

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

8 SUNY New Paltz
9 1 Hawk Drive
10 New Paltz, New York

11 Date: October 28, 2019
12 Time: 1:10 p.m.

13 PRESIDING:

14 Senator Toby Ann Stavisky
15 Chair

16 PRESENT:

17 Senator Jan Metzger (Co-Sponsor)

18 Senator Robert Jackson

19 Assemblymember Harvey Epstein

20 Assemblymember Jonathan G. Jacobson
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23
24
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1	SPEAKERS:	PAGE	QUESTIONS
2	Dr. Tod A. Laursen	10	35
3	Provost State University of New York (SUNY)		
4	Dr. Donald Christian	10	35
5	President SUNY New Paltz		
6	Dr. Alan Roberts	10	35
7	President SUNY Ulster		
8	KT Tobin	66	76
9	Deputy Mayor Village of New Paltz		
10	Austin Ostro	84	97
11	President SUNY New Paltz Student Government		
12	Brad Hershenson	84	97
13	Legislative Director SUNY Student Assembly		
14	Tajiah Pink	84	97
15	President SUNY Student Assembly		
16	Tal Schwerd	110	116
17	NYPIRG SUNY New Paltz		
18	Dr. Frederick E. Kowal	124	156
19	President United University Professions (UUP)		
20	Kelly Keck	124	156
21	Louis A. Reyes, Jr. UUP Delhi		
22	Cesar Barros	124	156
23	Beth Wilson Amanda Merritt		
24	UUP New Paltz		

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: Good afternoon,
2 and welcome to the Standing Committee on
3 Higher Education hearing today.

4 My name is Toby Stavisky, and I chair the
5 Committee on Higher Education.

6 Today is October 28, 2019, and the time is
7 1:10 p.m. That's for the record.

8 And joining me today are members of the
9 Senate.

10 We have Senator Jan Metzger who is the
11 co-chair of the hearing, and we thank her for her
12 help.

13 And we have Senator Robert Jackson, an
14 illustrious alumnus of SUNY New Paltz.

15 There will be other people --

16 [Applause.]

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- there will be other
18 legislators joining us later.

19 I'd like to thank SUNY New Paltz, and your
20 president, Donald Christian, for their hospitality;

21 Senator Metzger on hosting and co-chairing
22 the hearing, and especially her staff, Lacey Seidman
23 and Bianca Coppola.

24 And let me also thank Adam and -- I'm sorry,
25 Adam and Tom from Senate media who came from Albany.

1 My staff is here, including Sabiel Chapnick
2 and Beth LaMountain, and my chief of staff,
3 Mike Favilla.

4 The -- the -- these are the first of
5 statewide hearings on the cost of higher education.

6 And it is clear that SUNY needs help, and
7 that the students should not be overwhelmed with
8 massive debt that mortgage their future.

9 Let me add, that there are a number of issues
10 that we want to discuss today, particularly the
11 Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), the TAP gap;

12 The fact that SUNY provides probably the best
13 upward mobility of any public higher-education
14 system in the country, along with the City
15 University of New York, and the need for a capital
16 plan;

17 And, lastly, the importance of the
18 opportunity programs: HEOP, EOP, SEEK, and all of
19 the other programs.

20 So before we call the first group of
21 witnesses, Senator Metzger, would you like to say a
22 few words?

23 SENATOR METZGER: Sure.

24 Well, first of all, I just -- I want to
25 really thank my colleague Senator Toby Stavisky for

1 holding these hearings on higher education across --
2 around the state, and for coming to -- to our
3 university here in the 42nd District,
4 SUNY New Paltz.

5 In addition to that exceptional university,
6 I represent a number of other public colleges in the
7 42nd District, which includes portions of
8 Ulster, all of Sullivan County, Orange, and
9 Delaware.

10 We have a representative from SUNY Delhi with
11 us here today.

12 I also represent SUNY Sullivan and
13 SUNY Orange.

14 Even though SUNY Ulster is not technically in
15 my district, it's up the road from where I live,
16 practically, and I consider it in my family of --
17 of -- of colleges.

18 You know, it -- these -- our public
19 university system is absolutely critical to our
20 young people here in New York realizing their full
21 potential, and, increasingly, for adults as well, as
22 we see huge transformations in our economy, and many
23 adults going back to school.

24 And investments in education are -- are
25 probably the best kinds of investments we can make

1 as a state.

2 Being able to access an affordable college
3 education is more important than ever.

4 We have incredible inequality in this country
5 right now. It hasn't been this great since the
6 nineteenth century, and New York state has the
7 greatest economic inequality in the country.

8 Too many families are struggling just to put
9 food on the table and pay the bills, and they cannot
10 afford to send their kids to college.

11 Too many kids are forced to take out loans,
12 and they enter the labor -- the job market with an
13 unsustainable burden, especially combined with the
14 other really high costs that they face.

15 We -- we have, essentially, an
16 affordable-housing crisis in our region.

17 And when you combine all of these
18 ingredients, we're just -- we're putting an enormous
19 burden on young people.

20 And it's not surprising that close to half of
21 the young people between ages 18 and 34 in our
22 region are living at home.

23 So we have to address this.

24 We have to make sure that we're fully funding
25 our -- our -- actually, both K to 12 and higher

1 education.

2 I also sit on -- I sit on the Education
3 Committee as well.

4 The -- as I said, these are the -- these are
5 the most important investments.

6 And I look forward to hearing from you all
7 today, how we can best support you, especially in
8 this upcoming budget year.

9 Thank you very much.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

11 We are very proud of our freshmen Senate
12 class. We have two superstars with us here today.

13 In addition to Senator Metzger, we have
14 Senator Robert Jackson, who really has been a leader
15 in the fight for various education programs.

16 Senator Jackson.

17 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

18 I appreciate the opportunity to be here with
19 you and my colleague Jen Metzger with respects to
20 making sure that we go around the state of New York
21 and listen to presidents of the various colleges and
22 universities, the union leaders, education
23 activists, students, about the course of a college
24 education, and what they -- what do they need in
25 order to ensure that the students that are part of

1 their institutions can make it in four years, and
2 not five or six.

3 Obviously, we all know that higher education
4 is one of the goals that we want to achieve for all
5 of our children.

6 And as someone that attended this school
7 here, along with my wife, and along with my
8 daughter, and the last one -- not the last one --

9 My second child, attended the University of
10 Buffalo.

11 -- so we are, clearly, a SUNY family, and we
12 do know what it costs to educate a child.

13 We do know that we're not getting enough
14 money.

15 And I say that because I've sat with you and
16 others at the joint budget hearing between the
17 Senate and the Assembly, and I listened to
18 testimonies of mayors, superintendents, and
19 presidents of colleges and schools, and everything
20 was said.

21 And all of the people involved in the
22 budgetary process, the Assembly, the Senate, said,
23 you know, the need for more money for one primary
24 education, and then secondary education --
25 post-secondary education.

1 And so this is about going around the state
2 and giving additional documentation, so that those
3 who do not believe that there's a need for more
4 money to fund the system, both from an operations
5 point of view and from a capital-infrastructure
6 point of view, hopefully, we will open their eyes.

7 And, quite frankly, and I'm referring to
8 everyone who believes that enough is already being
9 funded.

10 And I saw the sign outside. It says --
11 I think it says, "Fund SUNY Education."

12 Huh? What does it say?

13 [Multiple audience members commenting.]

14 SENATOR JACKSON: "Not yesterday, but now."

15 [Multiple audience members commenting.]

16 SENATOR JACKSON: "Not tomorrow, but now."

17 And I see -- and I thank the leaders of your
18 union. I see red shirts with "UUP."

19 And I think that stands for -- what does it
20 stand for? University...?

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: United University
22 Professions.

23 SENATOR JACKSON: And that's good.

24 And I say to you, that your president spoke
25 at Brooklyn College, and we expect to hear from him

1 again today.

2 So with that I say, thank you, Madam Chair.

3 I appreciate the opportunity to be here, in
4 order to listen to what is being said, and ask some
5 serious questions.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

7 I too have been here.

8 Incidentally, my husband taught summer school
9 here when he was in the Legislature. He was chair
10 of the Assembly Education Committee.

11 And it was around 1980, we spent the summer
12 living in one of the motels, while he taught summer
13 school here at New Paltz.

14 And I must tell you, it was a great
15 experience.

16 We've tried to group the witnesses according
17 to certain criteria.

18 And the first group we're going to call on,
19 and they're here, obviously, is:

20 Dr. Tod Laursen, the provost;

21 Dr. Donald Christian, the president of
22 SUNY New Paltz;

23 And Dr. Alan Roberts, the president of
24 SUNY Ulster.

25 Dr. Laursen.

1 DR. TOD A. LAURSEN: Thank you very much,
2 Senator.

3 As has been mentioned, my name is
4 Tod Laursen. I'm provost for the system of the
5 State University of New York.

6 And it's a pleasure to be here, with
7 Presidents Roberts and Christian, to talk to you
8 today about this very important set of topics.

9 On behalf of Chancellor Kristina M. Johnson,
10 I'd like to thank the Chairperson Stavisky, members
11 of the Senate, and legislative staff for giving us
12 the opportunity to discuss a matter important to all
13 of us, which is ensuring an affordable and
14 high-quality education for all New Yorkers.

15 I'd also like to acknowledge and thank
16 Chairman Merryl Tisch, our entire SUNY board of
17 trustees, for their leadership and support, and the
18 great work of our executive leadership team and
19 presidents, two of which I have the pleasure of
20 being here with today, across all 64 of SUNY's
21 colleges and campuses.

22 SUNY is in the process right now of
23 finalizing our '20-'21 budgetary proposal.

24 And you're going to hear more about that from
25 Chancellor Kristina Johnson at the joint legislative

1 budget hearing in January or February.

2 But I very much appreciate the opportunity to
3 share the most recent data we have on New York's
4 transformative approach to an affordable and quality
5 public higher education.

6 I know that you're aware that SUNY is the
7 largest comprehensive system of post-secondary
8 education in the nation. We serve more than
9 400,000 full-time students each year.

10 And when you take into account credit-bearing
11 courses, continuing education, community-outreach
12 programs, and the like, that total increases to
13 nearly 1.4 million learners annually.

14 We're a unique system in this sense, and,
15 therefore, we have unique challenges.

16 In addition to our community colleges,
17 four-year colleges, and graduate and doctoral
18 research centers, we operate medical schools,
19 hospitals, a law school and a national laboratory.

20 With the support of Governor Cuomo and state
21 legislators such as yourselves, despite the
22 challenges of a vast system with diverse needs,
23 we've grown our commitment to being accessible and
24 affordable while continuing to excel on the quality
25 of the education we provide every student entering

1 through our doors.

2 And, in fact, I'm very pleased to share,
3 and I know you all will know, that
4 Professor M. Stanley Whittingham of
5 Binghamton University was just awarded the
6 Nobel Prize in chemistry very recently for one of
7 the most profound inventions of our day, and one
8 that we all take for granted, which is the
9 lithium-ion battery.

10 So every time you charge your smartphone, you
11 can thank Dr. Whittingham for his work while here
12 at SUNY.

13 And by the way --

14 [Audio disturbance.]

15 DR. TOD A. LAURSEN: See, I told you it's
16 provost-proof.

17 By the way, the other thing I could mention
18 in this connection as well, is that
19 Dr. Whittingham is our 16th Nobel Laureate.

20 So there have been a large number,
21 historically, in SUNY.

22 So this story of affordability and quality
23 extends to all of our campuses.

24 And I think the Senator mentioned this in her
25 introductory remarks.

1 "U.S. News and World Report" released its
2 rankings last month of the nation's best colleges,
3 and 21 of ours were listed in the National and
4 Northeastern lists, including Stoney Brook
5 University, the University at Albany, University at
6 Buffalo, Oswego, FIT, and many more.

7 Further, Forbes recently released its list of
8 the "2019 Best-Value Colleges," and 10 different
9 SUNY schools topped the list, including Farmingdale,
10 New Paltz, Maritime, and several others.

11 23 of SUNY's 30 four-year colleges were also
12 mentioned in CNN Money's "2019 List of Best Colleges
13 For Your Money." Those include Buffalo State
14 College, SUNY Purchase, SUNY Old Westbury,
15 SUNY Delhi, and more.

16 While Kiplinger's ranked
17 Binghamton University as the top public school for
18 value in the country, 14 other SUNY schools made
19 that select list as well.

20 So your ongoing support for our
21 infrastructure and academic facilities that serve to
22 help attract the best teachers, and which deliver
23 groundbreaking research, will help to further build
24 on these achievements.

25 Because of the support Governor Cuomo and

1 legislators have delivered on affordability, and
2 because of the innovation of programs like the
3 Tuition Assistance Program, or "TAP," and the
4 Excelsior Scholarship, New York is truly set apart
5 from many other states.

6 You have prioritized affordable and quality
7 education, and it's showing in one of the most
8 important metrics available: social mobility, and
9 the enormous impact SUNY and our students and alumni
10 have on local economies in every region and corner
11 of the state.

12 Because of this, one-third of the state's
13 college-educated workforce has a degree from the
14 State University of New York, with 55 percent of
15 resident undergraduate tuitions attending SUNY and
16 CUNY tuition-free.

17 So let's have a look at a few of the details,
18 just briefly.

19 Let's look at Pell, TAP, and Excelsior first.

20 So in 2017-18, 90,656 students at all SUNY
21 campuses were offered a Pell grant. 51,004, or,
22 56.3 percent, of Pell recipients were offered the
23 maximum Pell award allowable, which is just under
24 \$6,000.

25 Alongside Governor Cuomo and his team, we are

1 working with New York's congressional delegation to
2 see additional resources and better eligibility
3 requirements for Pell and federal work study in the
4 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

5 New York's TAP program has been a
6 life-changing experience for hundreds of thousands
7 of students, and this was referred to earlier.

8 Across all campuses last academic year, just
9 over 108,000 students were offered a TAP grant.
10 63,319 of those students, or, about 62 percent of
11 the recipients, got the maximum TAP award.

12 And, finally, the Excelsior program has
13 opened its doors to 24,000 SUNY and CUNY students in
14 just its second year of enrollment.

15 This has been a particularly powerful
16 resource for students at our community colleges,
17 where, because of the support for (indiscernible) --
18 from Governor Cuomo and legislators, students are
19 able to focus on learning, and we see some good
20 early indicators of that.

21 Just as an example, Excelsior students at
22 community colleges have an on-time graduation rate
23 that's nearly three times higher than their peers.

24 It's early days, but it's a very encouraging
25 trend that we see.

1 We also have seen an increase in the metrics
2 for on-time graduation at four-year colleges, with
3 full-time Excelsior Scholarship freshmen taking
4 15 or more credits, which constitutes a full load.

5 The number of those doing so has increased by
6 about 7 1/2 percent over what was true previously.

7 Next, let's take a quick look at the EOP.

8 Since its inception more than 50 years ago,
9 the Educational Opportunity Program has graduated
10 more than 75,000 people who otherwise may not have
11 gone to college, or, if they had, would not have had
12 the supports necessary to succeed.

13 Today we have 11,284 EOP students enrolled at
14 48 campuses. These students come from
15 economically-disadvantaged backgrounds, by and
16 large, with a family income of less than \$46,435 per
17 year for a family of four. They are academically
18 underprepared when they start their time with SUNY,
19 averaging 6 to 11 points lower than general admits
20 on their high school averages, and approximately
21 250 points lower on their combined SAT scores.

22 But because of the supports and services we
23 are able to provide with the generous support we
24 receive, EOP students have a first-time, full-time,
25 retention rate of just over 82 percent at our

1 four-year campuses, and a higher overall graduation
2 rate than their non-EOP peers.

3 Chancellor Johnson recently held the very
4 first program honoring EOP students for their
5 academic excellence, campus leadership, and
6 perservant -- perseverance at the first
7 Norman R. McConney, Jr., Awards for EOP Student
8 Excellence, named for the man who helped
9 Assemblyman Arthur Eve shepherd this program into
10 the success it is today.

11 Next, I'd like to talk a bit about
12 Reenroll to Complete, which is a new initiative that
13 we've seen to be very impactful in the
14 student-success arena.

15 We announced this last summer, the first
16 results of this unique and innovative program which
17 seeks to reenroll students who left a SUNY campus
18 prior to completing their degree.

19 So far, we have engaged students at
20 52 campuses in the months before their first
21 student-loan payment comes true -- due. And I'm
22 proud to share that, so far, over 6,000 have come
23 back to SUNY. More than half have returned as
24 full-time students.

25 In the process of reenrolling these students,

1 Reenroll to Complete has recovered over 12 million
2 in tuition revenue for SUNY campuses.

3 In addition to recovered tuition, and more
4 importantly, the project is expected to increase
5 retention and completion rates, and reduce the
6 number of students who fall into student-loan
7 delinquency or default.

8 I want to highlight, in particular, that this
9 program, and others like it, was the direct result
10 of PIF funding, which is another initiative
11 supported by the Governor and legislators.

12 And we thank you very much for that support
13 for innovative programs in our system.

14 Community colleges:

15 In the last state budget, Governor Cuomo and
16 legislators delivered much-needed support for our
17 community colleges with increased funding, and
18 providing a floor in particular.

19 These campuses are the lifeblood of the
20 communities they serve. They provide workforce
21 training skills and economic security.

22 In a good economy, when fewer people are
23 looking for work, community colleges generally
24 suffer enrollment declines, and in this sense,
25 they're kind of countercyclical.

1 Because of the support that you provided,
2 they are better able to plan for future growth and
3 local training needs.

4 So it's been a privilege to come before you
5 on behalf of SUNY, and I look forward to working
6 with all of you during the upcoming legislative
7 session.

8 And I'd be happy to answer any questions you
9 might have for me.

10 Thank you.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: (Microphone turned off.)

12 We'll have the questions at the end.

13 Next we have Donald Christian, the president
14 of SUNY New Paltz.

15 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: Chairwoman Stavisky
16 and Senator Metzger, thank you for holding this
17 important public hearing here at the college.

18 As the Mid-Hudson Valley's four-year public
19 university, we're pleased to convene special forums
20 like this.

21 I welcome the opportunity to speak with you
22 about the cost of public higher education, and the
23 financial realities and challenges that SUNY
24 New Paltz and our students face as we continue to
25 deliver a high-quality public higher education to

1 New Yorkers, with a large proportion of our students
2 from the New York City boroughs, Long Island, and,
3 of course, the Hudson Valley.

4 We're encouraged by your focus on State
5 investment in SUNY, and how to support campuses and
6 students.

7 Virtually, all objective measures show that
8 higher education has been worth the investment made
9 by Governor Cuomo and the Legislature, both for the
10 state and our students.

11 SUNY New Paltz has been widely recognized for
12 providing students a high return on investment and
13 opportunity to enhance their lives and livelihood.

14 New Paltz ranks in the top 5 percent in a
15 nationwide social-mobility index, which is a measure
16 of the college's effectiveness helping students
17 climb the socioeconomic ladder.

18 As we make the tough decisions about managing
19 our costs and economy, our decisions are based,
20 first and foremost, on what's best for our students.

21 SUNY New Paltz is an economic engine in our
22 region. We contribute about \$359 million annually
23 to the Hudson Valley economy, which is a phenomenal
24 return on State investment.

