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TESTIMONY OF THE ASSOCIATION OF PRIVATE COLLEGES

**FOR THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING
ON THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL FOR
SFY 2023 – 2024
February 27, 2023**

Testimony Provided by the Association of Private Colleges (APC)

Assemblywoman Fahy, Senator Stavisky, Assemblywoman Weinstein, Senator Krueger and members of the Legislature, thank you for giving the Association of Private Colleges (APC) the opportunity to present testimony regarding this year's budget.

Introduction – A New Name for APC

I'd like to take this opportunity to announce that APC has changed its name from the Association of Proprietary Colleges to the Association of Private Colleges. Our new name reflects the changing nature of higher education, the proprietary sector and better reflects the 11 privately held, primarily family-founded institutions that are members of APC.

The average APC member college has been in existence for more than 90 years, and more than half of our members were founded over 100 years ago. These institutions have a long history of producing strong outcomes for students of diverse and often under-represented backgrounds. APC member institutions are also deeply-rooted in their local communities and have strong ties to the businesses and industries they partner with, making them important economic drivers, focused on educating and training people to fill the workforce pipeline in New York State. More than 80 percent of APC students come from New York State and stay in the state after graduation, contributing significantly to the economy particularly in high-demand fields like healthcare, education and business.

Founded in 1978, APC has a long history of working with state and federal decision makers to advocate in favor of legislation and policies that protect and support the interests of our members' students. As we look to the future, the Association of Private Colleges is committed to continuing our work in support of legislation that promotes **transparency, universal accountability and strong student outcomes**.

For more information on APC, its member colleges, and our students' outcomes, please visit the APC website at www.apc-colleges.org.

Thank you for your continued support!

First, I sincerely thank you and your fellow legislators for your support as we have moved through and now past the challenges presented by the Coronavirus pandemic.

I must also express our appreciation to the legislature for their continued support for our members' students, especially those who come from backgrounds often under-represented on college campuses and students who are the first in their family to attend college. For over forty years, the Legislature has been a true champion for TAP, State-supported financial aid, and other opportunity programs. New York has one of the largest and most generous state sponsored aid programs in the country. The commitment to maintaining financial aid, is needed now more than ever, since those students benefitting from the assistance are also those that have been impacted the most by COVID-19.

As we look to 2023, the Association of Private Colleges is committed to working with the Governor and legislature to establish policies that ultimately serve the best interest of our students. We continue to urge the Governor and the legislature to hold all institutions accountable – not just proprietary institutions – because all students pursuing post-secondary education in New York State deserve to attend high quality institutions.

APC's Role in Workforce Development

Governor Hochul's State of the State address and proposed budget made clear her commitment to higher education, support for students and workforce development. We are encouraged by Governor Hochul's focus on prioritizing the economy, providing a living wage, and the need to create a high-quality workforce pipeline. Far too many New Yorkers do not have the opportunity or access to higher education and APC member colleges look forward to working towards a solution.

However, the Governor's focus on the role of SUNY and CUNY while overlooking private colleges is short sighted. Thousands of students attend private colleges, and these colleges are connected to their communities and local industries. APC would encourage the Governor and the legislature to leverage all colleges and universities in New York to expand opportunities and to help build the economy and workforce.

APC member colleges are strong financial engines for New York's economy and part of the state's work force solution because we identify the needs of employers and adjust or develop curriculum to meet those needs. Our member colleges partner with employers throughout the state by preparing qualified graduates who are ready to make an immediate contribution in the workplace.

Students attending APC member colleges are earning degrees in many traditional and emerging fields, including law enforcement, nursing and allied health, education, business administration, accounting, computer animation and the business of fashion and cannabis.

