

Submitted Testimony of President Claudia Schrader
Kingsborough College
City University of New York
New York State Senate Higher Education Committee
Thursday, October 24, 2019

Chairperson Stavisky and members of the NYS Higher Education Committee, the following testimony is submitted for your consideration regarding college affordability.

When I assumed this position a year ago, I knew I was walking into a very special place. I take seriously the responsibility of leading at a critical time in not only in the college's history, but during a time where the place of community colleges in the landscape of higher education has assumed significant attention. Access, affordability, a solid liberal arts foundation, job training and employment readiness are enduring reasons why community colleges will and must continue to be a viable option for those who seek to improve their lives. For those who call Brooklyn, the most populated of the five boroughs their home, Kingsborough Community College, which holds the distinction of being the borough's only community college, is that vital option.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to share with you the Kingsborough I have come to know, to share with you a portrait of a vibrant academic community of faculty and staff who deliver on its promise to students; and a portrait that highlights how college affordability and your investments and the investments of the University make a difference for our students.

Kingsborough, as you know is located in Manhattan Beach on the southern edge of Brooklyn overlooking the Sheepshead Bay, Jamaica Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. It is not surprising that a lighthouse sits atop our Marine Academic Building, because the college has

been a beacon of opportunity for the over 63,000 students that have graduated since its doors opened in 1963.

The University is committed to providing citizens of this great city access to an affordable education. This commitment is actualized in its efforts to remove barriers to access; make investments that support persistence, retention and completion; and provide supports that mitigate the hidden costs of a college degree. At Kingsborough, we share in this mission and have availed ourselves of all opportunities to do so.

The University's highly successful Accelerated Studies in Associate Programs (ASAP) also ensures that students are ready for college and are free of remediation by having students participate in the highly effective CUNY Start and Math Start programs. This preparation combined with the program's range of academic advisement, personal counseling, tuition and fee waivers, metro cards and financial assistance to offset the cost of textbooks, has resulted in student outcomes that exceed national averages. In 2017, statistics showed that six years after entering a community college, nationally, 35% of students earned a degree. Meanwhile, at CUNY, over 60 percent of ASAP students had earned an undergraduate degree within six years. Closer to home, 50%, of ASAP students who entered Kingsborough in Fall 2016, graduated within three years. At Kingsborough, since the inception of the program, three-year graduation rates have consistently been at or around 50%. Research has also shown that ASAP students transfer to baccalaureate programs at higher rates than non ASAP students and earned their bachelor's degrees at higher rates. In addition, the research has found that ASAP is an effective model to support black and Hispanic students who are 75% of ASAP participants, realize timely graduation rates. Because of your unwavering support and investments, ASAP has delivered on its promise of a college degree.

Over the past three years, significant investments were made by the University to support faculty to enhance existing and develop ways to meet the diverse profiles and needs of students. The University's move away from a narrow assessment of student's basic skills/ college readiness toward a more holistic and comprehensive approach that looks at multiple measures, along with its corequisite initiative, has also helped colleges like Kingsborough rethink how to best prepare and educate students across the spectrum of needs. As anticipated, not only has the college seen increases in the percentage of freshmen taking and passing credit bearing English/Reading and Math courses in the first year; but again, students have seen their financial resources used to support completion of credit bearing classes, instead of zero-credit remediation/developmental courses.

Another way the college has also sought to increase access to and the affordability of a college degree, is by creating pathways between our Continuing Education (CE), Workforce Development and degree-granting programs. Currently, CE courses in Central Sterile Technician, EMT and Patient Care bridge students into the Allied Health Pathway; the Certified Nursing Assistants program, Electronic Medical Records and Health Coach courses, stack into the Community Health Degree Program; and we are awaiting Board of Trustee approval which will enable CE students who complete the User Experience Technology program a pathway into the Graphic Arts Degree program. These stackable credentials will ensure that students are well-prepared to enter the workforce or enter college with academic credits and skill sets that are supported by industry partners, or both.