25 We're the largest employer in Ulster County,

1 and one of the largest in a several-county area.
2 And that's also the case for many other SUNY
3 campuses.

4 Governor Cuomo and the Legislature are
5 essential partners in our ability to make public
6 higher education accessible and affordable to
7 students, and to help us serve the public good.

8 Our campus's viability and success rely, in
9 part, on the considerable support that you continue
10 to provide.

11 We see this in State Tuition Assistance
12 programs, the Educational Opportunity Program,
13 capital support, and employee fringe benefits.

14 The Governor and Legislature's indirect
15 investments in SUNY New Paltz include supporting
16 fringe benefits for nearly all employees and the
17 debt service on bonds for non-residential buildings.

18 In our campus-budget forums and other
19 conversations, we make certain that the broader
20 community understands that support.

21 So thank you for your continued partnership
22 here.

23 Our campus core operating budget consists of
24 two revenue -- excuse me -- two revenue sources:
25 direct state taxpayer support, and tuition.

1 These sources represent our spending
2 authority.

3 SUNY New Paltz has unique challenges within
4 our system as almost every campus does.

5 Geography, for instance, plays out in
6 different ways on our local campus economies.

7 For example, New Paltz is located closer to
8 prospective students from population centers on
9 Long Island and New York City than for campuses that
10 are further upstate.

11 On the other hand, the high cost of living in
12 New Paltz is much greater than other regions
13 upstate.

14 Other cost factors that we manage on a
15 continual basis include heightened compliance and
16 mandates, like cybersecurity, research compliance,
17 changes in procurement requirements, sustainability,
18 emergency planning, ever-increasing costs of
19 technology and modernized data and systems
20 investments.

21 Our financial situation would be far more
22 precarious than it is today were it not for the
23 2011-2015 rational tuition policy.

24 Thanks to you, we've been able to invest in
25 personnel and programming to support our increased

1 attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion, clear
2 priorities of our state leaders and of SUNY.

3 Above all, we've been able to invest in the
4 quality of every student's education.

5 The demographic shifts we're seeing in
6 broader society are happening at SUNY New Paltz
7 right now.

8 This fall we welcomed a first-year class with
9 48 percent of its members, nearly half, from
10 historically underrepresented groups.

11 Our campus includes more Black and Brown
12 students than ever, including more first-year Black
13 students than any year since 2000.

14 Like many other campuses in SUNY, and across
15 the nation, we've seen substantial growth in
16 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics,
17 or, "STEM," majors, as demand for graduates in these
18 areas has grown.

19 I've strongly supported that growth in the
20 unique experience we provide those students whose
21 STEM majors are also rooted in the liberal arts,
22 even though educating a mechanical engineering major
23 is more costly than educating an English or
24 sociology major.

25 How have those increasing costs have been

1 funded?

2 Support from state leaders and tuition
3 increases.

4 Our tuition revenue is a function of both
5 tuition rate and enrollment level, because
6 95 percent of New Paltz students are New York
7 residents. Only a small percentage of our tuition
8 revenue comes from the higher non-resident rate,
9 which is a very different dynamic than exists at the
10 university centers which attract more non-resident
11 students.

12 For that, we're thankful that the State has
13 not cut direct state taxpayer support to New Paltz
14 in nearly a decade.

15 But I want to stress again, our challenges
16 are unique.

17 We've gotten creative about revenue.

18 For the past few years, we've been reducing
19 expenditures, and working hard to grow revenue by
20 increasing enrollment, including through online- and
21 graduate-program growth.

22 The Excelsior Scholarship Program has been
23 another meaningful way to help our students.

24 This year, nearly 900 New Paltz students
25 received about \$4.1 million through this program.

1 Were it not for Excelsior, the financial
2 picture for those 900 students on our campus would
3 be far more dire.

4 I will speak now about our
5 Educational Opportunity Program, or, "EOP," and
6 financial-aid programs.

7 For 50 years, the EOP program has fulfilled a
8 critical mission in public higher education,
9 providing promising students from challenging
10 economic and academic backgrounds with access to a
11 high-quality education and a robust, rewarding
12 residential-college experience.

13 We very much appreciate your recognition of
14 this mission, and your continued effort to restore
15 program funding in recent years.

16 Our nearly 600 EOP students are succeeding at
17 rates that rival, and sometimes exceed, the success
18 of their peers outside of the program, but they
19 struggle to cover the costs associated with
20 attaining a four-year degree.

21 SUNY has recognized our program's success.

22 Provost Laursen spoke earlier about
23 continuing performance-improvement funding, which is
24 a program created by Governor Cuomo and legislators,
25 and how SUNY has seized the -- that opportunity

1 across the system.

2 New Paltz was one of the first campuses to
3 earn this funding for its program successes,
4 receiving nearly \$300,000 to expand EOP by
5 100 students over a 4-year period.

6 New Paltz's graduation rates are well above
7 state and national averages.

8 Nationally, there are significant achievement
9 gaps in every graduation rates for low-income,
10 first-generation, and underrepresented students.

11 At New Paltz that gap is very small for
12 Black, Latinx, low-income, first-generation, and EOP
13 students.

14 Sustaining such student success is key to our
15 mission as a public university.

16 In my nearly 10 years as SUNY New Paltz
17 president, the campus's capital landscape has
18 transformed in ways not seen since the
19 Nelson Rockefeller Era.

20 Just last month, we celebrated the opening of
21 a new engineering innovation hub that supports
22 New Paltz's rapidly growing engineering programs,
23 fosters collaboration between the college and local
24 industry, and creates opportunities for students and
25 faculty.

1 The facility was funded largely by a
2 \$10 million award from the Governor's NY SUNY 2020
3 Program that was supported by the Legislature.

4 That project was part of a broader effort
5 that's added a new science building, and helped
6 address deferred maintenance, and renovate and
7 modernize facilities to support our evolving
8 programs.

9 Despite that investment, our current
10 non-residential space deficit is about 600,000 gross
11 square feet.

12 So capital remains an important need for us.

13 We ask that you continue the 5-year capital
14 plan, as it allows us to address critical
15 maintenance needs, and ask, also, that you add
16 opportunity for new construction projects.

17 I hope my testimony has provided you with a
18 useful lens into current State funding and future
19 potential funding opportunities in the efforts that
20 we take to support our students and their success.

21 The support we've received from
22 Governor Cuomo and yourselves has been important.

23 And I hope that as the formal budget process
24 begins in the new year, that we can continue this
25 dialogue and be helpful to you.

1 Again, thank you for your interest and work
2 on this subject, and for inviting me to be here
3 today.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: I'd like to welcome
5 Assemblymember Harvey Epstein from Manhattan.

6 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you, Chair.
7 I'm sorry I'm late. There was a bit of a
8 difficulty getting out of the city today.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: We're going to have
10 questions at the end.

11 And the last person is Dr. Alan Roberts,
12 the president of SUNY Ulster.

13 DR. ALAN P. ROBERTS: Good afternoon.

14 I'm Al Roberts, and I am the sixth president
15 of SUNY Ulster, and I am privileged and honored to
16 have that role.

17 SUNY Ulster is just around the corner in
18 New Paltz -- or, at Stone Ridge.

19 We have about 2100 full-time students.

20 And if you took that and you calculated the
21 headcount, we have about 3500 students that we -- we
22 serve.

23 What has changed in the years, is we now have
24 more part-time students than full-time students.
25 About 65 percent of our students are part-time as we

1 compare to 35 percent being full-time.

2 That directly relates to a number of factors
3 in our county.

4 But what I'd like to do is, first of all,
5 start by thanking the Committee on behalf of our
6 board of trustees, our faculty, and our staff.

7 It is a great opportunity to sit here and
8 talk about, and maybe brag a little bit, about what
9 I believe to be one of the finest community colleges
10 in the country, let alone the state.

11 We have 30 -- and we are all equally
12 challenged and we all equally proud of what we do.

13 We have a number of programs that we are
14 really proud of, but before I get into a couple of
15 those, what I would like to do is talk about
16 affordability.

17 The U.S. Department of Education comes up
18 with a list of the most affordable colleges in the
19 country. And they sub -- they put subcategories,
20 and they put technical and community colleges into a
21 list.

22 There's 1400 on that list, and SUNY Ulster is
23 one of the top 100 in the country as far as
24 affordability.

25 Now, I certainly do not take credit for that.

1 I want to thank the Legislature, I want to
2 thank the Governor's office, because of what you do
3 with the TAP programs, the Pell, tuition assistance,
4 Excelsior, allows us to become affordable.

5 And if you look on a national basis, if you
6 can say, yes, there's that little school up there in
7 the Adirondacks -- close to the Adirondacks --

8 I have to apologize.

9 First of all, I grew up in the Adirondacks.

10 I graduated from North Country Community
11 College, the smallest community college in the
12 state, and transferred on to Albany. And it was a
13 wonderful privilege to be part of the system, and
14 then to continue that role as a president of a
15 college.

16 -- so when I look at that, us being
17 affordable on a national basis, I think, well, how
18 can we do that?

19 Then look at what you as legislators and the
20 State have done for us is totally remarkable.

21 When I went to community college, I had no
22 debt when I was done. I actually was making money
23 because of the Pell, and I could afford things, and
24 it was just a wonderful opportunity.

25 Now when I look at our students, they're

1 really benefiting the same way.

2 An interesting statistic is, 70 percent of
3 our students who graduate from SUNY Ulster have zero
4 debt.

5 Now, I also have to give some credit to our
6 foundation because it's a remarkable resource to our
7 students.

8 It's -- it's just -- and I'll give you an
9 example of some of our students.

10 We have an EOP, which you've heard quite a
11 bit from my colleagues.

12 We have one student who was chosen to
13 represent -- or, to attend the ceremony in
14 New York City with the chancellor, Lena [ph.], who
15 was an EOP student, who has overcome extreme
16 challenges.

17 Her life is just -- it actually brings tears
18 to your eyes when you hear what she's overcome, and
19 she has a 4.0 average.

20 So she was chosen.

21 But that's what those programs do. They hit
22 students who really need it. The
23 economically-challenged, the folks that are living
24 in poverty, and you're helping them.

25 And we can't thank you more as an

1 institution.

2 We're always going to say we could do more,
3 and I want to thank you for "the floor."

4 Now, that's a term that may be new to some of
5 you, but, it meant the world to us. We can actually
6 do the things, we can plan, and we can do unique and
7 different things.

8 And before I close, I just want to tell you
9 about one program that we're working on right now.

10 The donors in our community are
11 overwhelmingly supportive. They know the value of
12 what we do and how we change lives.

13 Darlene Pfeiffer [ph.], who's an incredible,
14 incredible donor to our college, she has given
15 millions. And she actually called me to Florida.

16 She said, Al, I want you to come down.
17 I want to talk about what we're going to do next.

18 So I went down to Florida, I sat on the deck
19 with her, we had wine.

20 And the interesting thing was, she said, What
21 can we do to change the lives of women?

22 She said, I own a number of Kentucky Fried
23 Chickens, and I'm telling you, we got to help.

24 So I said, Let's come up with a program and
25 call it "New Start for Women."

1 So she wrote me a check for \$100,000, and she
2 said, Go and do it.

3 So we went back home, we wrote this program.

4 And I said, This is -- this has got something
5 to it, it really does.

6 So we took the program to the Novo Foundation
7 and said, Would you help support our community?

8 And they gave us \$1.5 million to support it.

9 So up and running, this fall, we started the
10 New Start for Women Program.

11 Now what that does, it takes
12 economically-disadvantaged, I call them the "working
13 poor," now, these individuals are raising a family,
14 they're single, and their dream is to go to
15 education, but that's so far out of reality.

16 What this program does is covers all of their
17 expenses.

18 By "all their expenses":

19 We get them to college.

20 We get them a laptop.

21 If they don't Internet in their house, we
22 give them Internet in their house.

23 They need child care, they need books, they
24 need supplies, it's covered 100 percent.

25 We have our first cohort started, and we're

1 going to bring in another one in January.

2 And before we're done, we're going have 40 or
3 50 individuals in this program.

4 Those are the types of things I believe
5 community colleges can do.

6 And I want to thank you, the Governor, and
7 all the legislators for all you do.

8 It's truly remarkable what we can do with so
9 little.

10 So with that, I'll turn it over.

11 And if there's any questions, I'll gladly
12 answer them.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

14 I have just one quick question for the
15 Provost.

16 You mentioned Dr. Whittingham, the
17 Nobel Prize winner for his work with the lithium
18 battery.

19 What happened to the payments as a result of
20 the patent that was -- that he must have filed?

21 Does the State -- does SUNY receive any of
22 the money involved, or is it individual contracts
23 with the scientist?

24 How does that work? I'm just curious.

25 DR. TOD A. LAURSEN: So -- well, we can do a

1 little bit of digging on that.

2 But I think one thing that affects that
3 answer, is that much of the work for which the
4 Nobel Prize was awarded happened prior to his
5 joining SUNY. It actually happened while he was in
6 the private world.

7 Of course, the work on these topics continues
8 in SUNY labs. And then I think they're -- you know,
9 the arrangements we have in place, and the system
10 would be more applicable.

11 But I -- that's the sort of short answer, is
12 that much of that actually took place before he was
13 in SUNY.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, no, I'm just looking
15 for additional revenue.

16 DR. TOD A. LAURSEN: Yeah, yeah, no, it's a
17 good thought.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: And one quick question for
19 Dr. Christian.

20 I noticed on page 4 of your testimony, you --
21 the fourth paragraph, "Our financial situation would
22 be far more precarious than it is today were it not
23 for the 2011-2015 rational tuition policy."

24 And this is an increase in tuition every year
25 on the students.

1 And I'm troubled by the fact that the
2 students are continuing to bear more and more of the
3 brunt of the cost of higher education.

4 Would you elaborate on that?

5 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: Sure.

6 So as I've indicated, our core operating
7 budget comes from two revenue sources: direct
8 taxpayer support, tuition.

9 Our direct taxpayer support has been
10 relatively flat for a number of years, and the
11 revenue increases we have seen have been through
12 tuition.

13 But if tuition had also remained flat during
14 that same time, we would not have been able to cover
15 the increasing costs to provide our students with
16 the high-caliber educational opportunities that
17 we've been able to do.

18 That was the point of that -- that -- that --
19 that piece of my testimony.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Metzger.

21 SENATOR METZGER: Yes, first of all, thank
22 you all for your testimony. It was very helpful.

23 Dr. Christian, first, I want to
24 congratulate you and the staff and faculty of
25 New Paltz for being in the top 5 percent in the

1 social-mobility index.

2 That is the promise of education, and you are
3 really realizing that promise.

4 And with the programs -- the kinds of
5 programs, the New Start Program, at SUNY Ulster, and
6 our community colleges, they are a critical,
7 critical piece of this in trying, really, moving
8 people forward and up the ladder.

9 I have a question for -- actually, I'm going
10 to start -- it could be either one of you, actually.

11 So you mention you have 900 students --
12 I think you said 900 students who have the
13 Excelsior Scholarship.

14 I noticed that my -- my partner in a bill,
15 Assemblymember Jacobson, just walked in.

16 If he wants to come sit up here, that would
17 be great.

18 But we have a bill that would extend the
19 Excelsior Scholarship to part-time students carrying
20 a load of 24 credits, rather than the current 30.

21 Something that I heard a lot when I was
22 running for office, was the difficulty that many
23 students had in meeting those credit requirements.

24 And so I wanted to hear your thoughts on
25 that.

1 DR. TOD A. LAURSEN: Well, I can start.

2 I think there are at least a couple things
3 there that are, potentially, intentioned. Right?

4 And as I read through the language about
5 Excelsior and academic affairs, one of the questions
6 we have to ask is: Does it seem as though this
7 scholarship opportunity for students is doing what
8 it was designed to do?

9 Right?

10 And one of the things it was designed to do,
11 not making a value judgment, but it was pretty clear
12 when it was launched, was to provide encouragement
13 for on-time completion and full-time registration.

14 Now, that's intentioned a little bit --
15 right? -- with what you just mentioned, in terms of
16 providing, you know, a part-time opportunity.

17 So, you know, I won't really comment on that.

18 But I will say that, one of the things we've
19 been looking for is:

20 Do we see evidence, two years in, that
21 students are taking full-time loads at a higher
22 rate?

23 Do we see evidence they're successfully
24 completing those courses at a higher rate?

25 And as I mentioned in my testimony, it's

1 early days. Right?

2 But when you look at the community colleges,
3 do we see a little bit of a pattern of on-time
4 completion?

5 And we are seeing that.

6 So it's an incomplete story, but, you know,
7 we're at least seeing pretty good evidence that, in
8 that respect, it's doing what it was designed to do.

9 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: I think one thing
10 I would add to that, if -- if you were to look at
11 SUNY New Paltz and our students now, compared with,
12 say, 20 years ago, we have many -- a much higher
13 proportion of our student body is full-time
14 students.

15 So that -- that dilemma of the -- the
16 full-time requirements for Excelsior has not played
17 into our student body in the same way that it has
18 some other institutions.

19 SENATOR METZGER: Right, the community
20 colleges.

21 And I have one other question.

22 So this past legislative session, the
23 Legislature passed, and was signed into law by the
24 Governor, the Climate Leadership and Community
25 Protection Act, which is going to shift us to a

1 clean-energy economy.

2 And I want to know if -- you know, have you
3 all been talking about the kinds of investments
4 you're going to have to make?

5 We talked about your -- the capital plan, and
6 the kinds of investments you're going -- our
7 university system is going to have to make to help
8 us as a state meet those obligations in -- in -- in
9 that legislation?

10 DR. ALAN P. ROBERTS: Not only are we looking
11 at it, but we're also doing the training for it.

12 We're working with our local county
13 executive, and we just started a green-collar
14 training program that is going to focus on clean
15 energies, and bringing the maximum utilization of
16 our facilities.

17 In addition to that, we're also looking at
18 solar arrays.

19 We're looking at -- we're doing a master
20 plan. Currently, it's underway. And part of that
21 is looking at energy efficiency throughout the
22 entire facility.

23 So we're dead-beat right on top of that.

24 SENATOR METZGER: Fantastic.

25 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: I might add, as

1 I think you're aware, we've added a photovoltaic
2 array on campus, with a battery storage system, a
3 new technology. We're proud to be implementing
4 that.

5 We're also a partner in a large-scale
6 renewable-energy purchase plan, that a number other
7 SUNY campuses, as well as some private campuses, are
8 part of.

9 And, you know, I think my comments about
10 capital indicate that we would welcome capital
11 infusion to help with those -- those pressing needs.

12 SENATOR METZGER: Thank you.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: We would like to welcome
14 Assemblymember Jacobson.

15 And our next questions will come from
16 Senator Jackson.

17 SENATOR JACKSON: So let me thank you for
18 coming in and giving testimony.

19 And it sounds like the SUNY New Paltz and
20 SUNY Ulster are doing great.

21 And it sounds like the state SUNY system is
22 doing great.

23 But, I hear a different picture, especially
24 when I sit up in Albany in the joint budget
25 hearings, and listening to what people are saying,

1 and about the needs.

2 I'm hearing, in general terms, that the
3 infrastructure, it's basically crumbling, overall,
4 because of the lack of funding at the State level.

5 And even though I heard, Dr. Christian, you
6 talked about the new building that we have here at
7 SUNY New Paltz, based on the monies that were
8 allocated through that 20 -- I think 2020 program.