A few examples of APC member institutions partnerships:

- Founded in 1939, originally as Laboratory Institute of Merchandising, **LIM College** has prided itself on successfully educating students and preparing them to become gainfully employed in the retail fashion, lifestyle, and related industries. As a pioneer in experiential education, LIM College fosters a unique connection between academic study in business principles and real-world experience in the business of fashion via required internship programs. Today, LIM College, a female-led and owned institution, has embraced an era of increased globalization, technological advancement, and rapidly emerging new industries, as well as a renewed commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

LIM College alumni number over 10,000 and many have gone on to excel at top companies, including, but not limited to: Amazon, Bloomingdale's, Calvin Klein, Coach, Harper's Bazaar, Kenneth Cole Productions, Macy's, Michael Kors, Neiman Marcus, Nordstrom, Ralph Lauren, and Tommy Hilfiger. And despite the tumultuous conditions of the worldwide pandemic over the last several years and tremendous changes transforming the fashion industry, the employment rate of LIM College graduates has remained consistently high.

In the fall of 2022, LIM College expanded beyond fashion into lifestyle degree offerings, assuming a national leadership position in readying students to enter the burgeoning legal cannabis industry. LIM is the nation's first to offer Bachelor of Business Administration and Master of Professional Studies degrees in The Business of Cannabis. With the goal of opening more educational opportunities for diverse students to pursue cannabis degrees, or any degree program LIM offers, the College recently established partnership agreements with South Bronx Overall Economic Development Corporation ([SoBro](#)) and [Local 338 Retail](#), Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU)/United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), which represents cannabis workers, among others.

- For 90 years, **Monroe College** has been an important part of the higher ed landscape in New York, proudly educating student populations who are typically under-represented and under-served on other college campuses. Monroe is proud of its innovative programs to increase college access, affordability, and completion outcomes, especially among first-generation students, and for the national recognition it receives for its outcomes and strong impact on graduates' social mobility

Monroe educates 8,000 students each year, offering Certificate, Associate, Bachelor's, and Master's degree programs. Its academic programs are aligned with the industries and sectors driving New York's economy, and accordingly has partnered with organizations such as 32BJ SEIU, 1199 SEIU, United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and DC 37, among others, to make a college education more accessible and affordable for their members.

Monroe's alumni can be found proudly working for themselves as small business owners/operators, as well as for local employers such as the NYC Department of Education and other school districts; the New York Police Department; major medical facilities such as White Plains Hospital, Montefiore Medical Center, and NYC Mount Sinai; among other corporate and community partners. They can also be found working in a broad array of community service organizations, government offices, banks and financial services companies, medical offices, and culinary hotspots in NYC and beyond.

- Founded in 1916 by the Callahan family, **Plaza College** has served the borough of Queens for over 100 years. Through the years the institution has grown; they have been accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education since 2002 and today offer Associate and Bachelor degrees in areas such as allied health, nursing, dental hygiene, business administration and court reporting. Plaza College operates the largest community dental hygiene clinic in Queens, providing free dental services to approximately 1,500 NYC residents every semester.

During the pandemic, Plaza College was awarded approval for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Plaza College's Center for Healthcare Simulation began construction in September 2021. The 5,000 square-foot suite features innovative, high-fidelity technology that allows students to practice skills development and high-risk, low-frequency scenarios in an educational, yet realistic patient care setting. Working in the simulation center is an essential bridge between the classroom and clinical environments. The experiences gained in these laboratories enable students to develop and perfect patient care skills crucial to shaping expertly-prepared registered professional nurses ready to enter the workforce aiding the national shortage of nurses. The first cohort of nursing students began their studies in January 2022. Plaza College partners with many local healthcare centers, including Jamaica Hospital, Elmhurst Hospital, Mount Sinai Hospital, New York Presbyterian, St. John's Episcopal, and St. Mary's Children's Hospital.

APC LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Continued Support for Access:

Your continued support of the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) is appreciated and provides much needed opportunities to many students across the state. TAP has served as the cornerstone of New York State's financial aid program, providing financial support to ensure students complete their degrees in a timely manner. Many students attending an APC member college are deemed "independent" or otherwise do not have family or support networks to whom they can turn to for financial help – these students rely on TAP and other financial assistance programs to complete their degrees.

