20 the average master social worker being offered  
21 annual salaries in the mid-40s.

22 A manager at Starbucks, for instance, with a  
23 minimum qualification of a high school diploma and  
24 two years of retail experience, earns a salary of  
25 50,000 annually. In New York City, that could be

1 62,000.

2 Social workers, on the other hand, who are  
3 required to have master's degree, complete work --  
4 coursework, in addition to two years of internship,  
5 obtain a degree, engage in post-master's training,  
6 and be licensed, yet, on average, don't even make as  
7 much as somebody in Starbucks or similar  
8 organizations.

9 How can we attract people and retain them in  
10 our field; the field that works to help populations,  
11 the field that is emotionally and mentally tasked  
12 in, and requires significant personal sacrifices,  
13 when this is the reality we are facing?

14 Social-work salaries are often constrained  
15 further by limited funding contracts and tight  
16 budgets within the organization, with the high cost  
17 of living in New York City.

18 The average rent in most places been about  
19 2,000 a month. And the low wages of social workers  
20 and low wages, social workers are finding it harder  
21 and harder to make a living.

22 We are aware of social workers employed in  
23 multiple roles in and outside of the field just to  
24 make ends meet; social workers who themselves need the  
25 same public-assistance benefit, such as SNAP, that

1 they advocate for the clients to receive; and social  
2 workers who are burnt out, and make quality of life  
3 or family-planning decisions because they simply  
4 can't afford it.

5 One example of the impact of student-loan  
6 debt quality-of-life decisions come from our  
7 executive director, Dr. Green-Ford, who, after  
8 years of paying off loans, still has well over  
9 \$100,000 in student debt.

10 She has spoken to the fact that, no matter  
11 what she pays, at the end of the year, the principal  
12 is the same or a bit higher.

13 Paying more each month on loans is the goal,  
14 however. It means being unable to have a place to  
15 live due to high cost of rent in New York City.

16 Additionally, the high cost of living, low  
17 wages she has been offered in her 10 years in the  
18 field, while also trying to address basic life  
19 needs, has impacted her ability to adequately save  
20 towards that goal to be a homeowner.

21 She shared that it also means that she is  
22 unsure if she will ever be a mother, as the cost --  
23 as the financial cost of children, coupled with the  
24 cost of living and other expenses in New York, don't  
25 make that dream attainable, given her student debt.

1           This is one example of one person willing to  
2           share a deeply personal story about the impact of  
3           crushing student debt has had them, in hopes of  
4           illustrating both the financial and personal cost to  
5           all of you.

6           She is not alone, there are many others.

7           There are three public education institution  
8           in New York City granting master social-works  
9           degree: Lehman College, Silverman School of  
10          Social Work at Hunter, and the Staten Island  
11          University at the College of Staten Island.

12          The competition for acceptance into those  
13          fine programs is high, and students may delay  
14          admissions one to two years if considering them.

15          Students graduate -- students graduating from  
16          this program still incur debt.

17          In fact, we can speak to at least one case,  
18          where a student was accepted into both public and  
19          private social-work program in New York City, and  
20          chose the private program because the scholarship  
21          offered there offset the cost of education at a  
22          greater level.

23          Therefore, students who are enrolled in  
24          public institution for social work are facing  
25          similar challenges to students who elect private

1 university.

2 I will share my own personal story.

3 In order for me to attend social-work school,  
4 I had to maintain a full-time job and take out  
5 student loans to help supplement the cost.

6 This were in addition to the loans I already  
7 had for my undergraduate study, which I did out of  
8 state and incurred even more financial debt.

9 Despite the high debts I incurred for my  
10 degrees, I consider myself one of the lucky ones  
11 because I was able to apply for scholarships that  
12 covered a small portion of my tuition.

13 Also, after graduating, becoming licensed,  
14 and working in a public-service agency, I was able  
15 to apply and receive the New York State Licensed  
16 Social Worker Forgiveness Program, where portions of  
17 my loans were canceled for four years.

18 Although these opportunities were incredibly  
19 helpful in reducing my debt, it took me being  
20 proactive, doing extensive research, fitting into  
21 certain eligibility criteria, and then applying in  
22 the hopes that I would be successful.

23 To date, I am still repaying a significant  
24 amount of debt, which begs the question: What are  
25 others who didn't have the same luck and opportunity

1 as me dealing with?

2 NASW has employed a multi-tiered approach to  
3 its advocacy for reducing student-loan debt.

4 At the federal level, NASW has supported the  
5 Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Junior,  
6 Social Work Investment Act which was introduced into  
7 Congress.