9 But, can you tell me what your needs are; the
10 needs for the students, the needs of the university,
11 this college here?

12 So, for example, I know that the
13 Excelsior Scholarship is a good program.

14 In fact, the Governor brought that out, and,
15 wow, a free college education for any family earning
16 \$125,000 or less.

17 But I'm looking at the statistics as to how
18 many children it serves -- students it serves, from
19 backgrounds in various colleges.

20 And it's very low compared to, I guess, the
21 thought of what it would provide.

22 My understanding, if your family earns
23 \$125,000 or less, if you -- you can get a free
24 scholarship, a free education, if you finish in
25 four years.

1 And then part of the stipulation is, that you
2 must work in New York State.

3 So, you know, as you know, especially in
4 other areas, you may be living close to another
5 state. And if there's not a job in your state,
6 you're going to go where the job is at.

7 And so then my understanding is that the
8 students would have to repay the monies that it
9 costs them to get an education.

10 So -- and I just think that, my philosophy,
11 every little bit helps.

12 And anyone that can take advantage of that
13 and finish in four years, that's great, because,
14 basically, as you indicated, you said 70 percent of
15 your students that leave your college,
16 Dr. Roberts, they have no debt.

17 And I say to you as a parent of three
18 children that are now 44, 39, and 32, and one went
19 to New Paltz, one went to the University of Buffalo,
20 and one went to Julliard, and all of them are still
21 in debt right now.

22 All of them are still in debt.

23 And so I just want to know, from your
24 perspective, for example, Dr. Christian, with
25 respect to the Excelsior, you said there's

1 900 students that have taken that.

2 How long ago did that start, Dr. Laursen or
3 Dr. Christian?

4 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: Two. This is the second
5 year.

6 SENATOR JACKSON: Two years ago.

7 So we don't have a four-year --

8 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: That's right.

9 SENATOR JACKSON: -- to look at yet.

10 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: That's correct.

11 SENATOR JACKSON: Because I was going to ask
12 you, what was the percentage of those that are
13 finishing within four years?

14 What is the average time it takes a student
15 to graduate from SUNY New Paltz, Doctor?

16 Because I know it took me more than
17 four years.

18 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: Yes, and some of
19 our programs are -- EOP, for example, is designed as
20 a five-year program, even though our four-year EOP
21 graduation rate is higher than the overall
22 national-average graduation rate.

23 So our four-year graduation rate is
24 58 percent. That's -- that compares with the
25 national average for public universities at

1 33 percent.

2 So 58 percent versus 33.

3 And the national average for private colleges
4 and universities is about 53 percent.

5 That climbs to, at New Paltz, to 77 percent
6 in six years.

7 And, you know, we think that some of the --
8 some of the extension of that time reflects the
9 financial realities that many of our students are
10 dealing with, that you've -- you've noted so well.

11 SENATOR JACKSON: Well, I ask that question,
12 because I know that the -- when you're missing the
13 types of resources, from an operations point of
14 view, where you cannot provide the courses that are
15 necessary for people to take, then they have to wait
16 another semester to take a course. And that then
17 delays the time and cost factor involved, overall,
18 to get a good education.

19 And so I -- I just -- the picture that you're
20 painting as far as successes, and I think that we
21 all need to talk about our positive things that we
22 do, but I think that, me, as a state senator that
23 sits on the High Education Committee, that sits on
24 the Education Committee, and sits on the
25 New York City Education Committee, I want to know:

1 What are you missing, what do you need, in order to
2 make sure you fulfill your obligations to the staff
3 and the students?

4 That's what I want to hear also, besides the
5 positive things.

6 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: Could I talk about
7 a wish list?

8 [Applause.]

9 SENATOR JACKSON: So, Doctor --

10 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: Could I talk about
11 a wish list?

12 SENATOR JACKSON: -- go ahead, yes, please.

13 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: So if -- if I -- if
14 I had -- if I were to dream about a wish list,
15 I would think about additional resources to support
16 students who encounter unexpected financial
17 challenges.

18 We have been directing private support for
19 that purpose, and it's had a remarkable impact on
20 retention and graduation.

21 I would think about the resources to adjust
22 employee salaries upward, to deal with the high cost
23 of living, particularly housing, here in the
24 Hudson Valley.

25 And --

1 [Applause.]

2 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: And -- but
3 investing in creating additional opportunities for
4 our students, to better prepare them for the future.

5 So, you know, if I could dream big, I would
6 think about adding 10 to 12 million dollars a year
7 to our \$70 million core operating budget.

8 I might also comment about your question
9 about capital.

10 And I referred to the fact that New Paltz has
11 a 600,000-square-foot space deficit.

12 Our newest science building is 77,000 square
13 feet.

14 The engineering building that I referred to
15 here is 20,000 square feet.

16 So that's a drop in the bucket compared to
17 our 600,000-square-foot space deficit.

18 I would share also that, while we have a
19 couple new buildings like that, we have lots and
20 lots of old buildings as well, which is why the
21 critical maintenance is so significant.

22 Our, perhaps, most pressing space need is for
23 a new academic building. And right now the clearest
24 path that we've identified to achieve that goal
25 would carry a price tag of something like 85 to

1 90 million dollars.

2 SENATOR JACKSON: And what is your student
3 population, both for full-time and part-time, at
4 this point?

5 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: It's about -- just
6 under 8,000 students, total. That's undergraduate
7 and graduate.

8 And I would have to get back to you with the
9 statistic on the ratio.

10 SENATOR JACKSON: About 8,000 for undergrad
11 and graduates?

12 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: Yes.

13 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Assemblymember Epstein.

15 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you, Chair.

16 And thank you all for being here, and
17 I apologize for being a little late.

18 I just wanted to follow up with a couple of
19 questions.

20 And one about what Senator Metzger's talking
21 about on -- and I'll make a plug -- that the
22 Assembly is having a hearing in Albany on
23 November 13th, around SUNY, CUNY, and environmental
24 conservation.

25 So if there's issues that you're -- you know,

1 that overlap around ensuring our public universities
2 are dealing with the climate-change reality, we
3 would love to have you come testify on November 13th
4 up in Albany.

5 But just on -- you know, on some of those
6 pieces we -- we were talk -- we talk a lot about
7 recycling, we talk energy efficiency. But there are
8 big problems around gases, around our lack of
9 composting.

10 I'm wondering, you know, how you think, as an
11 institution, is it even feasible to start thinking
12 about that as a challenge, to get composting out of
13 the waste stream, and really doing something
14 comprehensive about compost, and where you're all
15 thinking about?

16 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: I was at an event
17 just the other day, where I commented to -- and we
18 served food on -- on plates. The plates are
19 compostable. The flatware that we use for many
20 campus events now is compostable as well.

21 So we've been making great strides in that
22 area.

23 We have an extremely active faculty
24 sustainability fellows program, several student
25 organizations, that are -- that are making great

1 headway in sustainability issues.

2 We -- we undertook a campaign last year to
3 reduce our water usage, which we achieved about a
4 10 percent reduction, overall, in water usage.

5 Students in the various residence halls are
6 challenging each other on reducing energy usage.

7 So -- so we're having major impacts there,
8 and it's very much an active, lively part of our
9 campus community.

10 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: And what -- on the
11 composting side, do you think there are things,
12 resources, you need from the State to allow you to
13 be more of a leader on composting?

14 You said, "we use compostable plates," but if
15 it doesn't get into the compost stream, you know,
16 it's then just sitting in a landfill someplace.

17 So what -- what support would you need just
18 to ensure not -- that you get from the place where
19 you're using compostable material, but that
20 composting, the food waste and the compostable
21 materials, are getting in the compost stream?

22 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: I would like to
23 talk with our sustainability coordinator and
24 operations folks, and get back to you on that.

25 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Great, I'd love to

1 hear back.

2 The second question is around students with
3 disabilities.

4 We hear a lot from students with
5 disabilities, 72,000 statewide, and the resources
6 that there are available are really limited.

7 I'm wondering how you're supporting students
8 with disabilities, and ensure that they can have
9 access to a high-quality education as well, and be
10 able to graduate in an on-time way.

11 DR. TOD A. LAURSEN: Yeah.

12 So I can start with that on the system level.

13 And you all may want to speak to instances on
14 your campus.

15 And, of course, as you realize, those
16 disabilities can take many different forms. Right?

17 One of the -- one of the issues that's really
18 pressing us now is about accessibility to electronic
19 information -- right? -- for folks who are
20 sight-impaired, hearing-impaired, whatever.

21 This is a very complicated problem.

22 And you may be aware that the board of
23 trustees has actually shown a commitment to SUNY's,
24 you know, res -- determination, basically, to be
25 responsive to these issues, and to have a systematic

1 way of dealing with them.

2 So we actually have a cross-system workforce
3 now that is looking to implement that policy.

4 And it's very important. Right?

5 I mean, one of the things that we're working
6 on together very well is online education. Right?

7 And there's a -- you know, at any given time,
8 about half of those students I mentioned earlier are
9 accessing at least some of their education online.

10 But to really make sure that the standards
11 are being upheld for that is something we have to
12 have a system-wide commitment to.

13 I think when you start talking about things,
14 like guide animals, you know, comfort, you know,
15 folks who need to have accommodations with regard to
16 testing, whatever this might be, we do have a habit
17 within the system --

18 And you might want to speak to it in your two
19 cases.

20 -- of having contact points on campuses who
21 coordinate that effort.

22 There is a specialist in supporting students
23 with disabilities in our student affairs office at
24 system level.

25 But that's sort of interconnectivity between

1 system level and campus coordinators is very
2 important.

3 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Yeah, just, because
4 we hear a lot from students who say they're getting
5 lost in the system. They don't have enough support
6 system.

7 It is great to hear that you're -- you have a
8 person who's a coordinating individual.

9 I was just wondering if we see that across
10 campuses-wide, and whether we need more system
11 support?

12 DR. TOD A. LAURSEN: I suspect, and I think
13 there's some evidence to support the suspicion, that
14 some of our challenges here are with respect to
15 communication of where those resources are and where
16 students should go.

17 To take a slightly different area of concern,
18 but I think it's similar, we see this, for example,
19 with the food-insecurity issue -- right? -- that all
20 of our campuses now have food banks -- right? -- but
21 making sure that students actually know how to
22 access that, and what the process is by which to do
23 it.

24 It's one thing to set it up, to have people
25 coordinate in the effort.

1 We also have to make sure that they're very
2 well communicated to students and stakeholders
3 across the system, and that varies a little bit
4 different. You know, the ways in which that's done
5 can be a little different, campus to campus.

6 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: I would add, last
7 year we had, I believe, about 600 students register
8 with our disability resource center.

9 It's been -- that number has been growing
10 steadily in recent years.

11 We relocated the disability resource center
12 to a new space, to better accommodate those needs.

13 And as Provost Laursen points out, the needs
14 are diverse, and in multiple. They sometimes
15 include testing accommodations, study accommodation,
16 particular forums of support.

17 There are some technological solutions that
18 can have marvelous impacts.

19 And we -- you know, we know that with the
20 right support, from our own results, and that of
21 other campuses, we know the students can be
22 successful with -- with the right support.

23 Our disability resource center director told
24 me a story, a year or so ago, about a student who
25 she was working with, who got on the phone with her

1 mom every evening. And mom read her textbooks to
2 her, and -- because the student had a reading
3 disability.

4 And they sat down, and in a fairly short
5 time, figured out that the student had a disability
6 that caused her to mix the different lines in a
7 text.

8 And there's a technological solution to that.

9 She got on the phone with mom and read mom
10 "The New York Times" over the phone.

11 So -- so those are the kinds of -- kinds of
12 impacts that we -- we -- we can have on -- on -- on
13 the students.

14 As -- I'd comment also about
15 Provost Laursen's comment about food insecurity.

16 This is a -- it's a problem for many of our
17 campuses.

18 We have a food shelf here.

19 About 60 percent of our students, I believe
20 the figure is, reported that they have food
21 insecurity.

22 About half of our students, in a survey,
23 reported that they sometimes can't study because
24 they're hungry.

25 And being sure that they're aware of where

1 those resources are is a critical step for us.

2 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Well, I thank you
3 for bringing that up.

4 And I -- again, on the students with
5 disabilities, if there's additional things you think
6 we should be doing statewide, we would love to hear
7 about it.

8 But just on that food insecurity, I mean,
9 those are things we're hearing. That's food,
10 housing, transportation, and books, we hear students
11 struggling with all those aspects.

12 And so even if they get -- you know, they get
13 TAP, and they get -- maybe they're eligible for
14 Excelsior, maybe they're an, you know, EOP or ASAP
15 student, there's, like, all these other support
16 needs that they have.

17 And I'm wondering if you think there's things
18 that you see on campuses that would be helpful for
19 us to be thinking about, more of, like, a more
20 comprehensive ASAP program, or other programs, that
21 really help the comprehensive need of students.

22 DR. ALAN P. ROBERTS: Well, what I see is
23 that, we're probably not unique at the community
24 college level.

25 You know, everything you just mentioned,

1 really, is something we face on a daily basis.

2 True story:

3 This semester we had a student living in
4 their car behind our gymnasium.

5 It took us, you know, probably a month before
6 we helped her save enough money to get her an
7 apartment.

8 She finally got in the apartment. She got
9 there, and she didn't realize that she needed money
10 to turn the power on.

11 So our foundation stepped in and got the
12 power on.

13 And the phone call that she sent to our
14 foundation director, she said: This is the happiest
15 day in my life. I'm sitting on a mattress on the --
16 a blow-up mattress on my floor, with a candle,
17 eating soup.

18 And she couldn't be any happier.

19 When you talk about food insecurity,
20 disabilities, an issue that hasn't been brought up
21 is, mental-health issues on our campus has just
22 skyrocketed.

23 We've had three attempts of suicide just this
24 semester.

25 This is critical.

1 We brought in a part-time mental-health
2 counselor.

3 When you talk about what -- what could you do
4 to help?

5 First of all, for the community colleges,
6 keep the floor, that's the thing. If we can make
7 that into legislation, that make it the law, we can
8 breathe, and we can budget, and we can plan.

9 Community colleges, we work on a guess.

10 You know, we sit down and came up with our
11 best possible number of what the enrollment's going
12 to be.

13 And if that doesn't hit, and if you watch the
14 cycle of graduation rates in our county, we,
15 five years ago, stopped worrying about high school
16 students.

17 We changed our focus to the adult market.
18 We're going after people who are 30, 40, 50 years
19 old, bringing them back and retraining them.

20 In Ulster County, 50 percent of the
21 individuals who live here only have a high school
22 degree.

23 70 percent of those jobs coming in are going
24 to require post-secondary.

25 So our future is not with high school

1 graduates. It's with the adult market, and they
2 bring additional sets of challenges.

3 So, if you give us the floor, you get it into
4 legislation, we would -- we'd be thrilled. Then we
5 could plan with a logical sequence of what we expect
6 the following year.

7 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you, Chair.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Assemblyman Jacobson.

9 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: Thank you.

10 Doctor --

11 Is that on?

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes.

13 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: Okay.

14 -- so I just want to follow up on what you've
15 been saying.

16 So if we expanded the Excelsior program to
17 include part-time students, those pursuing
18 vocational education, what would that do to
19 alleviate your problem of revenue and dropping
20 enrollment?

21 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: How do I want to
22 respond to this?

23 Scholarship programs, whether it's TAP or
24 Excelsior, provide students the opportunity to pay
25 tuition, but they don't do anything for

1 institutional bottom-line budgets, except by virtue
2 of having students there who might otherwise not be
3 able to attend college.

4 So, you know, if a student -- if a student
5 pays tuition out of a family budget or a
6 scholarship, it's no different in our institutional
7 budget.

8 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: Wouldn't you think
9 that, if someone could get a 2-year degree in
10 5 years, or a 4-year degree in 10 years, because now
11 they could take two courses a semester, do a Tuesday
12 and Thursday evening, which would be reasonable for
13 somebody that works, or a Monday, Wednesday, don't
14 you think that you would have much more people
15 enrolling?

16 And if you included it for vocational
17 training, which would not require a two-year degree,
18 wouldn't that help your situation?

19 DR. ALAN P. ROBERTS: The feedback that we've
20 been getting with the Excelsior is, they've been
21 asking us for our recommendations. And we've been
22 working real close.

23 So we anticipate the future, maybe some of
24 those things coming.

25 But there was -- when Excelsior rolled out,

1 it was a wonderful plan. And we all jumped in and
2 we helped create it and carve it and make it what it
3 is.

4 We knew it wasn't going to be perfect.

5 And, you know, the Governor's office worked
6 with us, and we're still working on it.

7 And, you know, we're back and forth with
8 recommendations, you know, let's try this, let's try
9 that.

10 You know, we're open to just about anything
11 that helps students, quite frankly.

12 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: Well, you're lucky,
13 because there is a bill that would expand the
14 Excelsior program to part-time students, and for
15 vocational as well, which I'm carrying in the
16 Assembly and Senator Metzger in the Senate.

17 But that will be part of my remarks later,
18 but I just wanted to hear that.

19 Thank you.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Are you finished?

21 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: (Nods head.)

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Metzger has some
23 follow-up questions, and that will be the end.

24 And then we'll -- the students will be next.

25 SENATOR METZGER: Dr. Christian, do you --

1 how -- what percentage of your students do you know
2 carry -- have -- had to take -- have student-loan
3 debt?

4 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: I believe the most
5 recent statistic is about 70 to 75 percent of our
6 students graduate with loan debt.

7 The federal government has just changed the
8 way they do that calculation.

9 So -- so if you try to compare that current
10 figure with the figure from two or three years ago,
11 they -- they won't -- they won't match up.

12 The median loan debt for our graduates is
13 about eighteen -- eighteen to nineteen thousand.

14 SENATOR METZGER: Okay.

15 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: That's median.

16 SENATOR METZGER: Uh-huh.

17 And I actually just wanted to follow up on
18 the Assemblyman's comment about the composting.

19 There is a law that we passed.

20 So now in the next -- regulations will be
21 coming out in the next -- well, probably a couple of
22 years, but, you better start planning, because
23 colleges are going to have to sort -- sort their --
24 their food waste, and donate the edible portion, and
25 compost the inedible portion.

1 So if they generate more than two tons of
2 waste per week, which is a great thing.

3 Yeah, uhm...

4 Oh, I'm sorry.

5 One question I had is, have -- have you --
6 this is a little bit of a turn, but it could have
7 financial implications -- or, does have financial
8 implications.

9 I wanted to ask: Do you have a local
10 sourcing policy for food from local farms?

11 And if not, have you considered it?

12 We have, as you probably know, a
13 farm-to-school program at the K-to-12 level. And,
14 of course colleges are major consumers of food and
15 could do a lot.

16 Of course, it's great for your student body
17 to be eating fresh, healthy, nutritious foods, and
18 it really supports the local economy -- farming
19 economy.

20 DR. ALAN P. ROBERTS: Well, I appreciate your
21 bringing it up.

22 We've had a food pantry on campus, now going
23 on five years.

24 But that might be the next resource, maybe.

25 But, thank you, we'll look into that,

1 absolutely.

2 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: And I would add
3 that our campus auxillary services, which is our
4 affiliated 501(c)(3), that manages bookstore, food
5 service, vending, contracts with, Sodexo, is our
6 primary campus food source-it. And they're
7 increasingly relying on local foods.