Once students matriculate at KCC, they have the opportunity select from one of 50 associate degree and certificate programs offered at the college. Included among them are the University's only Associate's program in Maritime Technology, the only Polysomnographic

(Sleep Tech) Program in NY City; and the University's first fully-online Associates degree program in Liberal Arts.

KCC students are taught, mentored and supported by approximately 300 full time and 300 part time faculty, and 1200 staff. Our students thrive in an environment that reflects the very rich diversity of the city; there isn't a racial, ethnic, religious or cultural group not represented on our campus.

In recent years, Kingsborough experienced a decline in enrollment and is currently addressing this issue through the development of both a strategic enrollment plan and an academic strategic plan which will outline what new programs are needed to attract students and meet workforce needs. Other priorities that I have identified in my first year, include enhancing campus operations to better serve all members of our college community and upgrading campus facilities. Kingsborough's seaside location is both a gift and a curse. The same proximity to the ocean that provides the campus with awesome views also increases the deterioration of our buildings and roadways.

Our student outcomes however, continue to get stronger. Outcome metrics for the 2018-2019 year confirm that Kingsborough continues to be a leader in graduation rates, retention rates and credit accumulation, with Kingsborough out-performing most of its CUNY community college peers in a number of areas.

Our graduation and retention rates are among the highest of CUNY community colleges. Our ASAP three- year graduation rate (53.2%) exceeds the CUNY Community College Average. KCC's overall three-year graduation rate of 31.9% also exceeds the CUNY Community College Average and is second only to Guttman CC.

Retention rates also continue to exceed the community college average. Recent data show that in the fall 2017, KCC achieved the highest fall-to-fall retention rate (68.7%) of any CUNY community college. Kingsborough also leads the CUNY community college sector in credit accumulation with 23.4% of first-time, full time freshmen earning 30 credits or more in the first year; and 52.6.% earning 20 credits or more in the first year.

In addition to the the University's Momentum Campaign which encourages full time enrollment and credit accumulation, the college's completion-centered schedule also helps to support student completion by enabling students to take more classes over the course of a year. Kingsborough's unique 12/6 calendar, allows students to complete their degree in two years or less at a very affordable price. Tuition and fees at KCC for a full-time NYS resident is \$2626.45 per semester. One of the benefits of our unique calendar is that NYS residents who are full-time (at least 12 credits) in the fall or spring sessions can attend the winter or summer sessions for free. This calendar allows students to attend the fall session (12 weeks) and the winter session (6 weeks) and earn up to 26 credits in one semester (fall/winter combined). This also applies to the spring and summer sessions. The advantage of this is that students are able to complete 52 of 60 required credits for the degree in one year. Our 12/6 calendar gives students the ability to accelerate academic completion.

Kingsborough's extensive array of student support services have also positively impacted student outcomes. The College's understanding of the importance of supporting the whole student is evident in the host of programs and initiatives that are woven into the fabric of the institution and that address the most critical issues facing students: **the hidden costs of a college education** like meals, transportation, textbooks and other school supplies.

In 2009, Single Stop was launched at Kingsborough. Since then, the program has continued to provide services to help increase economic security for students by increasing their access to public benefits and financial, legal, and tax services. Between 2017 and 2018, Single Stop helped students access over \$450, 000 in benefits; referred 104 students for legal services; distributed \$10 food vouchers to 1,000 students; and served 13,697 students in the food pantry which was opened in 2012 after Hurricane Sandy. Also, in 5 months, Single Stop helped to distribute 857 bags of vegetable produce to students in collaboration with the College's Urban Farm, our organic, year-round food production site. The Farm yields a wide variety of vegetables and herbs are distributed free of charge to the students once per week from June to November. In the past 3 years, 11,148 students have availed themselves of the resources of the Urban Farm.