APC member colleges share the State's commitment to keeping college affordable. In 2021, the **average tuition at APC member colleges increased less than 2%** over the previous year and APC member colleges **provided over \$100 million** in institutional grants, scholarships and aid.

State sponsored financial aid programs (TAP, ETA and HEOP) are critically important to our students. APC members successfully educate more than 20,000 students of which **66% are women; 26% are black/African-American and 22% are Hispanic/Latino**. More than **70% of APC students receive federal Pell Grant awards** and approximately **10,000 students receive a New York State TAP award**.

COVID-19 has laid bare the inequity that existed for these students and their ongoing financial and mental health needs are significant. Many students are struggling with homelessness, food insecurities, childcare needs or caring for other family members.

Below we are providing a series of recommendations that we believe can enhance the TAP program and will help support students as our economy begins to rebound and employers seek talent with skills to meet their needs in the post-pandemic era.

Enhancements to the TAP program:

- **Expand the Part-Time Tuition Assistance Program to include students attending proprietary Colleges.** Last year the legislature expanded access to the Part-Time TAP program by eliminating the 24 credit prior year eligibility requirement, and instead made prorated awards available to students enrolled in six or more credits at a SUNY, CUNY or not-for-profit institution. Unfortunately, students attending proprietary colleges were denied access to this program.

In the past, our member institutions would encourage full-time attendance; providing flexible class schedules and learning modalities that allow their students to reach graduation in a timely manner. However, the current reality is that as New York recovers from the pandemic, many students will find themselves needing to focus on family or work obligations and may only be able to attend college part-time. According to HESC, expanding Part Time TAP to include students attending proprietary colleges would impact approximately 2,800 students and cost \$5.5 million.

We ask the legislature to ensure that these students have equal access to the newly expanded program. (\$5.5M)

- Eliminate Disparity in Access to TAP Awards by Standardizing Dependent & Independent Student TAP Award Schedules.** Use the same TAP Award Schedule, income, and maximum award eligibility for all students regardless of their Dependency Status. Currently independent students who are married or single and have no tax dependents receive significantly lower TAP awards compared to dependent students and independent students with tax dependents (with a maximum award of \$3,525 compared to \$5,665 for the latter group). There is also a significant difference in the maximum income allowed, with eligibility for TAP for independent married students without dependents limited to those below \$40,000 NYS Net Taxable Income (NTI) while eligibility for single independent students without dependents is restricted to those with NTIs no higher than \$10,000.
- Increase the minimum TAP award from \$500 to \$1,000 and/or the maximum TAP award from \$5,665 to \$6,000 annually.** In the past, the State demonstrated its support for low-income students attending higher education programs when it increased the maximum TAP award from \$5,165 to \$5,665. Continued adjustments to the minimum and maximum TAP awards would make a tremendous difference to many lower income students and their families.
- Increase the maximum net taxable income (NTI) threshold to receive a TAP award from \$80,000 to \$110,000 annually.** Using a three-year phase-in period, we recommend the State expand the maximum income threshold for TAP recipients to \$110,000. Also, establish a funding formula for future years (post-2026) whereby TAP would be increased annually to keep pace with inflation. This would open the door to a college degree for many students from moderate to middle class families. The maximum income threshold has not been adjusted in over 20 years when it was last raised in 2000 from \$50,500 to \$80,000. Both the cost of living and the cost of obtaining a college degree have increased significantly since 2000 and the maximum income threshold for TAP recipients should be adjusted accordingly. **(A1889 - Clark/S3474 - Stavisky)**
- Restore Maximum TAP Awards for Two-Year Degree Programs.** In 2010, the maximum TAP award for students enrolled at institutions that offered only two-year degree programs was reduced from \$5,000 to \$4,000 (a 20% reduction). The reduction impacted not only students receiving the maximum award (i.e., the most at-need students), but all students receiving awards saw their assistance cut by 20%. Unfairly, students who attended colleges that also offer four-year programs were not impacted by the reductions, meaning students enrolled in SUNY or CUNY community colleges or private (both independent/non-profit and proprietary) colleges that offer both two- and four-year programs are still able to receive maximum TAP of \$5,665. In other words, students are being treated differently based solely upon the type of institution they enter: students attending institutions that solely offer two-year programs are given far less funding compared to students attending institutions that offer both two- and four-year programs, even if the program offered is identical.
- Reimagine Graduate TAP.** The elimination of Graduate TAP in 2010 has had a significant impact on students. We urge the State to reconsider its elimination and provide support for critically needed STEM, education and healthcare degrees. Over the past several years, APC member colleges have invested in Master's-level programs that are in demand by employers. Notable examples among APC member colleges include Monroe College's Master's in Public Health (M.P.H.) program and LIM College's Master's in Professional Studies (M.P.S.) in Fashion Merchandising and Retail Management, Fashion Marketing, and Global Fashion Supply Chain Management.