8 SENATOR METZGER: You don't have a policy on
9 that, though? Or --

10 DR. DONALD P. CHRISTIAN: No.

11 SENATOR METZGER: -- okay.

12 Okay, thank you.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you all for coming.

14 (All witnesses say "Thank you.")

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: Again, we appreciate you
16 making the student union building available to us.

17 Next we have the student government folks.

18 SENATOR METZGER: Are you coming?

19 KT TOBIN: Yeah.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Would you take a seat,
21 and...

22 Austin, you want to bring your colleagues up?

23 SENATOR METZGER: So KT is on.

24 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: She's next.

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: Excuse me, no, she's not

1 next. We have the students.

2 KT TOBIN: I have to go teach, so --

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: Oh, you have to go teach?

4 KT TOBIN: Yes.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: Oh, okay.

6 All right, if you make it brief, yes. No.

7 KT TOBIN: Okay, I'll be brief.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: No problem.

9 KT TOBIN: Hi. My name is KT Tobin. I'm the
10 deputy mayor of the village of New Paltz.

11 Thank you, Senators, and for --
12 Assemblymembers, for coming here today, not just to
13 our campus, but to our broader community.

14 I hope you have some time to check out our
15 campus and New Paltz while you're here.

16 I also just want to say that New Paltz is
17 thrilled to have Senator Metzger, this tremendous
18 education advocate, as our state senator.

19 And I want to thank you again for your work
20 in getting us SUNY impact aid for the village and
21 the town, to make it easier for us to deliver
22 essential services, many of which we provide for the
23 campus.

24 So, I'm actually a graduate of SUNY
25 New Paltz. I have my mast -- my bachelor's is from

1 SUNY New Paltz.

2 My master's is from Hunter College, and my
3 Ph.D. is from SUNY at Albany.

4 So I'm a very proud product of public
5 higher ed in New York State.

6 I'm also the associate director at the
7 Benjamin Center for Public Policy Initiatives here
8 on campus, and an affiliated lecturer in sociology.

9 But I'm mostly going to be speaking as
10 deputy mayor today, and I'm not, to be clear, not
11 speaking as a representative of the university, but
12 I will touch upon all of my experiences and
13 perspectives.

14 So just this year I celebrated my
15 30th anniversary of moving to New Paltz as a
16 transfer student from what we used to call
17 "Auk" [ph.], now SUNY Orange, another public higher
18 ed institution I have to thank.

19 I graduated in 1992. And as an
20 undergraduate, with very, very minimal help from my
21 parents, I was able to work waiting tables and
22 bell-hopping and parking cars up on the mountain at
23 Mohonk to pay my own way through college, with a
24 full-time course load, graduating on time, while
25 working full-time.

1 For many, given the current price of tuition
2 and other costs, this is mathematically impossible
3 for our students today.

4 When SUNY New Paltz becomes more expensive,
5 there's ripple effects on our local community and
6 our local economy, and we can't view tuition in a
7 vacuum. It needs to be put in the context of State
8 investment in public higher ed.

9 When the State adequately funds SUNY, there's
10 less pressure to increase tuition and, as a result,
11 less negative facts, economic, social, on students
12 and their families specifically, but also on the
13 SUNY campuses and their host communities.

14 Some of these are indirect and less often
15 seen, and I seek here to make them more visible.

16 Ripple effects on community:

17 President Christian spoke already about the
18 \$5 million deficit our campus recently worked to
19 overcome.

20 It's important to note that a considerable
21 portion of that deficit was the result of the State
22 agreeing to labor contracts without funding what was
23 agreed to in those contracts.

24 When the State negotiates, thereby agreeing
25 to, salary increases, but does not fund them,

1 clearly, we have a failure in the system.

2 When Albany signs contracts, Albany needs to
3 follow up with the funds. When they don't, we end
4 up with shortfalls, like the \$5 million deficit we
5 just experienced.

6 I have to give abundant praise to our faculty
7 and staff on campus who rolled up their sleeves and
8 helped us climb out of this deficit, thoughtfully,
9 and with the least impact on our core mission, the
10 delivery of top-quality education.

11 I'm on the campus budget committee, and
12 I concur with the president's wish-list number, that
13 we actually need 10 or 12 million dollars more a
14 year just to be funded adequately.

15 I talked about salary increases, but it's
16 important to note that our salaries are still well
17 below national averages in a region that the
18 Economic Policy Institute regularly ranks as in the
19 top 10 most-expensive places to live in the country.

20 Many of our salaries are well below what EPI
21 (the Economic Policy Institute) says you need to be
22 able to afford to live here.

23 We can see shifts because of this increase in
24 the cost of living here.

25 In 1980, a majority of our faculty and staff

1 lived in the New Paltz ZIP code.

2 Today about a quarter of our faculty and
3 staff live and work in the same place right here in
4 12561.

5 This results in big impacts on our town and
6 on our carbon footprint.

7 Old-timers tell me all the time that the
8 village and town boards and volunteer activities
9 used to be chock full of college employees, helping
10 weave our presidents' and point of view into
11 community decision-making.

12 When we used to be -- when half of our
13 employees used to live in this ZIP code, and now
14 only a quarter do, you can see that this has a big
15 impact on our town-gown relations.

16 We also want people to be able to live where
17 they work for environmental reasons.

18 We just did our footprint inventory in
19 New Paltz, and the majority of our impact is from
20 transportation.

21 Clearly, there's a lot of factors at play
22 here, but Albany needs to curb tuition costs and
23 adequately fund SUNY New Paltz because student and
24 faculty and staff need to be able to afford to live
25 here.

1 There's also ripple effects on our housing
2 market.

3 Inadequate salaries and higher tuition means
4 faculty and staff and students are priced out from
5 living in this ZIP code.

6 Students pay top dollar for rents here. More
7 affluent students are less impacted. But students
8 from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and faculty,
9 many with their own student debt, have a much harder
10 time with these costs.

11 Our local housing market in the village is
12 three-quarters rental units, without 20 -- with
13 about 25 percent occupied by homeowners.

14 60 percent of Ulster County tenants need
15 30 percent or more of their income to cover housing
16 costs.

17 Senator Metzger recognized that we have a
18 housing crisis here.

19 The trend in the village and town, despite
20 unsustainable rents across the region, is an
21 increase in more, not less, rental housing.

22 We're doing what we can to address this
23 crisis in many ways in the village, but here in --
24 the SUNY system needs to keep tuition down while
25 being able to create more student housing on campus.

1 Among our comprehensive peers, we're ranked
2 at the bottom in terms of the amount of housing we
3 can offer students on campus.

4 We rely on transfer students, many who choose
5 other schools when they cannot find campus housing
6 here.

7 We know the on-campus residential experience
8 is what many students are looking for.

9 And our location in the beautiful
10 Hudson Valley so approximate to New York City is a
11 huge strength.

12 But we need more on-campus housing for those
13 reasons, and, also, to take the pressure off our
14 local housing market which has become more and more
15 appealing to outside investors, only worsened by
16 short-term, you know, Airbnb-type rental sector.

17 Money not spent on tuition is also money that
18 can be spent elsewhere.

19 We need students in our communities spending
20 money.

21 We need visitors to the college, be it in for
22 tours, athletic or cultural events, spending money
23 in our community.

24 A successful and well-attended open house,
25 just like last -- happened last weekend, are

1 critical to our small-business successes.

2 These small-business owners tell me all the
3 time that they cannot rely on one type of customer,
4 towny or tourist or college-related visitors, in
5 order to be profitable overall.

6 SUNY New Paltz's attractiveness and success
7 is tied to our local economy's success.

8 The research is clear that increases in
9 tuition can depress overall college enrollment.

10 The higher-ed market is a rapidly changing
11 one.

12 We need to stay competitive and continue to
13 attract students from near and far.

14 We need lower, not higher, tuition and
15 college costs to succeed.

16 We talk a lot about the so-called
17 "brain-drain" in our region, young people who, post
18 college, do not say stay here because they can't
19 afford it.

20 The higher the costs in the form of tuition,
21 or resulting debt, or otherwise, means students are
22 less likely to stay here when they graduate.

23 We need to minimize the cost of higher ed so
24 we can keep the next generation in New York State
25 and in our region.

1 To be clear again, this is not just about
2 increasing tuition.

3 Keeping maintenance-of-effort funding at the
4 same level for years, in the context of inflation
5 and other rising costs, is the equivalent of
6 slashing funding, and the holes are ever-widening.

7 By not increasing State funding, the burden
8 becomes that of the students and their families,
9 thus restricting access to quality, affordable
10 higher education which is the whole point of SUNY
11 and CUNY.

12 SUNY New Paltz is a star in the SUNY system.

13 We rank high on so many lists that assess
14 higher ed.

15 As has been mentioned, the social mobility
16 index is one of them, and, honestly, it's pretty
17 much the only one that I care about.

18 As has been stated, we're in the top
19 5 percent nationwide in this measurement of schools'
20 ability to help students, especially those from
21 disadvantaged backgrounds, climb the socioeconomic
22 ladder.

23 Much more than I would like to say that I do,
24 I encounter distraught students who will have to
25 drop out if their tuition goes up two or

1 three hundred dollars, or, are so stressed out about
2 those Excelsior rules, which are so easy to break
3 and lose, and then be on the hook for that money.

4 And I've seen it happen with my own eyes,
5 students, that that's their breaking point, just a
6 couple more hundred dollars for tuition.

7 Or, we even see an increase, I in my own
8 classroom see an increase, of students asking me to
9 put textbooks in the library because they can't
10 afford them.

11 As has been stated, New York is the most
12 inequitable state in the nation.

13 Among the states, we have the highest income
14 inequality.

15 Our Gini score, a standard measure of income
16 inequality, ranks us dead last, the worst, among all
17 the 50 states.

18 The top quintile in New York State in 2017
19 netted a majority, 54 percent, of all of the
20 earnings, with the top 5 percent ranking -- raking
21 in over a quarter of the state's aggregate income.

22 So there's so much more we need to do as a
23 state, but if higher education is the great
24 equalizer, the social mobility index, and metrics
25 like that, must be our top priority in order to

1 increase, not decrease, the number of students that
2 we lift up.

3 When students succeed, campuses succeed,
4 SUNY host communities succeed, our region succeed,
5 and our state succeed.

6 Please fund SUNY adequately in the upcoming
7 budget, and do not increase tuition.

8 [Applause.]

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: Do you have any questions?

10 SENATOR JACKSON: Yes.

11 So, Deputy Mayor, thank you for coming in and
12 giving testimony.

13 KT TOBIN: Thank you.

14 SENATOR JACKSON: So what I gathered from
15 your testimony, based on information was provided in
16 the testimony of Dr. Christian, is that, if
17 SUNY New Paltz loses funding, and the student
18 population drops, it has a negative impact on the
19 economic viability of the village of New Paltz.

20 Is that what I'm hearing?

21 KT TOBIN: Absolutely.

22 SENATOR JACKSON: Well, I'm glad that you are
23 a spokesperson for the village of New Paltz, and
24 speaking on behalf of the staff and students of
25 New Paltz, because sometimes the administrators --

1 the presidents, provosts, and what have you -- in my
2 opinion, they may not speak what they really, really
3 feel. That they have to more tow the line of the
4 administration.

5 So we need, in my opinion, realistic
6 assessments of the situation, in order so that we
7 can take those to Albany and advocate from a
8 realistic point of view.

9 So I want to thank you for coming in.

10 Now, you're teaching a class here at SUNY
11 New Paltz, or somewhere else?

12 KT TOBIN: Uh, yes, I'm a sociologist.
13 I have research methods at 3:30.

14 SENATOR JACKSON: Well, thank you very much.

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you very much.

16 SENATOR METZGER: (Inaudible.)

17 KT TOBIN: Hi.

18 SENATOR METZGER: Hi.

19 It's continuation of a long conversation,
20 but, I was wondering if you could speak to, as a
21 village trustee, just, you know, the important
22 impact that having a university in your town has on
23 the local economy, on the tax base.

24 You know, I represent a ridiculous number of
25 municipalities, over 50 in my district. And many

1 struggle to raise enough revenue through taxes and
2 the like.

3 So I thought maybe you could speak to that.

4 KT TOBIN: Yeah, well, certainly, we're
5 unique.

6 You know, I've -- I've -- I've -- being a
7 SUNY host community, especially a comprehensive,
8 there's only a dozen in the state -- right? -- is a
9 very sort of special category.

10 And not being a university center, you know,
11 we're different from those places which are,
12 typically, you know, in your Albany, your
13 Stony Brook, your -- your -- Binghamton, your more
14 populated places.

15 SUNY New Paltz is the village of New Paltz,
16 the town of New Paltz, and vice versa. Right?

17 We are so unique because of our
18 host-community identity.

19 You know, I think you can see it in the
20 restaurants that we have, and the people that live
21 here, and you can't uncouple those two things.

22 You know, there's other villages in this
23 county and this region that have some of the same
24 struggles that we have, but they're very, very
25 different because we're a SUNY host community.

1 I'm thrilled that we have a such great
2 relationship. We have a great, you know, mayor and
3 town supervisor right now.

4 And I think that administrators in
5 SUNY New Paltz would concur that we work together
6 all the time.

7 We have the same goals in mind, which is to
8 make sure that we have a vibrant community where
9 people are safe and that they can afford to live
10 here.

11 But it's very unique. It's hard to have
12 comparisons with other places.

13 SENATOR METZGER: I guess what I'm getting at
14 is, the State spends a lot of money on, you know,
15 economic-development funding.

16 And, you know, if we were to invest even a
17 portion of that funding into our university system,
18 it would have a major impact on economic
19 development, I would think --

20 KT TOBIN: I think that that is --

21 SENATOR METZGER: -- locally, regionally, and
22 in the state.

23 KT TOBIN: I think that that is a fabulous
24 idea.

25 I would love to redirect some of those funds

1 to SUNY's budget.

2 SENATOR METZGER: Right.

3 And I have one other question.

4 And it was mentioned by President Christian,
5 that most of the students here are from
6 New York State, are residents.

7 So is that by design? Is that because of the
8 reputation of the college?

9 And, you know, it seems to me that, you know,
10 that should be a consideration in funding, because
11 we should be, in my mind, rewarding our universities
12 that actually are educating our residents, which was
13 the entire intention of our public university
14 system.

15 And so I'm just curious how (indiscernible
16 cross-talking) --

17 KT TOBIN: Yeah, I was surprised, when I was
18 touring colleges with my son, when we went to UVM,
19 that they said they actually target out-of-state
20 residents because they don't have enough graduates
21 in the state of Vermont to actually feed into their
22 state university system.

23 Right?

24 So that's a very different model from what we
25 have here.

1 And it's my understanding, depending on what
2 state you're in, it's different models.

3 And I would say that you're keying in on that
4 one indicator, that, it's really the great, great,
5 great, almost fully, for the people of
6 New York State.

7 That should be recognized, because we're
8 investing in New York State when we're investing in
9 SUNY.

10 SENATOR METZGER: Thank you.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: Assemblymember Epstein.

12 SENATOR METZGER: So we heard earlier about
13 concerns we have around students with food
14 insecurity, lack of affordable housing for them,
15 transportation insecurity.

16 I'm wondering how that plays out in the city
17 here in New Paltz?

18 And what, if anything, government needs to be
19 doing to (indiscernible) about ensuring that, when
20 we're supporting the students, we're also supporting
21 the towns that they live in?

22 You know, my wife actually grew up in this
23 town. Went to elementary school across the street.

24 I know this town well.

25 But I know there's this dynamic that's kind a

1 weird dynamic between the students, and sometimes
2 the Town, but also to ensure that the Town and the
3 students are really supporting each other.

4 KT TOBIN: So what is your question, exactly?

5 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: What -- like, what
6 should the Town should be doing to support the
7 students who have housing insecurity, food
8 insecurity, you know, transportation insecurity?

9 Are there things that the Town should be
10 doing more?

11 And what do we as government need to do to
12 ensure that the students are successful here as
13 well?

14 KT TOBIN: Well, there's so many things that
15 we, you know, can say that we do for certain
16 segments of the population, that are really, you
17 know, we're doing -- we end up doing a lot for
18 students. Right?

19 And the first off the top of my mind is to
20 fully, what we do with our building department, and
21 make sure that the housing is safe in this
22 community.

23 It is such a stress on our local housing
24 market that we don't have enough housing here on
25 campus.

1 So I can't reiterate enough the need for the
2 State to put the money into being able to build
3 residences for students on campus.

4 That would do so much to take the pressure
5 off our local housing market, which manifests, you
6 know, there's lots of problems when you have a
7 housing market that is attractive to external
8 investors.

9 So we spend a lot of time making sure that
10 students are tenants, are, you know, in residences
11 that are safe.

12 So, there's that.

13 You know, the -- you know, there was talk of
14 the campus pantry, that's less than a decade old,
15 but they keep increasing their hours.

16 So -- and we have family in New Paltz.

17 I can't tell you how many students off campus
18 go to -- you know, we have lots of social safety
19 network in our community, because, just like the
20 state as a whole, you know, our communities are
21 bifurcated.

22 There tends to be the -- less middle-class
23 and those with a lot, and those with not a lot.

24 So it's complicated.

25 You know, a lot of what I talked about, it's

1 not -- you know, we can tie -- we can say, oh, yes,
2 if we could keep higher ed more affordable, it would
3 help.

4 But there's also a lot of macro factors and
5 things that y'all should be thinking about in terms
6 of our economy more broadly.

7 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Thanks.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay, thank you.

9 KT TOBIN: Thank you.

10 Thanks for letting me.

11 Thanks, students.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: And now we have
13 Austin Ostro, the president of the SUNY Student
14 Assembly and as student trustee; Tajiah Pink; and
15 Brad, I think it's pronounced, Hershenson.

16 I've known his family for a long time.

17 AUSTIN OSTRO: Thank you so much,
18 Madam Chair.

19 And let me just start by thanking all of the
20 members present for -- and for some of you traveling
21 pretty far, to see one of our incredible campuses
22 here in New Paltz, and be a part of this hearing.

23 I also want to thank you in particular,
24 Chair Stavisky, just for your constant support of
25 students broadly, but of the student assembly and

1 our voice in government, and ensuring -- and your
2 staff does a great job, I'm thinking of Sabiel in
3 particular -- of ensuring that we are a part of
4 important conversations.

5 So, thank you.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

7 AUSTIN OSTRO: It's an honor to be here to
8 share the student perspective on the state of the
9 cost of public education.

10 I'm joined by two incredible student leaders.

11 To my right, as was introduced, is
12 Brad Hershenson, who is our legislative director; '.

13 And to my left is Tajiah Pink, who is the
14 student government president here at New Paltz, and
15 a delegate to the student assembly.

16 We want to start off by hitting on a point
17 that was just raised in economic development.

18 SUNY is the economic engine of New York
19 State.

20 A recent study conducted by the
21 Rockefeller Institute of Government showed, that for
22 every \$1 in public spending from the State, SUNY
23 campuses generate \$8.17 in economic returns and
24 economic growth.

25 If I promised you that kind of return on your

1 401(k), everyone would jump at it immediately.