8 The primary goal of the Reinvestment Act is  
9 to secure federal and state investment in  
10 professional social work to enhance societal  
11 well-being.

12 It focuses on fair-market compensations, high  
13 social-work education that translate in social-work  
14 research to practice, social-work safety, lack of  
15 diversity in the profession, and state-level  
16 social-work licensure.

17 Congresswoman Barbara Lee and  
18 Senator Barbara Mikulski, both social workers, have  
19 reintroduced this bill several times, most recently  
20 in the 113th Congress.

21 Social workers, social-work students, and the  
22 social-work community could benefit from the passage  
23 of this legislation.

24 At the state level, NASW was pivotal in  
25 expanding the Social Work Public Loan Forgiveness

1 Program offered by HESC, and the organization  
2 continues to lobby for expansion of loans for people  
3 working in the public sector.

4 HESC consistently reports, the Social Work  
5 Loan Forgiveness program has more applicants than  
6 any other program they administer.

7 Unfortunately, given the amounts of funds  
8 available is only 1.7 million, they are only able to  
9 serve a fraction of those in need.

10 We strongly urge and encourage the  
11 Legislature, and, specifically, the Higher Education  
12 Committee, to consider expansion of this program.

13 As part of our social-work investment  
14 initiative, NASW-NYC has, and will continue to,  
15 advocate for substantial increase to the program,  
16 particularly for those working in the public sector  
17 where salaries are low and staff turnover is high.

18 NASW-NYC, as part of the Social Work  
19 Investment Initiative, has also advocated for  
20 4 million for an additional loan forgiveness for  
21 social workers.

22 With this advocacy has been the reality that  
23 professionals seeking student-loans forgiveness face  
24 a complicated and difficult process.

25 Students are often undereducated about the

1 different type of scholarship opportunities on the  
2 type of loans they have, what the payment  
3 requirements are, and how their jobs apply to  
4 requirements for serving underserved populations.

5 Also, there is a need to be -- there needs to  
6 be more protection in place for student-loans  
7 borrower in general.

8 In New York State, for instance, loan-service  
9 providers are neither licensed nor regulated,  
10 although the student-loan servicer industry has  
11 repeatedly been the cause for serious  
12 consumer-protection concerns.

13 The social-work profession is a noble and  
14 valuable profession.

15 Every day, social workers support our state's  
16 most vulnerable and marginalized individuals and  
17 community.

18 They advocate and empower those who have been  
19 silenced, fight to eradicate racism and oppression,  
20 and support the resilience of people.

21 This is a calling and a profession that  
22 people choose because they know that being an agent  
23 of change will greatly benefit all in society;  
24 however, the profession suffers from crushing  
25 college debt and low compensation in a state where



1 the cost of living can be quite high.

2 We need our legislative representative to  
3 increase access to loan forgiveness and reduce the  
4 cost of higher public education.

5 We recommend the following:

6 Reduce the cost of public higher education  
7 for NASW programs to zero, or near zero, and  
8 increase access loan forgiveness for all New Yorkers  
9 employed in the public sector.

10 Thank you for allowing me this opportunity.

11 [Applause.]

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

13 SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you.

14 You know, the points you mentioned, it's what  
15 we hear all the time.

16 I'm not sure if you know, one of our  
17 Assemblymembers is a licensed social worker,  
18 Assemblymember Jaime Williams, who happens to be my  
19 colleague in the district. And this is a fight that  
20 she brings up, and I know you guys know this, all of  
21 the time.

22 Social workers really are underpaid. They're  
23 underpaid, they're overstressed, you know.

24 And we have to do something about the way we  
25 forgive their loans when they're working in the

1 field. And it's something that we are continuing to  
2 push.

3 OANIKE (NIKKI) OYEYEMI: Absolutely, I think  
4 funding -- more funding.

5 Like I said, I was lucky to receive that  
6 loan-forgiveness program.

7 I know maybe two other people who have  
8 received that.

9 And this is a profession that is growing.

10 The need for social workers, like I said in  
11 my testimony, is going to grow in -- within the next  
12 10 years.

13 We need to funnel that pipeline and make sure  
14 that there's licensed social workers out there, and  
15 that they're able to go to school, so that they can  
16 then help populations and help the people in need.