Students who are part of the ASAP program are fortunate to receive a metro card throughout the course of their studies. This benefit helps to alleviate the cost of transportation to college, which is a major stressor for students. For the rest of the population, the cost of transportation impacts their ability to afford college. For Kingsborough students in particular, this issue is even more critical. Students who make a transfer on their commute to the college would have to pay for additional rides to and from the campus from the subway stop. To address this issue, the college started to provide free shuttle bus service from the train station to campus.

Since 2017, with the support of Governor Cuomo CUNY received funding from NY State for Open Educational Resources (OER), KCC has embraced the development of OER supported courses. The College's implementation of the OER Initiative has proved to be critical to ensuring that students have access to zero to low cost course materials. Last academic year, 256 sections of KCC courses used OER, thereby impacting 5952 students and resulting in a cost savings \$781,460. This is a significant increase over the previous year, when OER was used in

126 sections, impacting 3200 students, with a cost savings \$288,861. The college continues to implement OER in additional courses.

Kingsborough is also steadily increasing the number of courses offered partially and full online. This fall, KCC became the first community college in the University to offer the first fully online degree program – an Associates of Arts degree in Liberal Arts. And because we understand the role that technology plays in helping to educate and prepare a skilled workforce, we actively work to ensure that students have access to technology to support their learning. The College has a robust laptop lending program that is funded through the Student Technology Fee. Currently, there are 544 laptops and tablets in the lending pool which includes overnight loans.

For 56 years, Kingsborough has been synonymous with excellence. The College has been recognized by the Aspen Institute for Community College Excellence, placing in the top 4 in 2013 and the top 10 in 2018. In 2018, we were also designated as an Achieving the Dream Leader College of Distinction for our commitment to using data to improve student success and close achievement gaps; and most recently, we ranked #2 on Niche's 2020 Best Community Colleges in New York. Since 1995, our Learning Communities have been recognized for its focus on integrative and collaborative learning, and positive effect on student outcomes. The KCC New Start Program launched in 1985 with Brooklyn College to assist students who have experienced academic difficulty at senior colleges. The Program which provided students with specialized counseling, academic support and transfer advisement, was the first of its kind at CUNY. Similarly, Kingsborough was the first community college to provide Single Stop Services, a key resource in helping students access resources that help them to stay in college and reach their academic goals.

This year, over 15,000 students who are pursuing degrees, taking courses as part of College Now and ECI, or taking Continuing Education courses, call Kingsborough their academic home. Approximately, 20% are the first in their families to attend college; 50% are full time; 52% are women; and 85% reside in Brooklyn; and 64% of students received financial aid. We know that many of our students experience food insecurity. We know, based on our data trends, that a small percentage (15 %) will graduate with some debt. We also know that because of programs like Excelsior and ASAP that after aid is applied, their degrees will be tuition-free. For those who are not a part of these programs, or who don't qualify for financial aid, it helps that tuition has remained flat and student fees relatively low for the past few years.

Tuition is one part of the story of college affordability. The other parts of the story are the hidden costs of education, and the costs associated with the business of higher education. We are grateful to our alumni, donors and friends of KCC who help us to address some of our pressing needs. And we are fortunate that we are a part of a State, City and University system that understands that not addressing these needs will result in the ultimate cost to students: that is, the opportunity to earn a degree.

I hope my testimony has provided you with a comprehensive overview of how Kingsborough, through the work of a dynamic community of faculty and staff and the support of the University, City and State works to ensure that a college degree is both accessible and affordable for those who chose to use education as a vehicle to transform their lives.

Allow me to extend a warm thank you to the you and the members of the Higher Education Committee, members of the Legislature and Governor Cuomo for your support of the University, our College and all the students we serve.