2 And that's what SUNY is to New York State:
3 SUNY's success is New York State's success.

4 And that's why SUNY is worth investing in.

5 To take you through a little bit of the
6 recent history on SUNY funding, and where we're at
7 today, and where we need to go next, I want to take
8 you back to the years before the economic recession.

9 SUNY was supported at a significantly higher
10 level than it is now.

11 As a consequence of the economic crash, like
12 a lot of state agencies, SUNY saw pretty --
13 pretty -- pretty tough cuts in the 2007-through-2010
14 window.

15 And while New York State has recovered in the
16 ensuing years, SUNY's funding hasn't, to the tune of
17 approximately \$350 million in budget shortfall
18 compared to what we were funded at before the
19 economic recession.

20 And what that has led to is dramatic
21 increases in tuition and fees on our campuses, and
22 rising costs for associated expenses related to
23 college life, like housing and meal plans.

24 The way to offset that increased --
25 increasing tuition and fees is to jump the State

1 direct support for our campuses.

2 And that is our organizations', and students
3 more broadly's, highest priority heading into this
4 legislative session.

5 While the reasons for increasing costs
6 include a lot of different categories, two
7 particular ones I want to highlight are: The recent
8 increases in faculty salaries, and the TAP gap.

9 First, on the faculty salaries, I'm very
10 pleased to see a number of representatives from
11 UUP here.

12 And students understand how important it is
13 that faculty and staff be compensated adequately.

14 And, we want to attract the best and
15 brightest talent to the SUNY system to teach and
16 work, but it's important that that not -- that
17 contract not be paid for by students.

18 That the State support be increased to cover
19 the 2 percent raises annually, and the retroactive
20 raises, that the contract calls for.

21 And that's why --

22 [Applause.]

23 AUSTIN OSTRO: Thank you.

24 That's why we urge UUP, and I'm looking
25 forward to hearing their testimony in a moment, to

1 prioritize joining us in our call for the State
2 support for the cost of the contract.

3 Now turning to the TAP gap, which is a focal
4 point of today's hearing.

5 The TAP gap is responsible for approximately
6 \$75 million in reduced funding for the SUNY system,
7 and, approximately, about the same amount for CUNY.

8 That lost revenue has consequences, just like
9 added expenses have consequences, and it shouldn't
10 be seen differently than cuts are seen.

11 It's important that the TAP gap be closed
12 permanently so that campuses aren't disincentivized
13 from accepting students who have financial need.

14 In fact, those are the students, students who
15 are getting max TAP awards, who the SUNY system is
16 most designed to serve.

17 So we need to close the gap, and we need to
18 increase the State direct subsidy, and we need to
19 invest in our campuses and our students.

20 There are some consequences from that
21 declining state enrollment.

22 I'm going to highlight a few, and then I'm
23 going to ask Brad and Pink to highlight a few
24 others.

25 But it's the -- it's -- the types of things

1 that get sacrificed first are the nonessentials; the
2 things that add to student life, the things that
3 make the quality of our academic institutions
4 greater, but that you might not notice at first
5 glance.

6 It's things, like:

7 Academic advisement. Ensuring that students
8 have the opportunity to meet with an academic
9 advisor regularly, an academic advisor who isn't
10 overburdened with such a large load of students to
11 advise, that they can't offer adequate advisement to
12 all of them.

13 It's a reduction in financial-aid counselors,
14 so that when students are flagged for verification
15 on their FAFSA, or have an issue navigating the TAP
16 or Excelsior applications, they have somewhere to
17 turn.

18 It's cuts in support for mental health.

19 The National Association of Mental Health
20 Professionals recommends a counselor-to-student
21 ratio of 1-to-1500. And that's a ratio that,
22 really, no SUNY campus has the resources to meet.

23 And we know the tragic consequences that
24 failing to meet mental-health needs can have on
25 young people, and we need to offset that through

1 investment.

2 It's issues like food insecurity, where
3 students don't always have the -- just the basic
4 necessities of life that allow them to focus all of
5 their energy on their academic success.

6 Those aren't the types of things you might
7 notice at first glance.

8 Campuses will continue to operate, they will
9 continue to develop student leaders, but, they start
10 to lose their competitive edge.

11 And we want SUNY to attract not only the
12 brightest and most talented staff, but the brightest
13 and most talented students from New York State and
14 around the world.

15 So we need to invest in that success, we need
16 invest in New York; we need to increase that direct
17 State support.

18 One additional area of funding that I need to
19 highlight is community college funding.

20 Last year, thanks to the championship of this
21 cause, not only by the Senate Higher Ed Committee,
22 but also by the Assembly Higher Ed Committee, we
23 finally saw a funding floor introduced for our
24 community colleges, and it was warmly, warmly
25 received by students.

1 The student assembly would like to see that
2 funding floor enshrined in statutory language, like
3 the maintenance-of-effort provision for the
4 State-operated campuses, so that students don't have
5 to fight year after year for that funding floor, and
6 community colleges don't face the consequences of
7 the cyclical changes in the economy that directly
8 link to the -- to changes in community college
9 enrollment.

10 I also want to reference the
11 Educational Opportunity Program, which is
12 a uniquely powerful use of state dollars, to not
13 only support students financially, but to support
14 the diversity, equity, and inclusion of what the
15 campuses can offer.

16 We're joined today in the audience by a
17 student, Ester [ph.] Joseph, who is a comprehensive
18 college representative to the student assembly, and
19 who's a member of New Paltz's EOP program.

20 And she has shared with me, as countless EOP
21 students have, how essential that investment is to
22 their success, an investment that they will repay
23 once they are successful members of the workforce.

24 So we urge the Governor to protect EOP
25 funding, we urge the Legislature to protect and

1 strengthen the funding for this important program,
2 so that more students can be a part of EOP, and
3 other opportunity initiatives.

4 I'm now going to ask Brad to share some other
5 areas of focus on campus that increased support
6 could help meet.

7 [Applause.]

8 BRAD HERSHENSON: Thank you so much.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: Austin, who goes next?

10 BRAD HERSHENSON: Thank you --

11 [Audio interference.]

12 BRAD HERSHENSON: Thank you, President Ostro.
13 Members of the Committee, we very much
14 appreciate you taking the time to come to one of our
15 campuses --

16 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: [Motioning to
17 witness.]

18 BRAD HERSHENSON: -- we very much appreciate
19 you taking the time to come to one of our campuses
20 and host this conversation on the costs and
21 affordability of public higher education in the
22 state.

23 One important aspect I want to mention is,
24 sustainability, and that's something that has been
25 talked about today in earlier conversations, and,

1 hopefully, will continue to remain a topic on the
2 table of conversation.

3 So as students, we view sustainability
4 through the sustainable development goals. These
5 are the top 17 priorities that the United Nations
6 has put out for the entire globe to accomplish by
7 the year 2030.

8 And these are issues that go beyond life on
9 land, life on water. We're talking about quality
10 education, gender equality, innovation,
11 infrastructure... big topics that are important to
12 society, the economy, and students alike.

13 With respect to the curriculum at our
14 campuses, it's important that elements of
15 sustainability are incorporated into them, and that
16 the sustainable development goals shine through with
17 respect to what students are learning about, and the
18 learning outcomes of our coursework.

19 It's important that our campuses have the
20 ability to invest in new programs of study related
21 to changes in the economy, technology, medical,
22 science, and beyond.

23 We mentioned operations earlier as well,
24 talking about compost and new laws that will come in
25 effect.

1 It's important that the waste-management
2 practices, and what our campuses are doing with
3 respect to their carbon footprints, are met.

4 Furthermore, research, the importance of
5 impactful research to students, is so critical.

6 We want to be able to invest in some of these
7 new programs so that students have access to
8 material and programs that will benefit them coming
9 into the workforce after graduation.

10 And, lastly, I want to mention engagement;
11 preparing students for campus life, preparing
12 students for what the sustainability culture is at
13 SUNY, and what that sustainability culture could be
14 at their home, and in New York State.

15 And as President Ostro mentioned, SUNY's
16 success is New York's success.

17 Today we mentioned that our food pantries on
18 all of our campuses are so important.

19 And what we want to see as students, is we
20 want our campuses to be able to go above and beyond
21 the mandate of having our food pantries.

22 At the University at Albany, we have
23 something called "Purple Threads," which allows
24 students, once per semester, to receive a full suit
25 and tie, or, if they prefer, a dress and a topcoat.

1 It allows students to go above and beyond
2 seeking food-insecurity measures by actually putting
3 clothes on their back.

4 We want our campuses to be able to offer
5 students school supplies, textbooks, pencils, pens;
6 areas that should be really highlighted with respect
7 to higher education.

8 Furthermore, I want to mention disability
9 services.

10 Tests and study accommodations in classroom
11 and at home is so important.

12 And I know some of these issues with respect
13 to sustainability and disability services are
14 capital issues, so we'll save that for a later date,
15 but it's so important that there's an equitable
16 classroom experience.

17 SENATOR METZGER: Our Chair had to step out,
18 so I'm going to take over.

19 Tajiah.

20 TAJIAH PINK: Yes.

21 Hello.

22 SENATOR METZGER: Okay.

23 TAJIAH PINK: First, I thank everyone for
24 being here today, to listen to fellow student
25 leaders, UUP, and our administration.

1 So my name is Tajiah Pink. I go by "Pink"
2 here at SUNY New Paltz.

3 I'm the president of the student association.

4 And one of the best things about being the
5 president of the student association is being a
6 voice for my student body.

7 So I would like to share with you guys a
8 story that was shared with me about higher ed and,
9 like, what it means for students.

10 When we hear a lot about higher education, we
11 hear about, like, EOP and TAP. But there is so much
12 gray area that we don't always acknowledge when we
13 come -- when we talk about the SUNY system.

14 So I share with you a story about a young
15 person who went through high school, studied day in
16 and day out, trying to do her -- their best to make
17 it to college.

18 Does really well on their SATs. Graduates
19 high school with a high GPA. Goes to college --
20 goes to the college of their choice at SUNY
21 New Paltz.

22 Three years into SUNY New Paltz, working two
23 jobs supporting themselves, their parent receives a
24 promotion.

25 Now, what that puts them is, in a completely

1 different bracket of receiving tuition help.

2 This person, 24 credits shy of a
3 life-changing thing --

4 Because we all know that having a high school
5 degree puts you further in life. Some college, a
6 little further, but a bachelor degree really helps
7 out students.

8 -- and being 24 credits short, and 24 credits
9 is two semesters, that even the two jobs that this
10 student was working was not enough for them to
11 graduate college.

12 This is one story, and I imagine across our
13 SUNY system there are hundreds, and thousands.

14 This is why today I ask that, like, that
15 student felt that 75 percent of that weight that we
16 fail students, because the State only supports 25.

17 So today I ask to fund SUNYs.

18 And -- yeah.

19 Thank you.

20 [Applause.]

21 SENATOR METZGER: You guys were thorough, and
22 really presented really great testimony.

23 Thank you so much.

24 And it's so important, I think it's the most
25 important, to hear the students' perspective.

1 Do -- do any panelists have any questions
2 that they would like to ask?

3 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: I'm just wondering,
4 how much are your housing costs here? Or where --
5 oh, well, let me say, where do you -- where do
6 you -- you go to (parties cross-talking) --

7 TAJIAH PINK: I go to SUNY New Paltz.

8 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: You go, where?

9 AUSTIN OSTRO: UAlbany.

10 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: And...?

11 BRAD HERSHENSON: UAlbany.

12 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: So how much do you
13 pay for housing?

14 TAJIAH PINK: So I live in the New Paltz
15 area. I'm a "resi" commuter. So, I'm a residential
16 liver, but a commuter student.

17 I pay \$700 a month in rent, and that doesn't
18 not include my utilities, and, nor food, or gas that
19 I put in my car.

20 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: And what about you?

21 AUSTIN OSTRO: Students at UAlbany pay
22 upwards of 1,000 to 1100 dollars a month for housing
23 on campus, with a reduced price for off-campus
24 housing.

25 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: 1,000 a month?

1 AUSTIN OSTRO: Yes.

2 And I'd say that that's pretty standard for
3 the university centers, with housing costs a bit
4 lower at the comprehensive colleges, like New Paltz.

5 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: And that's sharing
6 it with a roommate; right?

7 AUSTIN OSTRO: I'm sorry?

8 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: Is that with a
9 roommate, or not?

10 AUSTIN OSTRO: Is that -- is that --

11 BRAD HERSHENSON: With a roommate.

12 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: With a roommate.

13 AUSTIN OSTRO: -- yes, yes, that's per
14 person. That would be per person.

15 Okay. All right.

16 And how much do you books cost you?

17 Or do you even get books, or is everything
18 online?

19 TAJIAH PINK: This year alone, I think I paid
20 about \$250 in books, and that includes paying for,
21 like, to get online access to certain things.

22 So around \$250 for this semester.

23 AUSTIN OSTRO: Yeah, luckily, I'm in a
24 program where I can share textbooks with friends.

25 If you're in a STEM field, you might need an

1 access code that's unique to the person.

2 But I -- if I had to purchase all the books
3 myself, it would have been north of \$500 this
4 semester.

5 BRAD HERSHENSON: And that's the same for me,
6 usually around \$800 a semester.

7 And like they said, access codes are in
8 addition to that.

9 And it's so important that we promote open
10 educational resources for students at SUNY.

11 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: Well, just want to
12 say you all did a great job.

13 And I hope that you would end up being in our
14 intern program up in Albany, because they pay you.
15 You don't have to take any classes. And might be
16 something you want to do.

17 SENATOR METZGER: (Parties cross-talking) --

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Sabiel Chapnick who lives
19 here started as my Senate fellow.

20 Now he's being paid a living wage.

21 SENATOR METZGER: The student you spoke of,
22 was -- was this recently?

23 TAJIAH PINK: So I'm entering my senior year,
24 so, yes, it was going into this semester.

25 SENATOR METZGER: Okay.

1 Like, the Excelsior plan, like, I'm just
2 curious, like, what -- this is supposed to be the
3 kind of person that this is to serve.

4 So --

5 TAJIAH PINK: Absolutely.

6 So, Excelsior has very, like, strict
7 requirements. Like, mostly, 15 credits a semester.
8 And, like, if you fall shy of those in any way,
9 you're, pretty much, out of the program.

10 So this person was doing just enough.

11 Like, the way financial aid works, is that
12 these brackets, that, like, an extra dollar can
13 place you in a completely different bracket, where
14 you don't have enough -- you don't make enough to go
15 to college, but you have, like, enough to live.

16 And that's like the challenging part of it,
17 is that, you're working, and you're living a
18 working-class life, but, it's just still not enough
19 for college.

20 SENATOR METZGER: Right.

21 Well, thank you very much.

22 And I really -- you raised a lot of important
23 points, Brad.

24 But the suggestion you made of being able to
25 provide students with supplies, with those that --

1 with clothes, even things that are not covered, is,
2 I think, so important.

3 So...

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

5 And I apologize. I had a local problem,
6 which I had to run out to return a phone call.

7 Senator Jackson.

8 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

9 So, representatives, let me thank you coming
10 in, representing -- how many students do you
11 represent?

12 AUSTIN OSTRO: 1.4 million.

13 SENATOR JACKSON: Wow.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: I thought there were only
15 440,000 students at SUNY?

16 AUSTIN OSTRO: Well, we count the students
17 who are non-matriculated programs, because we
18 represent those students too.

19 SENATOR JACKSON: 1.4 million.

20 Are they all registered voters?

21 AUSTIN OSTRO: We're working on it.

22 SENATOR JACKSON: You're working on it.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Austin, I assure you, is
24 working on it.

25 SENATOR JACKSON: But, first, I want thank

1 you for coming in because, always, it's important to
2 hear from the students' perspective.

3 We hear from the administration, we hear from
4 the labor unions. But the students are the ones
5 that are being most impacted because they are the
6 ones that are still in school, whereas, most of the
7 educators and professors are already graduated from
8 college; master's degree, Ph.D.s, and, you know,
9 post-docs, and all the other stuff.

10 But, thank you.

11 So my question to you is:

12 You have been, at least -- at least
13 you Austin; first time I'm meeting you,
14 Madam President --

15 That sounds good, Madam President.

16 -- but you know the way the situation is
17 right now.

18 Tell us, talk to us, what would you want us
19 to do, understanding the situation?

20 AUSTIN OSTRO: Sure.

21 And we are very cognizant of the fact that
22 there are other priorities.

23 Students on our campuses also have other
24 priorities that they'd like to see funded in the
25 state.

1 We'd like to see enough of an increase in the
2 direct State support, that there could be a freeze
3 on tuition increases. We think that is imminently
4 feasible. We think that could stay within
5 reasonable financial constraints.

6 And, additional support for community college
7 students through the statutory language, which would
8 just enshrine something that's already been funded,
9 with an eye towards, on the -- both funding sides,
10 ensuring that those student-support services --
11 academic advisement, mental health, food
12 insecurity -- that those are priorities on the
13 campus end, in terms of the allocation of dollars.

14 SENATOR JACKSON: Well, you say a freeze in
15 tuition.

16 The tuition increase is automatic; isn't that
17 correct?

18 Every --

19 AUSTIN OSTRO: Well -- so the Legislature
20 authorizes a maximum increase. This was part of the
21 rational tuition agreement with SUNY 2020.

22 But if there was -- part of the understanding
23 was, that the in -- that there would not be an
24 increase in State support, which was the reason why
25 SUNY would be permitted to raise tuition.

1 But if there was an increase in State
2 support, then there wouldn't need to be increases in
3 tuition.

4 SENATOR JACKSON: Well -- and how many
5 students are there?

6 For example, in essence, what figure are we
7 talking about, if, in fact, if there was a freeze on
8 tuition, in which the State picked up the cost and
9 gave it to the colleges -- okay? -- where the need
10 is, how much would that be?

11 I mean, I'm not a mathematician.

12 AUSTIN OSTRO: Sure.

13 I think that would be a very good question
14 for SUNY, because SUNY needs to be prepared, also,
15 to agree that it would be enough funding to not need
16 a tuition increase.

17 And I know, just from working with the
18 chancellor and my colleagues on the SUNY Board of
19 Trustees, that raising tuition for them has always
20 been seen as a last resort.

21 So I think that figure should be worked out
22 with the chancellor and with the leadership at SUNY;
23 and, in turn, there should be a commitment that
24 tuition will not be raised if that support is
25 increased.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: I'm not testifying, but,
2 that's a question that I had asked, internal.

3 My question to some folks was: What would it
4 cost if we had no tuition at all, if we had free
5 tuition?

6 [Applause.]

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: And it's -- the answer is:
8 We're not really sure, but it's in the billions.

9 And we only have a state budget of
10 \$175 billion.

11 But that is certainly -- I think that's down
12 the road quite a bit, but that would -- I think all
13 of us would agree, we'd love to see tuition go back.
14 But I don't think it will happen soon.

15 But I did ask that question.

16 SENATOR JACKSON: And I think that's a great
17 question.

18 But, obviously, the first thing, let's freeze
19 it, and then let's roll it back.

20 But can you -- you may have been
21 here when I asked the question about the
22 Excelsior Scholarships program.

23 From the student government point of view,
24 I mean, the way it was rolled out, oh, this is like
25 apple pie and ice cream, the American dream.

1 But my understanding is that, the total
2 number of students that really can take advantage of
3 it is no more than about 3 percent of the student
4 population, that's eligible.