17 So, absolutely.

18 SENATOR PERSAUD: Yep, definitely.

19 I'm going to make sure I share with this her  
20 also.

21 OANIKE (NIKKI) OYEYEMI: Thank you.

22 SENATOR PERSAUD: Senator? Are you good?

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Our last --

24 Thank you very much for waiting.

25 OANIKE (NIKKI) OYEYEMI: Thank you.

1           SENATOR STAVISKY: Social workers have a lot  
2 of patience.

3           Our last person to testify is Anthony Vancol,  
4 who is a student at Queens College, which is in my  
5 district.

6           ANTHONY VANCOL: Thank you.

7           Last but not least, am I right?

8           Good afternoon.

9           Thank you for the platform to share my story,  
10 Toby Ann Stavisky and Roxanne Persaud.

11          My name is Anthony Vancol. I'm a senior at  
12 Queens College as a psych major.

13          I'm a board rep with NYPIRG.

14          I entered college in 2016 as an ASAP student  
15 at Queensborough Community College.

16          As an ASAP student, I was granted a  
17 personalized advisor, textbook vouchers, unlimited  
18 metro cards, a cohort with similar students, under  
19 the program.

20          I took 15 credits each semester.

21          I was under a student contract that allowed  
22 me to graduate within a two- to three-year time  
23 frame. And I entered Queensborough in 2016 and  
24 graduated in 2018.

25          I entered Queens College as a transfer

1 student in fall of 2018.

2 But prior to that, I accepted the  
3 Excelsior Scholarship the summer of 2018.

4 As a transfer student, I was ill-advised and  
5 misinformed and rushed during the transfer  
6 orientation process.

7 So, I registered for 12 credits instead of  
8 15.

9 It was a very stressful time being integrated  
10 into Queens College as a transfer student. There  
11 wasn't that much support.

12 The only way that I could find out  
13 information that could support me is if I was really  
14 involved in the student body.

15 I was food-insecure. I wasn't working at the  
16 time.

17 I had to decide whether to buy an unlimited  
18 metro card for the week versus my textbooks for  
19 courses that I had.

20 I was going through a lot of stress, so  
21 I utilized the mental-health services on campus, the  
22 counseling center.

23 I used the support system, like student  
24 organizing groups, like NYPIRG.

25 I really got involved with the student body.

1           I consider myself pretty self-aware, and  
2           I knew that something wasn't right with me,  
3           mentally.

4           So I decided to get psychologically evaluated  
5           at the clinical psychology program on my campus  
6           during my fall semester. And it was really hectic  
7           going back and forth, getting tested.

8           Under unfortunate circumstances, I ended up  
9           failing a course, so I only accumulated 9 credits by  
10          the end of fall of 2018, and I was (indiscernible).  
11          I failed French.

12          I didn't know really what to do.

13          After contacting the professor, and him  
14          telling me that, "There's nothing I can do, changing  
15          your grades," I went to advising at my campus, and,  
16          again, it was very rushed, again, because the  
17          student-to-faculty ratio is so unequal at  
18          Queens College.

19          As more and more students get into  
20          Queens College, the faculty either stays the same or  
21          gets cut.

22          So I decided to register for 20 credits of  
23          spring 2019, which was a lot.

24          So, in the beginning of spring 2019, I was  
25          informed that, based on my psychological evaluation,

1 that I had a learning disability, which was  
2 something that I had to, like, process, accordingly.

3 And then, after spring 2019, and all the  
4 stress that I was under, I found out at the end,  
5 that students with disabilities have a little more  
6 leeway in terms of their (indiscernible) with  
7 Excelsior, which I didn't know after the fact.

8 Even though I completed spring 2019  
9 successfully with A's and B's, the amount of stress  
10 and mental-health struggles that I encountered is  
11 still something I'm trying to rectify.

12 Over the summer I was diagnosed with ADHD,  
13 and also found out that I have high blood pressure.

14 When I went to the doctor, the doctor would  
15 see why I have the blood pressure of a -- not of a  
16 20-year-old. And I would semi-jokingly blame it on  
17 being a CUNY student.

18 With ADHD, it's severely impacted my academic  
19 performance.

20 And when you think about individuals with  
21 ADHD, your executive function is impaired.  
22 Executive functioning deals with organizing,  
23 planning, prioritizing.

24 When I was at Queensborough, I had an advisor  
25 who would keep me on key on the things that I was

1 doing and what I needed to accomplish.

2 When I was at Queens College, I didn't have  
3 any of that since ASAP was not extended to four-year  
4 institutions.

5 So I had to figure out everything by myself  
6 when advisement wasn't available to me.

7 So this semester I registered as a part-time  
8 student, taking 8 credits.

9 I initially didn't want to be a student this  
10 semester. I wanted to take time on myself to  
11 mentally gather myself together. But I was afraid  
12 that not being a student, it would not allow me to  
13 pursue many opportunities that requires you to be a  
14 student.