Submitted Testimony of President Russ Hotzler
New York City College of Technology (City Tech)
City University of New York
New York State Senate Higher Education Committee
Thursday, October 24, 2019

Chairperson Stavisky and members of the NYS Higher Education Committee, the following testimony is submitted for your consideration regarding college affordability. Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the progress that the New York City College of Technology (City Tech) has made in recent years. I also appreciate this chance to inform you on our priorities and objectives that will advance the educational goals and career prospects of our students going forward. First though, I want to thank Governor Cuomo, the Legislature, and all of our funding partners for the support they provide the University.

Over the past decade City Tech has made significant strides enabling the institution to establish its place as a senior College in the University system. City Tech's future is deeply intertwined with that of New York City; it is a microcosm of the city's diversity, creative enterprise, and innovative spirit. A City Tech degree brings value to graduates; its potential for upward economic mobility and professional success has been proven and represents the driving force of our commitment.

The pace of institutional change continues to accelerate – today, City Tech is demonstrably more baccalaureate-focused (55% baccalaureate), research active, interdisciplinary, connected to industry and community, and focused on technological change than ever before. This transition is essential if the College is to fulfill its mission of preparing a diverse urban population for the careers of the present and the future. There is a rapidly expanding need for a workforce skilled in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

A designated Hispanic-serving institution, City Tech currently enrolls a student population that is 34% Hispanic, 29% Black, and 20% Asian. The College is 44% female, a population also substantially underrepresented in STEM.

To enhance minority participation, the College has made extensive use of National Science Foundation (NSF) and United States Department of Education (USDE) grant awards geared to broaden participation. Over the past three years, these grants have brought in \$5.3 million, funding both enhancements in pedagogy and support for students in STEM, including an NSF HIS-IUSE grant of \$1.5 million to strengthen articulation with CUNY's Hispanic-serving community colleges and to improve the success of transfer students from these institutions. These activities are also aimed at increasing the participation of women in STEM programs.

City Tech's outreach also encompasses partnering with two early college career and technical high schools, P-Tech and City Poly. Both high schools prepare students to enter City Tech degree programs in technology with no remedial needs and provide students with the ability of earning an associate degree at the same time they are completing their High School graduation requirements.

Of importance, the value of a City Tech Degree has increased as the College has become a dynamic engine of economic mobility for its graduates. According to the 2017 Stanford University Equality of Opportunity Project, City Tech ranked fifth among 369 selective public colleges and ninth among the entire sample of more than 2,300 US colleges in the achievement of overall intergenerational economic mobility. This means that graduates are jumping two or more income quintiles above their parents' economic status. This demonstrated potential for professional and economic success by our graduates serves to verify the importance of our mission.

City Tech is ranked by the National Science Foundation as a top producer of associate degrees in STEM for underrepresented students. The College is ranked sixth nationally in the number of Black STEM associate degree recipients, 18th nationally in the number of Asian recipients, and 21st

nationally in STEM degrees awarded to males. These outcomes reflect City Tech's effectiveness in addressing the NSF Broadening Participation in STEM challenge and has demonstrated success in preparing underrepresented students for careers in STEM.

STEM enrollment at City Tech recently exceeded 8,200 students and represents over half of the College's total degree enrollment - by far the largest STEM enrollment in the University – and an additional 2,000 students are studying for degrees in health care. The median earnings of baccalaureate students one year after graduation is \$43,867 (PMP), highest among the senior colleges. In addition, PayScale's annual national rankings indicate that City Tech's associate degree graduates routinely earn the highest, or close to the highest, median early career earnings (\$40,600).

These outcomes are not surprising when you consider that the most recent licensure pass rates in our healthcare programs are 97% and 100% in Dental Hygiene, 98% in Radiologic Technology, 96% in Nursing (NCLEX), and 94% in Dental Lab (ADEX), clearly facilitating our students' entry into their chosen professions.