5 Does the student government, either
6 presidents, local, or legislative director, has an
7 opinion as to how successful this is, overall, in
8 trying to reach out to the general population of
9 students?

10 AUSTIN OSTRO: Sure.

11 So we -- and I think students, broadly,
12 do appreciate the added value that the
13 Excelsior Scholarship brings to the larger suite
14 of what New York State offers financially.

15 There are a lot of students in New York State
16 who are going to SUNY tuition-free, thanks to Pell
17 and TAP already, before Excelsior.

18 But Excelsior helps add to the number of
19 students who are going tuition-free, and we
20 appreciate that.

21 We think it could be strengthened in a few
22 ways.

23 And while we do, in principle, support the
24 credit requirement, because we understand it's
25 reasonable, if New York State's investing in

1 students, that they make every effort to complete on
2 time.

3 There are certain students where their
4 personal circumstances make it impossible for them
5 to take a full 15-credit load.

6 I think, in particular, of working parents
7 who are trying to go back and get a degree. It's
8 not reasonable to expect them to complete
9 15 academic credits.

10 I'm also thinking of community college
11 students who lose academic credit in the process of
12 transferring to a four-year school at the completion
13 of their degree, and may, in turn, lose eligibility
14 for the scholarship, through no fault of their own.

15 And that's an issue I've actually raised with
16 HESC, and that they're looking into as well.

17 But I think there are tweaks that can broaden
18 its access.

19 But, in principle, we support the program, we
20 appreciate the Governor's commitment through
21 instituting the program, and we're committed to
22 working with the Legislature to identify the areas
23 that can be tweaked to support students.

24 SENATOR JACKSON: Well, my last question is
25 that:

1 The assemblymember right next to me here,
2 Assemblymember Jacobson, and my college Jen Metzger,
3 had submitted a Senate bill and Assembly bill,
4 basically, amending that, so that people that are
5 now working, that they can go to college to get a
6 degree, two nights a week, under the program.

7 So my question to you is: Does the student
8 government of SUNY; more specifically, at New Paltz,
9 and you as the president of the student assembly, do
10 you support these bills in the Assembly and the
11 Senate?

12 AUSTIN OSTRO: Absolutely.

13 Anything that broadens the access of
14 Excelsior we support.

15 And we would -- I'd be happy to work with you
16 outside of the hearing, to try and lend our voices
17 of support.

18 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

19 Thank you, Madam Chair.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Are we good?

21 Okay. Thank you.

22 And there's a reason we called you early in
23 the session.

24 AUSTIN OSTRO: Thank you so much.

25 [Applause.]

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: Next we have --
2 Let's try to keep our comments shorter.
3 -- Tal Schwerd, NYPIRG, SUNY New Paltz.
4 And, yes, we are familiar with your report.

5 TAL SCHWERD: What?

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: And we are familiar with
7 your report.

8 TAL SCHWERD: Okay.

9 Thank you so much.

10 Yeah, I'll definitely keep this short and
11 sweet because I have class in 20 minutes.

12 So, hi. My name Tal Schwerd. I am a junior
13 political science major at SUNY New Paltz, and one
14 of the student board representatives for the
15 New York Public Interest Research Group. You guys
16 are probably familiar with us.

17 You know, so, NYPIRG, but different -- you
18 know, NYPIRG is a student-directed non-profit
19 advocacy group with chapters at SUNY, CUNY, and
20 private colleges across the state.

21 And I just want to thank you guys for holding
22 this hearing, and everyone for attending.

23 So I'm here to advocate for myself, as well
24 as so many students and faculty members suffering in
25 silence.

1 The State has routinely underfunded and --
2 CUNY and SUNY, and the costs get pushed onto
3 students and their families, and we are suffering.

4 And as I'm -- as I'm sure you're aware,
5 beginning in 2011, nearly constant tuition hikes
6 have raised tuition rates by more than 42 percent.

7 So NYPIRG is urging the Legislature to freeze
8 all tuition at senior and community colleges.

9 And, also, I would like to add that a lot of
10 what these students were saying about, like,
11 inflated housing costs, and all that, definitely,
12 I can absolutely advocate, that is correct.

13 I live off campus in -- with seven people in
14 a house, and I pay \$700 in rent.

15 And there's many houses infested with mold.

16 So there's, like -- you know, it's just
17 insane, like, what students deal with because the
18 landlords can get away with it.

19 So, anyway, that was a little off record --
20 or, off the book.

21 But -- so, it's clear that students can't
22 afford rising tuition.

23 And we hear from students unable to pay for
24 food, books, medical bills, and stable housing, like
25 Adrianna Martinez, who struggled to rent textbooks,

1 and, often, still did not have enough money to eat.

2 NYPIRG urges the Legislature to close the TAP
3 gap, and include mandatory costs in its base-funding
4 equation.

5 Why does the State continue to divest from
6 higher education?

7 For many students, limited course offerings,
8 overloaded classes, with overworked professors, and
9 limited advisement, cause graduation delays, hurting
10 families and our economy.

11 TAP, Excelsior, and other State-funded
12 educational-assistance programs must be made
13 accessible to our state's most vulnerable people,
14 including single parents, incarcerated people, and
15 struggling students who often need to take summer
16 and winter courses, or reduce their course load and
17 become part-time students, so that they can work --
18 so that they can work enough hours to survive and
19 graduate on time.

20 And I understand the value in graduating
21 within four years, and I understand why the
22 Excelsior Scholarship is designed that way, but,
23 it's there to help struggling students. And those
24 struggling students typically have to work at least
25 part-time jobs, at least 20 hours a week, and,

1 typically, more.

2 So it's incredibly inconsiderate of that,
3 that, like -- and many, many students have said
4 that -- that their part-time job -- jobs have
5 severely, negatively impacted their ability to keep
6 up with their classes.

7 So I have a quote here from Alexis
8 (indiscernible), a senior at SUNY New Paltz,
9 studying communication disorders, and minoring in
10 deaf studies, and she said:

11 "I have come really close to being kicked out
12 of school because my financial aid was not enough to
13 cover all the costs.

14 "Thankfully, I was able to use the money
15 I received from my campus jobs to pay off any
16 remaining amounts. I receive both TAP and Pell
17 grants, but it is not enough. I had to increase my
18 unsubsidized loans for it to be enough to cover
19 tuition, and room and board.

20 "I would only get approval to increase my
21 unsubsidized loans if my parent loan was denied.

22 "I'm in" -- "I am in" --

23 She's an EOP student (educational-opportunity
24 student), "and this program has helped me cover the
25 majority of the costs for school.

1 "Without EOP, I'm not sure if I would still
2 be in college."

3 So this is a quote from one of our students.

4 So NYPIRG is urging the Legislature to
5 provide TAP and Excelsior scholarships during winter
6 and summer sessions, to expand aid for use beyond
7 tuition, and to include graduate students and
8 incarcerated people in TAP.

9 Chelsea Great [ph.], a SUNY Cortland student,
10 was worried about graduating on time, but still
11 elected not to take summer classes and pay out of
12 pocket.

13 So she said:

14 "I'm concerned about graduating on time. If
15 I had six more credits, I'd be considered a junior
16 right now. I didn't want to do classes over the
17 summer because I didn't want to have to pay for that
18 out of pocket on top of everything else.

19 "I pay for school with financial aid, TAP,
20 and the Pell grant.

21 "I also work at Target and Market 32 on
22 breaks to pay for textbooks and food for the
23 semester.

24 "If I didn't get financial aid, I probably
25 would be working at Target full-time, and I don't

1 think it's possible to go to school at the same time
2 as that."

3 For working students like Chelsea, the need
4 to receive TAP puts them in a precarious educational
5 situation where students must struggle to work just
6 so they can receive the necessary financial aid they
7 need to continue.

8 However, 15 credits per semester is simply
9 unrealistic for some.

10 The issue is particularly acute for working
11 students. Currently, students, nationwide, work an
12 average of about 30 hours per week. At least a
13 quarter of all students and about a fifth of all
14 students who enroll on a full-time basis are also
15 employed full-time while they're enrolled.

16 We've heard from students who struggle to
17 balance their full-time course load, jobs, and
18 personal obligations.

19 In a recent report put out by the CUNY Office
20 of Institutional Research and Assessment, of
21 students that work, 79 percent of students reported
22 they work to pay for living expenses, and over a
23 third of those who worked believed that their job
24 negatively impacts their academic performance, as
25 I said before.

1 Robust financial-aid programs and student
2 services exist to safeguard low- and middle-income
3 students from financial barriers which impede
4 college completion.

5 Students should not have to jump through
6 hoops to receive aid.

7 Our written testimony includes students'
8 stories highlighting these hoops.

9 The decision is yours.

10 We're bringing you our experiences, and
11 asking you to be our voice.

12 Be our champion and liaison with
13 Governor Cuomo before the executive budget is
14 released.

15 We are putting you on notice, and thousands
16 of students and staff are watching how you move
17 forward, so we urge you to represent your people.

18 Thank you.

19 [Applause.]

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Questions?

21 Thank you very much.

22 SENATOR JACKSON: I have a question.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Wait.

24 TAL SCHWERD: Sorry. I wasn't sure.

25 SENATOR JACKSON: Sorry.

1 Did I hear you threaten us at the end?

2 TAL SCHWERD: No.

3 We're just going to be keeping our eyes on
4 you.

5 SENATOR JACKSON: No, but you're paying
6 attention.

7 And you -- basically, you're saying, if we
8 don't do our job, then somebody has to get it done.

9 Is that correct?

10 TAL SCHWERD: Essentially, yes.

11 SENATOR JACKSON: That's not only the members
12 of the state Senate and the Assembly, but everyone
13 who is in public office at the state level.

14 Is that correct?

15 TAL SCHWERD: Yes.

16 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay.

17 Well, you know, one of the first things I do
18 when I have an intern in my office, I introduce
19 myself to them.

20 And if they live in my district, I ask them a
21 question.

22 I ask them: Who is your city council member?

23 Who is your state senator?

24 Who is your state assemblymember?

25 And do you know that most interns that come

1 into my office when I was a member of the city
2 council, they did not know.

3 So, in order to make the change, you must be
4 politically involved.

5 And, obviously, NYPIRG is.

6 And as a representative of NYPIRG, I'm glad
7 that you said at the end that you will be watching
8 us and holding us accountable.

9 But that is not only us, but everyone --

10 TAL SCHWERD: Absolutely.

11 SENATOR JACKSON: -- who's in the
12 decision-making process.

13 Need I say more?

14 TAL SCHWERD: Yeah.

15 So when -- I mean, when it comes to the
16 decision-making regarding the budget, that's,
17 typically, the assemblymembers and the Senate, so
18 that's why we are addressing you guys.

19 But, yeah, of course there's a lot of people
20 responsible for these types of decisions.

21 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you for coming in.

22 SENATOR METZGER: Wait, wait.

23 SENATOR JACKSON: I'm sorry.

24 SENATOR METZGER: One question.

25 So do you agree that the course-credit

1 requirement of the Excelsior Scholarship is a
2 barrier --

3 TAL SCHWERD: Yeah.

4 SENATOR METZGER: -- to many students taking
5 advantage of it?

6 And do you agree that it would help to reduce
7 the credit-load requirement to 24 credits a year?

8 TAL SCHWERD: Absolutely.

9 Also, there is -- there's clearly some,
10 like -- some miscommunication, because I hear two
11 different things, whether it be 24-credit
12 requirement, or, a 15-credit a semester, like,
13 30 credits a year.

14 Because a full-time student is 12 credits a
15 semester.

16 SENATOR JACKSON: 24 a year.

17 TAL SCHWERD: Like, 24 a year.

18 Okay.

19 SENATOR METZGER: It's currently 30.

20 TAL SCHWERD: Yeah.

21 So -- wait.

22 It's currently 30.

23 SENATOR METZGER: 15 a semester.

24 TAL SCHWERD: Yeah, that's what I thought.

25 So, yeah, that's more than a full-time

1 student.

2 And I can speak, even -- even by taking
3 15 credits without -- without working 30 hours a
4 week, is -- can sometimes feel impossible,
5 especially if you're trying to excel in your classes
6 and not just barely scrape by.

7 I think that the people that are struggling,
8 the most, typically, have to take less classes, they
9 have to work more hours. They sometimes have to
10 take the classes during the winter and the summer,
11 or wherever they can, just so that they can, you
12 know, graduate within four years.

13 And it doesn't seem like it's even anymore of
14 an expense to account for this. It's the same
15 number of resources, they're taking the same number
16 of classes, it's just in a different timeline.

17 SENATOR METZGER: Well, difference is, you'd
18 have more people able to participate (parties
19 cross-talking) --

20 TAL SCHWERD: Yeah, that's more accessible.

21 So besides for that, like, I -- it's just,
22 like, I don't see the downfall, I don't see who is
23 suffering, as a result of students being given more
24 time. They're still participating in the economy,
25 they still have jobs.

1 You know, it doesn't, like -- it's just --
2 it's backwards.

3 And, it can also, like, if a student can't
4 keep up with the 15-credit thing, or whatever it is,
5 like, it's a trap for them. It turns into a loan.

6 Like, it -- and, like, these 18-year-olds
7 have no idea what they're signing on to. You know?

8 It's dangerous.

9 It's obviously an amazing thing, but it needs
10 a lot of work, to -- and really needs to take into
11 account who -- who -- like, what are the problems
12 that the people that it's meant to serve are dealing
13 with?

14 And how is it actually -- how is actually --
15 can it actually be harmful to them, you know, like,
16 for whatever reason, they can't finish their
17 four-year degree, or whatever, you know?

18 So -- and it needs to account for working
19 students, which is most students.

20 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: I want to thank you
21 for being here and holding us accountable.

22 But I just want to just frame it, just for
23 one second, that the budget originates with the
24 Governor. The Governor has exclusive power on the
25 budget.

1 And usually we have these things called
2 "table targets," which say how much we can pay for
3 higher ed (pointing).

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: 55 million in April.

5 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: And so it would
6 be -- it's great to push us, and we want to be
7 pushed, and we want to do the right thing, but we
8 are -- we have an income-stream problem. We have a
9 2 percent cap the Governor has.

10 So if we can figure out other income sources
11 to fund higher education, or, if we can figure out
12 how to get beyond the 2 percent cap, or, if we can
13 overturn Silver v. Pataki.

14 All those things are really positive things,
15 but we really would need your support, and people's
16 support, to say, hey -- to the executive, Hey, you
17 need to do something about higher education.

18 And to really under -- everyone understand
19 where it comes from, and how we can mobilize to have
20 real funding for our higher education, because
21 I think people here are the choir who agree with
22 you.

23 TAL SCHWERD: Absolutely.

24 That is why I, like, specifically used the
25 term "liaison," because, obviously, like, I can call

1 Governor Cuomo several times a week, which I do,
2 but, there's only so much that, like, we can do.

3 Like, we clearly have a barrier, you guys
4 have less of a barrier, you know, like, when it
5 comes to communicating with people that really do,
6 you know, like, make -- like, you know, have control
7 over that -- those final decisions.

8 So that's why we are asking you.

9 We understand that powers are limited, and,
10 you know, it's difficult. You're working with a lot
11 of people.

12 But this is the reality that we're dealing
13 with.

14 And there is -- there is just myriad reasons
15 for -- for -- for the funding to increase.

16 And, like, also, like, just, like, the
17 structure of the funding, you know, like the -- just
18 the -- what is it called? -- the -- sort of the
19 rules that, like -- that come along with all these
20 financial-aid programs, and just to make it more
21 accessible for them, because it's, like, yes, great,
22 there's all this funding happening.

23 But, like -- and I understand why the
24 motivation is for -- for whatever it is, you know,
25 having all these requirements for 15 credits a

1 semester, et cetera, et cetera.

2 But, like, let's take into account the
3 reality of the people that are dealing with these
4 issues.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

6 And, incidentally, and Blair Horner will be
7 testifying Wednesday in Buffalo.

8 Thank you.

9 TAL SCHWERD: Okay.

10 [Applause.]

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: And we have our
12 friends from UUP, led by the president,
13 Professor Frederick Kowal.

14 We have Kelly Keck, Louis Reyes,
15 Cesar Barros, Kevin Saunders, Beth Wilson, and
16 Amanda Merritt.

17 SENATOR JACKSON: UUP! UUP!

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: An affiliate of the union
19 that I once, not only belonged to, but walked a
20 picket line, when UFT was on strike.

21 Fred, do you want to start?

22 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yes.

23 And, first off, thank you again,
24 Senator Stavisky, and to all the members of the
25 New York State Senate and Assembly, for having these

1 hearings, and for taking the time to travel upstate
2 to meet with us.

3 I'm going to give a brief statement to begin
4 things, but then I want to turn them over to my
5 colleagues, starting with Beth Wilson, who has a
6 class to go teach in 9 minutes.

7 So, yeah, we will be concise.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: (Inaudible.)

9 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yes.

10 A couple points that I wanted to make to
11 begin with, first is, just as a reminder, since the
12 Great Recession hit in 2008-2009, SUNY was the
13 agency that was cut the deepest, and has never been
14 recovered from that -- from those cuts, and, as
15 such, obviously, some real serious problems remain,
16 and you've heard about many of them.

17 Two comments on that.

18 One is, while tuition was going up, it's
19 important for legislators to know that members of
20 UUP went without raises for five out of the
21 seven years, that covered two different contracts.

22 Though we have gotten retro pay in this new
23 contract, that doesn't compensate for the lost
24 buying power of two years of no contract.

25 And then, of course, in the very draconian

1 contract of 2011-2016, we had three zeros.

2 And so it is a case where a very, very
3 important question to pose to the leadership of
4 SUNY, the trustees and the chancellor, is:

5 During the time when faculty and staff were
6 not getting raises, but tuition was going up, and
7 there was not any kind of indication of an increase
8 in the hiring of full-time faculty and staff, where
9 that money was going?

10 Was it invested in the university?

11 And, going forward, where is the return on
12 that?

13 Second, I listened with some interest to the
14 testimony of the provost -- the SUNY provost.

15 I am hopeful that we will not have to wait
16 until January or February to hear what the
17 chancellor's budget priorities are.

18 As was just indicated by Assemblyman Epstein,
19 by then, the horse has left the barn and the barn is
20 gone.

21 The Governor's budget will come out in just a
22 couple of short months.

23 And it is why we've been advocating over the
24 last few months for funding, through addressing of
25 the TAP gap, and, also, advocating for transparency

1 in the SUNY foundations.

2 I want to thank Chairperson Stavisky for
3 sponsoring the Senate version of that bill.

4 Senator Jackson, you've signed on as a
5 co-sponsor, we appreciate that.

6 The SUNY foundations have \$2.3 billion in
7 them. Those are the campus foundations. They have
8 no transparency, no oversight from the state
9 comptroller.

10 Those foundations were created to serve the
11 academic mission of SUNY.

12 There would seem to be a need in these times,
13 where funding has not been there, for those
14 foundations to, basically, be held accountable for
15 how they're using their funds.

16 Another major issue that has been brought
17 about by the understand funding of SUNY is the gross
18 exploitation of contingent faculty.

19 And our numbers in SUNY and our numbers in
20 our UUP union have continued to rise in terms of the
21 number and proportion of contingent and adjunct
22 faculty. It is now, fully, one-half of the faculty
23 that we have in the largest higher-ed union in the
24 country.