15 Due to budget cuts and lack of funding on  
16 mental-health resources, especially at Queens, the  
17 mental-health faculty has been dramatically cut, and  
18 I can't get available counseling.

19 I can either do academic or personal.

20 And for personal there's a wait list.

21 And, unfortunately, I can't wait-list my  
22 mental-health struggles.

23 And I try to utilize the other resources on  
24 campus, but there's only so much they can do.

25 Due to the lack of treatment for my ADHD,

1 my -- I've regressed even worse.

2 And due to the bureaucracy inappropriateness  
3 that I experienced at Queens at the disability  
4 center, and miscommunication with my professor,  
5 I have to drop a course.

6 My professor pulled me to the side during her  
7 office hours and advised me, it is in my best  
8 interest to drop a course, "because it doesn't look  
9 like you're going to pass," which will delay my  
10 graduation for anticipated 2020.

11 And a part of me wasn't even that sad because  
12 graduating in the four years is no longer the norm,  
13 which is problematic in itself.

14 Again, I'm just reiterating the facts that  
15 the Excelsior Scholarship program is very flawed.

16 The woman who expressed the statistics of how  
17 students under Excelsior are doing well, I wish  
18 I was part of that statistic, but I'm not.

19 Every time I encounter a student at  
20 Queens College under Excelsior they say the same  
21 thing, that, it's not feasible.

22 Accumulating 30 credits in academic year  
23 varies on your curriculum, what major you're  
24 pursuing, versus (indiscernible) liberal arts, the  
25 amount of research you're getting, the support



1 system.

2 Yeah, holistic approaches, like the ASAP  
3 program, would really help individuals like me,  
4 students who didn't even know they had a learning  
5 disability, and just, like, properly accommodate  
6 them.

7 So more funding, expanding the ASAP program  
8 into four-year institutions, would be very -- not  
9 ideal -- it just should be the required thing to do  
10 for more increased graduation rates.

11 SENATOR PERSAUD: Question for you.

12 When you transferred from Queensborough to  
13 Queens College, the counselor you -- the advisor  
14 that you met with, was that person made aware of  
15 your disabilities?

16 Because I'm trying to follow, when you were  
17 diagnosed, and when they were informed.

18 Because, the minute you enter and you've  
19 given them the documentation of your diagnosis,  
20 you're supposed to be receiving these services.

21 So when did you notify them?

22 And when did they begin giving you services?

23 And what is causing you to have a wait time  
24 receiving services?

25 ANTHONY VANCOL: So I got psychologically

1 evaluated in fall of 2018.

2 SENATOR PERSAUD: Uh-huh?

3 ANTHONY VANCOL: And I didn't get the  
4 diagnosis until spring 2019, early January, so to  
5 speak, when --

6 SENATOR PERSAUD: Was this diagnosis from a  
7 counselor at a school or was this private?

8 ANTHONY VANCOL: This was at the school, this  
9 was at Queens College.

10 SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay. And so it went in  
11 the fall semester did your diagnoses session begin?

12 ANTHONY VANCOL: October.

13 SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay. And when in the  
14 spring did you receive it?

15 ANTHONY VANCOL: Late January.

16 SENATOR PERSAUD: And right away  
17 Queens College was notified?

18 ANTHONY VANCOL: Yes, they got me  
19 accommodations, like, what did I need?

20 Whether that be note-taking, or extended test  
21 time and resources, to utilize at the students with  
22 special services.

23 SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay. And the instructor  
24 that told you that -- that pulled you aside and said  
25 you were not -- you were in jeopardy of failing the

1 class, were you offered additional services for that  
2 class?

3 ANTHONY VANCOL: So the course that I'm  
4 talking -- referring is psych statistics.

5 So in psych statistics, I had to take my  
6 first exam.

7 And with students with special services, if  
8 you want extended test time, you have to give a blue  
9 form to the professor.

10 SENATOR PERSAUD: Right, yeah.

11 ANTHONY VANCOL: (Indiscernible) -- okay.

12 Yeah, so there was a miscommunication as to  
13 when I was supposed to take the exam, because I had  
14 a certain window to take the exam.

15 But on the certain days, it was a holiday on  
16 campus, and I didn't know whether the campus was  
17 closed. So I didn't end up taking it that day.

18 SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay, this is just a crazy  
19 question: Do you have your college calendar?