Contributing to the College's growth is the emphasis placed on the development of new programs that map to business and industry sectors

undergoing employment growth and transformation. In this regard, the College has added many new baccalaureate degrees including: BS degrees in Data Science, the Business and Technology of Fashion, Biomedical Informatics, Radiologic Science, and a BA in Architecture (pending NYSED registration). Most of these programs were built upon existing associate degree programs and provide seamless transfer from the associate to the baccalaureate program. New baccalaureate degree offerings in Data Analytics in Economics, Health Communications, and Biomedical Engineering Technology are soon to follow.

The CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs initiative (ASAP) continues to be an engine driving on-time completion of associate-degree programs, and progression to bachelor's programs. The major focus of City Tech's ASAP has been STEM programs, especially programs in the School of Technology & Design, which are demanding and experience high attrition. The program currently serves over 1300 students and recent ASAP 3-year cohorts reflect a 41% graduation rate and 59% graduation & retention rate, significantly higher than the non-ASAP cohorts.

With significant support from Governor Cuomo and the State Legislature, and "15 years in the making" the College's 360,000 sq. ft. new Academic Complex represents a marker of City Tech's expansion, and a high-profile symbol of both the College's and the University's growth. First occupied

last fall, the complex represents a \$420 million investment in high-tech infrastructure, providing students with state-of-the-practice clinical health facilities and science laboratories that will foster growth, research capacity, and new programs in the evolving health sciences. The Complex also includes a 1000 seat theater, a gymnasium, and other facilities that help address the lack of space for student activities and community functions.

As City Tech has advanced and grown in the past decade, its surroundings in Downtown Brooklyn have also been transforming into a major technology hub. Financial services, media, medical technology, robotics, architecture, design, and e-commerce firms have made City Tech's neighborhood a thriving start-up laboratory. The College has actively engaged this renaissance and is building partnerships by providing the skilled workforce needed to sustain our economic development. Partnerships with Google, the Brooklyn Navy Yard (BNY), New Lab, Wegman's, Ernst & Young, NASA, Tesla, Marriott International, Syspro Automation, and Industry City have yielded hundreds of internships. Additionally, relationships with Idealist, Google and Etsy provide students with mentorship and professional development from industry experts.

Collaborating with Infor, the College established an Infor Center of Excellence on campus that has trained almost 200 students to use Infor's proprietary industry software. Infor has also agreed to be the internship

partner for students enrolled in our recently initiated Bachelor of Science program in Data Science.

These strong relationships with employers are fostered by our Professional Development Center (PDC) and our unique blend of programs that assist City Tech students in attaining internships and permanent employment. A highly successful student Mechatronics Competition, conducted in partnership with BNY tech firms, highlights the importance of these partnerships. In 2020, a culinary competition will be added, taking advantage of the many specialty food companies that operate out of the Navy Yard and Industry City.

However, with a broad stake in high-cost STEM education, the College's academic portfolio presents the challenge of extremely high instructional costs. Clinical programs and programs in engineering technology, the sciences, and an array of professional offerings, all require significant investment in specialized equipment and facilities, and in faculty holding special certifications and significant professional experience.

The cost of service contracts and required software upgrades on medical imaging equipment, dental equipment, remote sensing instrumentation, robots and robotic components, and laser cutters – to name a few - have all escalated dramatically in recent years.

Up until recently the College managed to support this academic portfolio by minimizing administrative costs, encouraging growth, and maximizing program efficiency. I note that City Tech spends 76.4% of its tax-levy operating budget on instruction and student services – the highest percentage for a senior college.

Looking over the horizon, there are areas of rapidly evolving science and technology that will require significant programmatic investments if we are to continue to provide students with relevant skills and programs. One such area is the transition to 5G cellular network technology. This technology will enhance Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality capabilities and promises to initiate a surge of innovation, new startups, and ventures we can only speculate about. Building upon our offerings in data science, robotics, and telecommunications, we need to provide students with the opportunity to engage and master this evolving technology.