25 So it's part of a national trend, but it

1 points to a situation where SUNY is, basically,
2 dependent on exploiting those on starvation wages,
3 to teach more and more of the classes that students
4 who are paying more and more in terms of tuition to
5 take to graduate.

6 And, lastly, in terms of what I would like to
7 say, is the investment in SUNY is crucial because of
8 the incredibly important economic impact it can have
9 upstate, which is, you know, a deeply depressed area
10 in New York State.

11 If you just think about the TAP gap, that's
12 about 75 million this year.

13 SUNY's number is, that there's an 8-to-1
14 multiplier. That comes out to, \$600 million
15 injected into the upstate economy would be very
16 beneficial.

17 And as you know, I cannot testify at any time
18 without mentioning the SUNY hospitals, incredibly
19 vital, important -- vitally important healing
20 centers and research centers.

21 And don't forget, they're teaching hospitals,
22 the ones at downstate. Upstate it's Syracuse and
23 out at Stony Brook.

24 The reason I have to reiterate it again,
25 after speaking about it in Brooklyn, is that the

1 word from the -- from Washington is not good. That
2 it does not appear that a continuing resolution will
3 be on time. And that will endanger the DSH funding
4 for New York State and the SUNY hospitals, and the
5 hospitals across New York State.

6 So thank you very much once again for the
7 opportunity to testify.

8 And I would like to turn it over to my
9 colleague, starting with Beth.

10 BETH WILSON: Good afternoon.

11 First, I'm Beth Wilson. I'm the UUP chapter
12 president here. I'm also a lecturer in art history
13 on this campus.

14 I started here 13 years ago -- oh, no --
15 25 years ago. I spent 13 years as an adjunct, and
16 the last 11 years I've been a full-time lecturer on
17 this campus.

18 I want thank Senator Stavisky and members of
19 the Committee and Senator Metzger for inviting me to
20 speak here.

21 You've gotten my written remarks.

22 Basically, summarizing them:

23 Over a decade of kind of flat funding for
24 operating funding from the State has made an
25 indelible impact on this campus.

1 I've been here, like I said, 25 years. I've
2 seen, long term, what's been going on.

3 We've been pushed to the brink with increased
4 workloads on our academic and professional staff.
5 High levels of turnover, failed searches, because
6 they can't offer enough money for a lot of
7 positions. And a lot of low morale on campus.

8 Our people have absorbed the cuts in staffing
9 and resources as best they can, but we are at the
10 point where there's no more fat to cut. We're just
11 cutting straight to the bone.

12 I was a member of the negotiations team for
13 UUP, statewide, that got us this most recent
14 contract that was ratified last September.

15 And I -- you know, we made some modest -- we
16 have our modest 2 percent increases across the
17 board.

18 And I was quite dismayed to find that there
19 was no additional State funding to cover those
20 contractual increases.

21 And I can tell you I shared this with our
22 administration, because we've had discussions, and,
23 I mean, they're not responsible for it, and we're
24 not responsible for it. It's, like, why -- where's
25 the money?

1 And, of course, because we came in a couple
2 of years after the expiration of our previous
3 contract, there were -- there was retro money for
4 the 2 percent for the years that had already passed.

5 And that has been covered by this thing that
6 our VP for finance and administration tells us is
7 called a "magic window," by shifting the funding,
8 because there's a difference between the state
9 fiscal year and the SUNY fiscal year, so they
10 shifted when the payments were made to cover that.

11 On our campus, I think it was \$2 million
12 worth of retro.

13 And the only way that that's going to
14 continue is if the Legislature continues to shift
15 the money in that fashion in perpetuity.

16 That's a sort of Damocles that I don't feel
17 very comfortable having hanging over our head.

18 As I pointed out in my written testimony, and
19 you've heard from several other people already, we
20 have a very high cost of living in this area.

21 It's compounded by the fact that there are
22 other places certainly in the state that have high
23 costs of living, on Long Island or in New York metro
24 area. They are covered by a regional differential
25 pay that's added on.

1 And Ulster County, where we are now, is not
2 included in a regional differential, even though the
3 county directly to our south, Orange, and the county
4 right across the river, Dutchess, both get the
5 regional differential pay.

6 But because we are located in Ulster County,
7 we don't get that, even though we have really high
8 cost of living. The rents, the -- you know, just
9 finding housing, is driving people, as we've heard,
10 further and further out of the community to find
11 places to live that are a little bit cheaper.

12 And, you know, my people have been -- when we
13 went into negotiations, I was hearing from my
14 members, people screaming, "Can we get the regional
15 differential?" because it would make a world of
16 difference.

17 I can say, to President Christian's credit,
18 for a number of years, he really tried to focus
19 resources on hiring full-time tenure-track faculty
20 as much as he could.

21 A couple -- I think last year's State of the
22 College, he finally kind of surrendered and said,
23 Okay, we can't afford to do this anymore.

24 That's the ideal situation, we would love to
25 have more full-time, fully-supported, tenure-track

1 faculty, but, he's unable to do it with the
2 resources and the funding that's available, even
3 with all the student-tuition increases.

4 Okay?

5 So, he backed -- he has backed off of that.

6 Now, we're told that, you know, funding for
7 SUNY increases every year. And, again, that's
8 funding, primarily, for the -- to pay the fringe
9 benefits, the IFR on our salaries, which is not on
10 the campus books anyway. And, also, funding the
11 debt funding for capital improvements.

12 Right?

13 None of that goes to our operating budget.

14 So our operating budgets coming from the
15 State have been, basically, flat for the better part
16 of 10 years.

17 And when you factor inflation into that, it
18 makes it less and less and less each year. Right?

19 These so-called "rational tuition increases"
20 that were made over the years, these have impacted
21 our students incredibly negatively.

22 The students that I work with are under
23 increasing stress, increasing pressure. More and
24 more of them are working multiple part-time jobs,
25 often totaling 40 hours, you know, in addition to

1 being a full-time student.

2 This is not conducive to a full experience of
3 the educational environment that we're trying to
4 provide.

5 I mean, my -- you know, the workforce, you
6 know, the professors, the professional staff, are
7 stressed out. The students are stressed out.

8 We are under tremendous pressures
9 financially.

10 And having restored funding for SUNY, and,
11 again, as Fred just pointed out, after the financial
12 crisis, the whole system took a major reduction,
13 which has never been replaced.

14 Although, I happen to notice that Wall Street
15 seems to have rebounded since then. I'm not sure
16 where that money went.

17 Anyway, my main point, though, is, public
18 higher education is a public good, and it deserves
19 to be funded by the public. We have -- it's only
20 right that we get that support.

21 The current funding situation at New Paltz is
22 not sustainable.

23 I know our administration, my members, and
24 all the students at New Paltz would be incredibly
25 relieved, and grateful, to see a significant

1 restoration of levels of State funding once enjoyed
2 by the campuses in our SUNY system.

3 It's the right thing to do for all
4 New Yorkers.

5 Thank you.

6 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yeah -- no, first, yeah,
7 Kelly, go ahead.

8 KELLY KECK: Yeah, hello.

9 Can you hear me here?

10 So my name is Kelly Keck, and I am the
11 chapter president of UUP at SUNY Delhi. And my day
12 job is the manager of educational technology and
13 instruction.

14 So, a lot of folks have already, quite well,
15 sort of explained a lot of areas, aspects, of the
16 funding enrollment and issues that we're a facing,
17 so I'm sort of looking at it from a technical
18 college perspective, and a rural technical college
19 perspective.

20 So, in Delaware County, we do not have a
21 community college. We have SUNY Delhi. We have
22 BOCES. We have our high schools -- and our
23 K through 12s, I should say.

24 So, if SUNY Delhi were not -- were to go
25 away, we would see a significant downturn in the

1 economic vitality of our county, most definitely.

2 One of the things I would like to also point
3 out, when we're discussing, pretty much, just about
4 every assistance program that we may have; for
5 example, TAP, Excelsior, EOP, each of them have
6 gaps.

7 And when you're talking from the smaller
8 colleges' perspective, every gap is going to be
9 multiplied, or compounded, for us because every
10 dollar is more important for us.

11 Every one student is a higher importance for
12 us because we only have so many students.

13 So, when we're looking at the TAP gap, for
14 example, technical colleges accept a higher
15 proportion of recipients. So not only are we
16 getting the higher portion of students to our
17 college, but we're also experiencing, and we're
18 having to eat, the difference for each of them. And
19 then each dollar that we're eating is a bigger
20 dollar for us than, perhaps, at a larger institution
21 like Binghamton or Albany.

22 But beyond that, when we're talking about a
23 funding issue, it's hard to talk about funding
24 issues and not really address, or at least bring up,
25 the enrollment issues that we're all facing.

1 So when we're talking about enrollment for
2 technical colleges, and SUNY Delhi, for example, we
3 have some identified programs that are definitely
4 under-enrolled. And creative thinking should be
5 utilized to help revitalize those programs.

6 But, several years ago, we had a program, and
7 it went through a sort of metamorphosis, and now
8 it's called "mechatronics." And now we have an
9 extremely successful program at SUNY Delhi that we
10 can't even expand, because we can't afford the lab
11 expansion, we can't afford to expand our automotive
12 labs.

13 So when we're dealing with trade colleges, we
14 have higher expenses with regards to our programs.

15 Our equipment for mechatronics is fairly
16 expensive.

17 So if we don't have the space, we don't have
18 the equipment, and we don't have the faculty and
19 staff, but we have the numbers, and we could
20 actually expand it, how can we meet our enrollment
21 goals, overall, down the road?

22 So, in addition to looking at the cost for
23 equipment for expensive programs, we should also
24 think about, as we were talking about earlier, the
25 economic driver of SUNYs in their communities.

1 And I just mentioned earlier that, again,
2 SUNY Delhi, I'm not sure if this is -- I'm not sure
3 how this example is going to land, but, SUNY Delhi
4 offers the best jobs in our county.

5 But if you go one county over, we're one of
6 the lowest-paid SUNYs in the -- in the -- in the
7 system.

8 So we're aware of region, we're aware of the
9 rest of the state, but, I know for a fact that,
10 should SUNY Delhi not be there, we would suffer an
11 increase -- a huge economic issue in the county, and
12 also in the neighboring ones.

13 Also, I would like to point out that, mental
14 health, we were -- I was listening to earlier
15 testimony, and people brought up mental-health
16 issues.

17 At SUNY Delhi, just this semester, we had a
18 suicide.

19 We saw, already, our short-staffed
20 mental-health center already spiking with their
21 services that they provide.

22 But then during a moment of crisis, they go
23 from working 60 hours, to 100 hours, a week in order
24 to deal with the crisis appropriately.

25 So, at SUNY Delhi, and I'm sure at multiple

1 of the other technical colleges out in rural
2 Upstate New York, we're facing similar situations.

3 We, basically, would like to see the fund --
4 see funding, as we were just talking about, at least
5 brought up to what historically has been, while also
6 not putting the financial burden back onto the
7 student.

8 As the manager of educational technology and
9 instruction, I'm very aware of our new online
10 initiative that's coming out through the
11 chancellor's office.

12 I just would like to caution everyone, as a
13 person who works in that field, just because I have
14 a hammer doesn't mean I see nails all over the
15 place.

16 So, online education is a tool that can be
17 properly utilized.

18 If it's not, then it's probably not going to
19 be the right tool to be used in the situations.

20 So it's about being thoughtful, and thorough,
21 in the proposal, and not just trying to throw
22 spaghetti at the wall and seeing what sticks.

23 So --

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

25 KELLY KECK: -- any way, thank you very much.

1 LOUIS REYES: My name is Louis A. Reyes, Jr.
2 I am proud to serve as a director of the Educational
3 Opportunity Program at SUNY Delhi.

4 I want thank those before me for taking time
5 out today to listen to our testimonies.

6 For the sake of time, I won't read my
7 already-provided written testimony. I'll just
8 highlight key points.

9 The Educational Opportunity Program for me
10 has been a lifeline.

11 I was not only a student -- an EOP student at
12 the University at Albany, and once EOP always EOP,
13 I was also served, for over a decade, as a
14 counselor -- an EOP counselor at SUNY Delhi. And,
15 more recently, in the last few years, been promoted
16 to director.

17 The program provided me, first-generation
18 college applicant from uptown Manhattan in
19 Wood section, Washington Heights, Dyckman Street, to
20 attend the University at Albany, but it also
21 provided modest financial support, and allowed me
22 the ability to attend this institution that,
23 otherwise, I would not have normally been admitted
24 to.

25 And I'm so thankful for that opportunity, and

1 thankful for the services that were provided to me,
2 in addition to just the opportunity of getting me in
3 the door, but graduating me, and growing me, and
4 things of that nature.

5 So back when I went to the University at
6 Albany as an EOP student, back in 1997, when
7 I started my undergraduate career, you know, I had
8 to take out loans, and things of that nature.

9 And now I'm speaking to you of the lens, I'm
10 worried about my other children/my EOP students who
11 are also taking out loans at a much higher level
12 than I even had to. And I'm still paying back my
13 student loans.

14 But I do sell that it is an investment, and
15 they are investing in their future.

16 And despite me paying back student loans,
17 I often jest with them. Obviously, I'm eating well.

18 I'm only -- not only a first-generation
19 college graduate, but also a first-generation
20 homeowner -- all right? -- I had the opportunity.

21 And, I'm thankful for being, also, a husband,
22 a father of three children, who I look forward to
23 seeing where their academic careers take them.

24 But for our current students, the type of cut
25 we've been receiving has led to necessity --

1 necessities occurring.

2 For example, EOP programs throughout our
3 state have -- their total funded enrollment has been
4 cut. Okay?

5 I know at SUNY Delhi, we were cut from
6 172 students, to 150 students. That really worries
7 me about access, it really frightens me about
8 access.

9 But, also, it was something that had to be
10 done out of necessity because our funding has been
11 flat for some substantial time.

12 And, you know, those incoming freshmen who,
13 after they get through the grueling financial-aid
14 process, have to be then hit with, potentially,
15 getting parent-plus loans, and increasing their
16 unsubsidized loan.

17 So a fully-packaged EOP student tends to be
18 packaged with \$5500 as soon as they step foot on
19 campus, with the probability that they have to raise
20 their own subsidized loan as well.

21 You know, it's quite disheartening when you
22 think about the success of our program. And that
23 has been dynamically been displayed throughout these
24 testimonies.

25 With increased funding, you know, we can

1 really support things such as, our peer-mentoring
2 programs, tutoring, intentional workshops,
3 mental-health counseling, et cetera, to help better
4 support our students who are our New York State
5 residents, interns, you know, they're coming to be
6 doctors, lawyers, tax-paying citizens. Even EOP
7 directors they become.

8 Right?

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: (Inaudible.)

10 LOUIS REYES: I'm sorry?

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: And senators.

12 LOUIS REYES: And senators, yes.

13 So we have a great amount of success.

14 But, with the Educational Opportunity
15 Program, unless we come back to a time where funding
16 is not flat no longer, and we can better support and
17 reduce that -- those gaps that our students do see,
18 so despite a fully-packaged EOP student having as
19 much TAP and Pell, and \$5500 student loans, there
20 still is, what I wrote in my testimony, a \$3500 gap.

21 But, indeed, when I talked to opportunity
22 programs last week, that's up to over \$4,000.

23 And this is disheartening for our
24 already-marginalized population of students.

25 So, again, I thank you for being great

1 listeners, and great supporters of our programs.

2 And if there's anything we can do, as far as
3 Educational Opportunity Program or myself, to help
4 with your endeavors, please feel free to let us
5 know.

6 Thank you so much.

7 CESAR BARROS: Okay. Can you hear me?

8 Yeah.

9 So English is not my first language, so for
10 the sake of time, I'm going to read.

11 So thank you for hearing us.

12 So my name is Cesar. I'm currently associate
13 professor here at New Paltz, and I started working
14 here as an assistant professor in 2012.

15 I'm an immigrant. I came to this country
16 15 years ago from Chili, where I was extremely lucky
17 to be able to go to college. I was lucky and
18 privileged to study there because, in Chile, going
19 to college, even at the public university, is an
20 expensive privilege.

21 In my country, studying can be an economic
22 burden that haunts you for life, and too expensive a
23 service for many of my neighbors and friends to even
24 consider the possibility of pursuing a degree.

25 I never imagined that students would face

1 something similar here in the United States.

2 A mixture of too much TV and remnants of
3 colonial mentality made me naive enough to think
4 that higher education would be a right in the
5 richest country in the planet, not a paid privilege,
6 not an economic burden.

7 As you are well aware, I was wrong.

8 Everything I'm now, for better and for worse,
9 is because of the opportunities open to me by
10 attending college. And it's because of that that
11 I know going to college should be a right for every
12 individual who wants to do it, especially in
13 New York State that prides itself on being an engine
14 of change and democracy.

15 I'm extremely proud of being a professor at
16 the State University of New York because of its
17 democratic promise, because its main purpose is to
18 give every person who lives in this territory the
19 opportunity to develop their critical minds, and to
20 learn about their place and the place of their
21 community in the world.

22 I can attest that, here at SUNY New Paltz,
23 full- and part-time faculty professionals and all
24 (indiscernible) workers, in spite of all the
25 challenges that come -- that have come from the

1 State divestment in our university, are deeply
2 committed to our students, and to making their
3 experience here a truly life-changing event.

4 I'm so proud to say --

5 I'm going to skip that.

6 -- but I'm proud of everything here.

7 I'm here to give testimony, and I think the
8 best way of doing that is telling you a little bit
9 about what it means to be a professor here at
10 SUNY New Paltz.

11 I teach (indiscernible) classes each academic
12 year.

13 Teaching means designing syllabi that can
14 engage every student in the classroom, a classroom
15 that, because of the lack of funding from our state
16 government, has been steadily growing in numbers
17 with all the pedagogical problems this entails.

18 Teaching means updating syllabi to make them
19 current with the discussion in whatever subject I'm
20 addressing.

21 It means preparing each class with care,
22 trying to foresee discussions, problems, and
23 pedagogical potentials.

24 It means grading, and reading assignments,
25 and more important, giving meaningful feedback to

1 each one of my students, who can be 90 or more in a
2 semester.

3 Teaching means conversations with my students
4 outside of the classroom.

5 Teaching means staying current with the
6 latest trends.

7 In my field, teaching also means advising.

8 And I advise more than 40 students, besides
9 my class students, each semester.

10 Many of my advisees are students of color and
11 immigrants who need my -- who need me to help them
12 navigating a complicated and challenging system, a
13 system that I myself am still learning how to
14 navigate.

15 Being a teacher means organizing and
16 participating in events around migration, race,
17 gender, Spanish-language cultural problems; inviting
18 scholars, artists, organizing film projections,
19 conferences, and art exhibits.

20 Without these events, New Paltz wouldn't be
21 the great place it is.

22 To organize all this, I -- I rely on the
23 generosity of my colleagues in our departments who
24 can chip \$50 or \$80 from their departments'
25 ever-shrinking allocations.

1 And I also do research, of course, et cetera.

2 So, I love to do all of this. I generally
3 love it.

4 Sadly, my colleagues and I have to do this
5 important and challenging work with fewer and fewer
6 resources, with, in the case of full-time
7 colleagues, a salary that is, on average, 25 percent
8 or 30 percent less than average salary for college
9 in four-year public institutions.