Other APC Legislative Priorities:

Support NYSED's Request for \$15 Million to Enhance Supports for Students with Disabilities. (\$13M)

In May 2017, New York State Education Department's Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities recommended – and the Board of Regents adopted – a plan to develop a funding proposal in consult with representatives from the four higher education sectors (SUNY, CUNY, independent/non-profit, and proprietary) that would provide much-needed enhanced supports and services to over 79,000 identified students with disabilities attending New York State's degree-granting colleges and universities.

Since the adoption of this plan, the State Education Department has been engaged in collaborative efforts to establish a legislative framework advocating for critical new funding that would supplement (not supplant) any other federal, state or local funding in existence for such purposes. Past funding has been allocated by the State Education Department to SUNY, CUNY, independent and proprietary colleges in a proportionate manner according to the number and needs of identified student with disabilities per sector.

We were grateful that last two years the legislature agreed and provided \$2 million in funding for this program. As well, Governor Hochel included \$2 million in funding for this program in her proposed SFY 23-24 budget. **However, the pandemic has demonstrated that these enhanced supports and services are needed by students with disabilities now more than ever and we respectfully request full funding in this year's budget of \$15 million.**

APC member colleges indicated they would use the funding to support students with disabilities in the following ways:

1. Provide opportunities to increase and expand faculty and staff training and mental health literacy. Some examples might include crisis management, sensitivity training, awareness training, training on existing and new regulations, and even basic considerations such as color-blindness and faculty instruction.
2. Improving the process to identify students with disabilities and mental health issues by developing and implementing a tracking system for students shortly after they are admitted to college. Purchasing a tracking software could assist with this and allow institutions to reach students in need of services as soon as possible.
3. Diagnostic testing and assessment: Students often cannot afford the cost of a private psycho/educational evaluation and, therefore, many disabilities remain undiagnosed. Assessment is a key that can open doors, as it provides the documentation required for students to get registered with accessibility services and obtain accommodations to help them reach their fullest academic potential. In addition, it helps students learn more about their strengths and weaknesses and what type of work may be best for them. We currently don't have the staffing or resources to offer diagnostic testing. We have referred students to outside resources and often don't hear back from them because they could not afford the evaluation. This could be an excellent additional service to provide our students.

Conclusion

Like most institutions, APC member colleges spent much of the pandemic in a constant state of adaptation and change in response to the continually evolving landscape. As our colleges prepare for the future, it is clear that those plans will be influenced by the lessons we have learned through the pandemic. The challenge we all will face as we move forward will be to continue to identify ways in which we can make education and employment opportunities more accessible while retaining excellence, transparency and accountability.

We appreciate your consideration of our proposals and look forward to working with you.

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