20 ANTHONY VANCOL: Yeah.

21 SENATOR PERSAUD: Okay. Always make sure  
22 that college calendar is in the front of your col --  
23 of your notebook, because it tells you when the  
24 college is open or not, and when the school is  
25 closed.

1           But what I'm asking is, because if you were  
2 supposed to receive -- every class you register for,  
3 the counselor is supposed to have gotten your  
4 schedule. Right?

5           ANTHONY VANCOL: What counselor?

6           SENATOR PERSAUD: The counselor -- the  
7 disabilities counselor, or your academic advisor,  
8 all of them, are supposed to have that.

9           They're supposed to know the classes you're  
10 taking, and making sure that you're receiving that  
11 special assistance that's needed.

12          Are you receiving that?

13          ANTHONY VANCOL: No.

14          SENATOR PERSAUD: You got a problem, Toby.

15          OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: The counseling center at  
16 Queens College has a wait list of months.

17          ANTHONY VANCOL: Yeah.

18          OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: Months.

19          Like, you need counseling, you can make an  
20 appointment for three or four months from now.

21          SENATOR PERSAUD: (Microphone off.)

22          Well, we're not just talking general  
23 counseling.

24          We are talking, assistance -- a student in  
25 the classroom that has to have, by law, that

1 assistance.

2 You're saying that it was not granted.

3 They were given the information, and you're  
4 not receiving the services, that's what you're  
5 saying?

6 ANTHONY VANCOL: What information, exactly?

7 SENATOR PERSAUD: (Microphone off.)

8 When you give them your diagnoses, you have  
9 to have give -- it has to be part of your record.

10 ANTHONY VANCOL: It is part of my record.

11 SENATOR PERSAUD: (Microphone off.)

12 Right?

13 ANTHONY VANCOL: Yeah.

14 SENATOR PERSAUD: (Microphone off.)

15 So when you register for your classes, your  
16 schedule, you're supposed to give them that schedule  
17 so they know the classes you're taking, and arrange  
18 for the assistance you're supposed to get, what  
19 it -- so that they have to notify the instructors of  
20 every class: Student A must have additional  
21 test-taking time. Student A must have additional  
22 time for homework... all of these things.

23 That sort of thing.

24 You're saying that was never done --

25 ANTHONY VANCOL: No --

1 SENATOR PERSAUD: (Microphone off.)

2 -- that they had the information?

3 ANTHONY VANCOL: -- yeah, certain things they  
4 send e-mails to professors, and certain things they  
5 require the student to give to the professor, which  
6 I did, yeah.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: Let me make a suggestion.

8 SENATOR PERSAUD: (Microphone off.)

9 We'll follow up on that.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: We'll follow -- exact --  
11 that's what I was about to say.

12 Sabiel, will you take the information down,  
13 and we -- with a phone number and an e-mail and --

14 SENATOR PERSAUD: (Microphone off.)

15 And you have to give her authorization  
16 (parties cross-talking) --

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: And have you to give me  
18 authorization to contact the college in your behalf.

19 But we'll start with the background, and then  
20 you'll -- you know how to write an authorization,  
21 I guess.

22 We'll find a form.

23 We have to do that now. We do that with  
24 every -- even though you're not a constituent,  
25 necessarily, we have to do that with everybody.

1           SENATOR PERSAUD: (Microphone off.)

2           Not only that (indiscernible) --

3           SENATOR STAVISKY: And this way, we have a  
4 record. It's a paper trail.

5           SENATOR PERSAUD: (Microphone off.)

6           -- give your information out.

7           SENATOR STAVISKY: Yep, because we,  
8 obviously, respect privacy rights.

9           Okay?

10          But we will get the information and see what  
11 we can do.

12          SENATOR PERSAUD: (Microphone off.)

13          Just give him all of the details, and we'll  
14 follow up with it.

15          SENATOR STAVISKY: In fact --

16                   (Parties cross-talking.)

17          SENATOR STAVISKY: -- before I adjourn the  
18 hearing, let me tell you, write it all out for us,  
19 and give it to Sabiel Chapnick, and we will contact  
20 Queens College and see what we can do to help.

21          ANTHONY VANCOL: Thank you.

22          SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay?

23                   [Applause.]

24          SENATOR STAVISKY: Is there anybody else who  
25 would like to add anything?

1           Good.

2           The hearing -- it is now 3:55, and the  
3 hearing is adjourned.

4           SENATOR PERSAUD: Thank you all.

5           SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

6

7                   (Whereupon, the public hearing held before  
8 the New York State Senate Standing Committee on  
9 Higher Education concluded at 3:55 p.m., and  
10 adjourned.)

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