10 And in the case of our many part-time
11 colleagues, a shameful \$3,000 per course a semester.

12 We working in environment in which these same
13 part-time colleagues don't know if they will have a
14 job the upcoming semester, in which students are
15 worried about the debt they are accruing, on a
16 (indiscernible) with a fiscal deficit, and with all
17 the austerity measures they have decided to
18 implement to face it.

19 Since I started working here, every year has
20 been more challenging.

21 And this is the most important thing: We
22 have always been in a deficit, in a budgetary
23 crisis, since I got here.

24 That means the administration can be
25 supported, but there will always be the specter of

1 austerity.

2 My strategy, once I understood this trend,
3 was, and still is, to do as much as I can during the
4 current academic year, because I know the next year
5 there will be less resources, more work, and on an
6 unchanged salary.

7 All of this means that we are asked to do
8 more for the same compensation, because our campus
9 gets its budget, in big part, from tuition, and not
10 directly from the State, our student body has grown
11 without the necessary growth in faculty.

12 This is a trend, and it is making our job
13 more difficult.

14 Tuition has also risen, with all the problems
15 this entails, et cetera.

16 So, I've heard too many times this phrase
17 here, and I've heard it, really, I've heard it, "We
18 want cost-free solutions."

19 They ask faculty and staff to come up with
20 cost-free solutions.

21 Cost-free solutions, in our contemporary
22 world, is what in other context we call "magic."

23 Making a rabbit appear from a hat out of
24 nothing is cost-free. But in a world, even
25 magicians need to buy the rabbit.

1 There are no cost-free solutions, only, more
2 or less, visible cuts to this or that program, this
3 or that position, this or that infrastructure; only
4 more hiring of part-time colleagues with shamefully
5 low wages.

6 The deficit gets (indiscernible) by our work,
7 work that becomes invisible, more (indiscernible),
8 more service, same compensation, same culture
9 identify with an employer, the State, that seems to
10 have forgotten us.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: Can you sum up?

12 CESAR BARROS: It is hard to maintain one's
13 self in those conditions.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: The clock is ticking.

15 CESAR BARROS: I know.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Or it's finished ticking.

17 CESAR BARROS: But this is important
18 information.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

20 CESAR BARROS: Yes.

21 So, I wanted to say that, I have colleagues
22 in part-time, and full-time, that have second jobs.

23 I have doctoral-degree colleagues that have
24 to work promoting products over the weekend, because
25 they cannot make ends meet.

1 That's one important thing that I wanted to
2 say.

3 And I wanted to say that, we are -- we are
4 feeling the crisis every -- every day, working here.
5 And we really deeply care for our students.

6 We are super-tired, and they are asking us to
7 keep working more, because they have nothing else to
8 ask -- ask for, because they don't have money. And
9 we don't have money.

10 And I think -- I think I can speak for
11 everyone, that the tiredness is really affecting
12 everyone.

13 And our students are the ones that are more
14 affected by this.

15 Thank you.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

17 Can you adhere to the -- thanks.

18 AMANDA MERRITT: In fact, I think we could
19 walk you to your cars, and I could give my testimony
20 on the way.

21 My name is Amanda Merritt, and I'm a
22 professional faculty member. I've been here for
23 28 years.

24 There are several things professional faculty
25 could be doing if we had enough of them.

1 As we have developed, you know, our wonderful
2 engineering and STEM programs, these are
3 labor-intensive.

4 Labs have to be set up.

5 Machinery has to work.

6 We've added a science building and an
7 engineering hub.

8 Have we increased the number of technicians?

9 No.

10 Our technician, one, now runs from one
11 building to another, frantically setting up for
12 increased numbers of students for two very
13 successful programs.

14 We've run into the same problem in fine arts.

15 There are situations in which there's a
16 safety issue. A wood shop, a ceramics lab, you need
17 a professional faculty member to set up for the
18 students.

19 We don't have a full-time person in one of
20 those. We are still -- we have been arguing for
21 three years to get full-time people.

22 We have a short -- a problem on this campus.

23 I would like to think it's almost our only
24 weak spot: academic advising.

25 Will you please tell me why an academic

1 faculty member, an untenured professor, under
2 pressure to publish, new at teaching, probably
3 paying off student loans, has 55 advisees?

4 The point about advising is not just, here's
5 what you take next. It's a time in which that
6 student is seen and acknowledged.

7 That advisor might be the first to know that
8 the student is sleeping in her car.

9 But with 55, it's really hard to ferret out
10 this valuable information that could lead to some
11 help for mental health, some food, maybe some extra
12 money somewhere.

13 We -- within the last week or so, we have had
14 another student suicide.

15 Did anyone see this student?

16 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

17 AMANDA MERRITT: Can you -- I guess you'll --

18 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: Last week -- you said,
19 last week --

20 AMANDA MERRITT: I think it was last week
21 (microphone turned off) -- (inaudible) --

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: Why don't you slide your
23 chair over so that you can talk into (inaudible).

24 AMANDA MERRITT: I guess this is an
25 opportunity to point out, that much of the

1 technology we work with changes every week, it
2 seems.

3 We are constantly training ourselves to keep
4 up with whatever computer services has cooked up for
5 us, such as microphones.

6 We can take time off to be trained and
7 neglect our students, or we can do the best we can
8 while attending to our students.

9 A professional conference is a hardship if
10 we're leaving students stranded.

11 In my particular job I have a lot of student
12 contact.

13 What I would -- to return to academic
14 advising, rather than an academic faculty member
15 having 55, in some departments we have a full-time
16 professional faculty advisor.

17 We need battalions of those people. We need
18 to pay them so that they can afford to live here.

19 But first of all, we need permission to hire
20 them.

21 We have accessibility issues.

22 All our faculties, all their materials for
23 classes, have to be accessible.

24 This is another project for our academic
25 faculty to do in their spare time.

1 In the school of education where I've worked,
2 all they can do is hire an hourly employee to -- we
3 don't have a line to hire her permanently, to come
4 in, work by the hour, to help the faculty get their
5 course materials accessible.

6 We do not have enough lines for professional
7 faculty.

8 Our computer technicians service
9 300 computers and their users, each.

10 Industry standard is around 200.

11 Our folks in computer services might not get
12 to your urgent problem today.

13 I'm trying to -- what would -- tell you what,
14 let me stop, and ask me what you think is most
15 important, what do you want to hear from?

16 I can see your -- I can you're (motioning
17 with hands.)

18 I appreciate the "Red for Ed" behind the
19 counter, but I know I'm last, and I know you all
20 have places to do.

21 I can tell you, I can echo Cesar, though,
22 we're swamped.

23 The one person we have in the school of
24 education who collects the incredible amount of data
25 we need for Middle States and for Title II shouldn't

1 have to work till midnight. He really shouldn't.
2 He should have someone maybe helping him.

3 But we don't have the money, we don't have
4 the support.

5 And I do want to emphasize that we cannot
6 increase our funding on the backs of our students.

7 Our students have day-care costs. They have
8 two jobs. They don't have good places to live.

9 This is, by the way, also true for some of
10 our academic faculty members and new professional
11 faculty.

12 So, we need funding, we need more, we need it
13 now.

14 We could go back to 2008, that would be nice.

15 But we cannot have tuition increases. That's
16 inconscionable [sic].

17 Thank you.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

19 Incidentally, we have copies of your
20 testimony, and it will be available online within a
21 day or so.

22 AMANDA MERRITT: Thank you.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: That's the (inaudible).

24 Any questions?

25 SENATOR METZGER: I just -- I really

1 appreciate hearing all the details of, really, the
2 specifics of how the shortage of resources affects
3 your daily lives as faculty, as well as the
4 students.

5 It's very helpful for us when we are making
6 our case during budget.

7 So, I really appreciate it.

8 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: I just have some
9 quick questions on numbers.

10 I know that community colleges are
11 increasingly relying on adjunct professors.

12 What is the average pay for an adjunct
13 professor for a course?

14 BETH WILSON: I can answer that as far as
15 New Paltz is concerned.

16 We are currently paying about \$3300 for a
17 3-credit course, which I will point out, having been
18 on the negotiations team, I know we are near the top
19 of the SUNY system at that rate.

20 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: And what's the
21 average pay for a full-time professor at a (parties
22 cross-talking) --

23 BETH WILSON: Well, I can tell you, the
24 starting salary for a tenure-track, full-time
25 assistant-professor hire, is in, most disciplines,

1 fifty-five or fifty-six hundred dollars -- not
2 fifty -- fifty-five, fifty-six thousand dollars.

3 Sorry.

4 And this is for people who are walking in,
5 usually -- you have to have a Ph.D. to get one of
6 these jobs. And they're walking in with \$100,000 or
7 more into student debt, into a job that pays
8 \$55,000.

9 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: And then once you
10 become tenured, what is your salary?

11 BETH WILSON: Okay, so our median salaries
12 that I crunched from just this campus's information
13 that I have, is -- are -- once you get tenure after
14 7 years, those people in the associate-professor
15 ranks are making just under \$70,000 a year.

16 SENATOR JACKSON: Seven years?

17 You said, after seven years?

18 BETH WILSON: Yeah, well, you get tenure
19 after seven years.

20 There are people in that group that have been
21 here much longer than that, who are in that
22 associate-professor rank with tenure.

23 And then the next rank up is the
24 full-professor level.

25 Full professors on our campus, the median

1 salary is around \$80,000.

2 LOUIS REYES: I'm sorry.

3 I just became associate professor one year
4 ago. I got a raise of \$2,000 on my annual salary
5 for getting tenure. And I'm making sixty -- after
6 the raises, I'm making 60,000, if you want to know.

7 BETH WILSON: Right, that's a newly-tenured
8 person.

9 That "\$70,000" number includes people who
10 have been in that rank for quite a long -- some
11 time.

12 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: So most of you --

13 KELLY KECK: And I would SUNY, Delhi, you can
14 subtract five to ten thousand for Delhi.

15 SENATOR METZGER: For Delhi?

16 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: So most of you
17 would be making more if you taught in a public
18 school system?

19 BETH WILSON: Oh, yes.

20 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: Yes.

21 BETH WILSON: Absolutely.

22 We have people in our school of education who
23 tell me regularly, that the students that they are
24 just graduating will walk into brand-new jobs in a
25 K-12 district someplace and make significantly more

1 than the professors who trained them here.

2 AMANDA MERRITT: Yeah, that's true.

3 LOUIS REYES: And if I may add, if you have
4 faculty that are badly paid like that, and, also,
5 you add the fact that adjunct part-time labor is so
6 much cheaper, you have all the incentive to hire
7 more and more and more very low-paid part-time
8 faculty who have to teach more than five or
9 six classes to just get by every month.

10 BETH WILSON: And one thing I would like to
11 mention, if I could, at New Paltz we have this
12 invention of the full -- well, the full-time
13 lecturer line exists in the board of trustees'
14 policies.

15 I am one of these people.

16 New Paltz is sort of an outlier in the SUNY
17 system, having, a few years ago, decided that their
18 lecturers should be teaching 30 credits per year.
19 That's five courses a semester.

20 I myself, when I have taught five courses,
21 and my classes are all full, have had between
22 160 and 170 students that I personally was
23 responsible for, with no, you know, teaching
24 assistants. I have to do all the grading, all the
25 class prep, you know, all the exam grade -- papers.

1 And it cuts down on the number of papers you
2 can ask for people to write, because there's only so
3 many that you can read and give meaningful feedback
4 to.

5 You (indiscernible) understand why some
6 courses wind up with multiple-choice exams instead
7 of more broadly-based essay exams, it's because of
8 this kind of demand.

9 We have lecturers in our languages,
10 literatures, and cultures department, who I know,
11 and they have -- they've been doing this here,
12 they've replacing, if somebody retires who was a
13 full-time professor, they'll replace them with a
14 lecturer, because they can get more courses out of
15 them. They also have to often supervise the program
16 area for the language that they teach, for which
17 they give them one course release. So that's like a
18 four or five load over the year.

19 But that doing the -- the -- the, you know,
20 area-director job is pretty significant, and it's
21 way more than one coursework -- course's worth of
22 work. And some of these people are being asked to
23 teach four different preps with five courses in a
24 semester.

25 That's a huge amount of work.

1 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yeah, I would -- and
2 I think Kelly has alluded to this, at the tech
3 campuses, and my home campus is Cobleskill, what
4 Beth just described is the typical workload for a
5 full professor.

6 That was my teaching load -- full-time
7 teaching load, five courses per semester, about
8 170 to 180 students. And, also, the salaries tend
9 to be much lower.

10 Having said that, one of the primary impacts
11 is the retention of faculty and staff, especially if
12 we're trying to diversify the faculty and staff,
13 which SUNY claims to have as a priority.

14 It is extremely difficult to do if you're
15 recruiting top-level scholars, who come from
16 African-American and Latinx communities, and then
17 retain them at the campuses when they're paying so
18 low a salary.

19 And, also, the fact that, in some of the --
20 you know, campuses are located in upstate
21 communities, where the -- the -- how could I put
22 it? -- the cultural divide is pretty extreme, and
23 that makes it even more difficult.

24 But at least, if the salaries were
25 competitive, the retention problem could be solved.

1 BETH WILSON: And if I could add, these
2 full-time lecturers I just described, the normal
3 starting salary for them at New Paltz is \$45,000 a
4 year.

5 KELLY KECK: I would like to just make a
6 comment to the diversity.

7 We just recently at SUNY Delhi had
8 a Filipino-American woman working in our
9 IT department, who went to Oneonta and immediately
10 got a \$15,000 raise.

11 And then we have a White American male in our
12 nursing program, he just went across the river in
13 Delhi at the hospital, and got a \$20,000 raise.

14 So we see here, if we're looking -- and
15 this -- and those were two opposite ends of the
16 diversity, in different areas. But I would have
17 thought that they would have liked to have fought
18 for those people a littler harder.

19 SENATOR JACKSON: But it appears as, though,
20 obviously, when people look at their individual
21 circumstances, and people have bills --

22 KELLY KECK: Yeah, you got to go, you got to
23 go.

24 SENATOR JACKSON: -- mortgage, rent, you
25 know, college bills, and so when an offer across the

1 river is \$20,000, really, you don't have a choice.

2 If you're talking about survival, and
3 economic survival, you don't have a choice.

4 One of you mentioned in the beginning of your
5 testimony that, at a certain period of time, your
6 contract had zero, zero, zero.

7 Did -- do you -- your current contract, when
8 does that expire?

9 And --

10 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: 2022 is when it expires.

11 SENATOR JACKSON: And does that have
12 increases of --

13 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yes, annual increases.
14 And, plus, there's funding in other areas.

15 We did -- were able to get a minimum
16 established for adjunct pay, and still far below
17 where it needs to be.

18 But for the first time, we did get those
19 minimum.

20 And -- yeah, so it -- and it will expire in
21 2022.

22 SENATOR JACKSON: Does it -- when I was
23 listening to the testimony as to adjunct, someone as
24 an assistant professor coming in, the average
25 salary, and then the average salary of a tenured

1 professor, \$70,000, and a full-time professor,
2 average, is \$80,000, and I'm saying --

3 BETH WILSON: Those are median numbers.

4 SENATOR JACKSON: Say that again?

5 BETH WILSON: Median, not average. But --
6 you know.

7 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay.

8 -- well -- and I'm saying to myself, state
9 employees that work for us, they have to pay into
10 their pension, and health insurance is so expensive,
11 and all of the other things that, basically, take
12 away from your take-home pay.

13 Is this -- and as you indicated, some people
14 are working, you know, late at night, or taking
15 their work home and falling asleep, because they're
16 so tired.

17 BETH WILSON: Well, and as Cesar mentioned,
18 and I know -- I personally know a number of examples
19 of people who are assistant professors, full-time
20 employees, who find the need to have second jobs on
21 the weekend just to make ends meet.

22 I have seen marriages in danger, people going
23 through divorces, because of the financial stress.

24 I have, as chapter president, had members
25 come in to talk to me in the department, because

1 their health was being endangered by the stress, and
2 asking me, what would be the repercussions if they
3 quit after the fall semester, and didn't continue
4 and finish the full year?

5 SENATOR JACKSON: Well, I think it's
6 imperative that we all work together to try to
7 improve the outcomes.

8 But, from a political point of view, we know
9 what we have to do.

10 Whether or not we, collectively, or have the
11 will, to get it done.

12 As you know, there is a property tax cap,
13 permanent, of 2 percent, which many people are very
14 happy to hear that because they own property, and
15 they can't afford higher increases in property tax.

16 And there's a spending cap of 2 percent.

17 So, we have to find a way to make sure that
18 our priorities are met.

19 And so I ask all of you to be understanding
20 of that, and work within your organizations and
21 structures, so that that would happen, that we,
22 collectively, can make that happen.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

24 A number of my colleagues have to leave, so
25 let's try to wrap it up.

1 SENATOR JACKSON: It's finished.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Finished. Okay.

3 Thank you.

4 Thank you all.

5 Class is dismissed.

6 SENATOR METZGER: Thank you all for coming.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you all for coming.

8 We understand.

9 SENATOR METZGER: And from all the way from
10 Delhi, especially.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: I came from Queens.

12 SENATOR METZGER: I know.

13 Well, thank Toby.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay, last, we have --

15 SENATOR METZGER: No, no, no.

16 We're not going to (inaudible).

17 I have to go.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Can you summarize?

19 SENATOR METZGER: You're an assemblymember.

20 You don't have to give testimony.

21 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: Okay, so I don't
22 have to.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Well, we have the written
24 testimony. Can you do it in a minute, or two?

25 Okay.

1 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: I'm just going to
2 summarize because (inaudible) --

3 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Go ahead, try it
4 now.

5 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: All right.
6 I'm just going to summarize:

7 I have a bill, which I mentioned before, this
8 is A7486, which Senator Metzger's carrying a bill in
9 the Senate, S58A21 [sic].

10 And this would expand the Excelsior
11 problem -- Excelsior problem, of course -- the
12 Excelsior Scholarship to part-time students, to
13 those taking vocational classes at community college
14 and CUNY, and also at BOCES.

15 The biggest problem I see, is when people are
16 told they have to go back to work once they're
17 working in the workforce, and they're not going to
18 be able to quit their jobs and go full-time.

19 This bill would also alleviate the problem of
20 declining enrollments at our state colleges.

21 I also have a second bill, which would
22 require all students, this is A8566, which requires
23 all students or their parents to file their Free
24 Application for Federal Student Aid, that's "FAFSA,"
25 which is required for -- now for all scholarships.

1 And this was found -- in Louisiana, that
2 Louisiana started this, and they found that, at one
3 point, they -- once they required it, it went from
4 44 percent, to 79 percent, of those filling it out.
5 And it increased, tremendously, the people attending
6 college.

7 So, I'm just going to sum it up, and thank
8 you for having this hearing, and having it in the
9 Hudson Valley.

10 And, that's all I'm going to say.

11 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: Thank you.

12 ASSEMBLYMEMBER JACOBSON: I don't want to --
13 I know when I've lost the audience.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: And we thank you all for
15 coming.

16 It is now 4:10, and the hearing is adjourned.

17
18 (Whereupon, the public hearing held before
19 the New York State Senate Standing Committee on
20 Higher Education concluded at 4:10 p.m., and
21 adjourned.)

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