The second rapidly evolving area encapsulates Genomics and DNA science, Quantitative Biology, and Neuroscience. Given our extensive investment in the health sciences, health care, and environmental concerns, it is essential that the Colleges' have the capacity to respond to the transformative nature of discoveries and technologies in these areas.

In closing I would mention the partnership that is evolving between the University / City Tech and Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL) - the preeminent international research institution that continues to spearhead breakthroughs in molecular biology and genetics. The partnership will support the establishment of a DNA Learning Center at City Tech that will serve as a hub for students in grades 5-12 and the public to explore and understand DNA science and its impact on health and society. The partnership will also serve to foster educational and research collaborations between CUNY and CSHL. When fully operational the DNA Learning Center will engage 15,000 students and mentor over 100 teachers per year. We project that the Center will become the go-to place in New York City for DNA education and information to help people understand their own uniqueness, the implications of personalized medicine, and genetic heritage. Working with faculty, the Center will also incentivize interest in STEM by replacing standard laboratory instruction with discovery-based research by scaling up Course-based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs) and faculty-supervised undergraduate projects and internships. City Tech faculty are already involved in pursuing NSF grants in conjunction with CSHL and one of the proposals will engage a number of our community colleges in a collaborative biotechnology initiative.

Construction will start shortly on the DNA Learning Center and we expect it to be operational within a year.

While it is easy to think of the City University of New York as the largest institution of public higher education in the North East, I would be remiss if I didn't pause to make it clear that the success of CUNY and its colleges is critical to the success of New York and everyday New Yorkers. City Tech and all the CUNY colleges – represent hope for a better future and provide a road map to getting there. In that regard, City Tech serves as both an educational institution and community development partner.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony and I look forward to continuing City Tech's partnership you with and your colleagues.

**Submitted Testimony of Sunday Coward
University Dean of Special Programs
City University of New York
New York State Senate Higher Education Committee
Thursday, October 24, 2019**

Chairperson Stavisky and members of the NYS Higher Education Committee, the following testimony is submitted for your consideration on behalf of College Discovery and the Percy Ellis Sutton Search for Education, Elevation, and Knowledge (SEEK) Program - CUNY's higher education opportunity programs.

I would like to thank Governor Cuomo, members of the State Assembly, and members of the State Senate for allocating \$28,077,000 for the SEEK Program. The College Discovery Program and the SEEK Program provide comprehensive academic, financial, and social supports to assist capable students who otherwise might not be able to attend college due to their educational and financial circumstances.

Founded in 1964, College Discovery programs are housed at six (6) CUNY community colleges - Borough of Manhattan Community College, Bronx Community College, Hostos Community College, Kingsborough Community College, LaGuardia Community College, and Queensborough Community College. The Percy Ellis Sutton, founded in 1965, is housed at three comprehensive colleges - College of Staten Island, Medgar Evers College, and New York City College of Technology, and at eight (8) senior colleges - Baruch, Brooklyn, City, Hunter, John Jay, Lehman, Queens, and York.

The Office of Special Programs (OSP) exists to provide the vision, leadership, and fiscal oversight of the 17 campus-based CD and SEEK programs by implementing established priorities, policies, and initiatives that encourage and support inclusion and educational success of CD and SEEK students studying within The City University of New York (CUNY), CD and SEEK funding

The Office of Special Programs continues to advance the University's mission through enrichment initiatives that provide CD and SEEK students with access to opportunities that emphasize personal and professional exploration. OSP administrators have collaborated with Central Office and campus-based colleagues to develop initiatives that promote academic momentum, global education, and career success. As CUNY students, College Discovery and SEEK participants have access to the full array of educational offerings as well as the ability to participate in study abroad programs, student government, and internship opportunities.

Through an array of retention-based opportunities, transitional programming, tutoring, skill-building seminars, educational and personal advising, and mentoring programs, CD and SEEK participants receive supportive services throughout their college experience. Collaborative partnerships with University departments, external organizations, businesses and alumni enhance our educational services to students.

Understanding that participants will need very personalized support and encouragement, the CD/SEEK programs' Student:Counselor ratio, 115:1, compared to the national average of 491:1, allows for more in-depth, individualized, and comprehensive educational services.

Admitted CD and SEEK students are required to attend a summer program immediately preceding their fall enrollment. For the initial summer only, CD and SEEK participants enroll in non-credit bearing,



**Enhancing Support Services for Students with Disabilities in Postsecondary Education –
Proposed CUNY Strategic Investments**

Introduction

CUNY has not received an increase in its State funding for key reasonable accommodations and support services since 1993-1994. Over the last 25 years, the enrollment of CUNY students with disabilities has increased by more than 50 percent, while due to inflation, the purchasing power of CUNY's disability services base allocation has eroded by more than 50 percent.

The proposed statewide funding program to enhance support services for students with disabilities in postsecondary education would allow CUNY to make strategic programmatic investments that would expand access and support the success of presently unserved and underserved students with disabilities. The following summarizes the ways in which CUNY could strategically use funding through the proposed program to invest in the University's capacity to better serve its more than 11,000 students with disabilities.

Expansion of CUNY LEADS

Need: 70 percent of CUNY LEADS participants achieve competitive employment within 18 months of graduation. However, the program presently has the capacity to serve only 2,000 CUNY students with disabilities.

Investment: An additional \$1,000,000 would enable CUNY LEADS to secure:

Additional Advisors

- While CUNY LEADS currently has the capacity to serve 2,000 students, it would be able to **double the number of eligible students served to 4,000**, drawing from the University's more than 11,000 students with disabilities, including the growing number of veterans with disabilities

Job Developers

- Job developers can match employers seeking to diversify their workforces with educated, prepared and screened candidates with disabilities

Oral Testimony of University Executive Director of Financial Aid

Elaine Pimentel

The City University of New York

Senate Higher Education Committee Hearing

The Cost of Higher Education

Thursday, October 24, 2019

Good morning to the members of the Senate Higher Education Committee, staff and guests. I am Elaine Pimentel, University Executive Director of Financial Aid for The City University of New York.

I am delighted to share with you today some updates and recent progress in regards to financial aid processing at CUNY. We are truly grateful to Governor Cuomo and the legislature for the steadfast commitment to keeping public higher education affordable, especially in comparison with other States. CUNY's relatively low tuition, generous financial aid, and programs like the Excelsior scholarship, combined with tax credits,

enable 66% of CUNY undergraduate full-time residents who received non-loans aid to attend tuition-free.

For award year 2019-2020, full-time undergraduate tuition at CUNY's senior colleges is \$3,465 per term and \$2,400 per term at the community colleges. Fees and indirect costs, such as transportation, books and supplies, and meals, among others, may increase the cost of education up to approximately \$10,000 per year for students living with parents.

The annual generous TAP maximum full time award is \$5,165 (or \$2,582.50 per term), and the maximum annual Federal Pell Grant award for a full-time student with a zero Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) is \$6,195 (or \$3,097.50 per term). Other awards may vary in amounts, student's needs or academic achievements.

In award year 2017-2018, nearly 3,300 CUNY students earned the Excelsior scholarship, and with the higher income limit in the following years, that number has risen. For award year 2018-2019, the number of students awarded the Excelsior Scholarship was over 4,400 totaling over

\$15,000,000. In spring 2019, Excelsior scholars had higher GPAs and higher retention rates than non-Excelsior students. Students who received Excelsior awards were more likely to complete 30+ credits in a year than students who were eligible but did not receive awards because they were already fully packaged (52.1% vs. 40.4%, respectively.)

Students who received Excelsior awards were significantly more likely to complete 30 credits in their first year than those who did not receive awards (52.1% vs. 22.5%). This is true across race/ethnicity groups.

Compared to students who received Excelsior awards, students who did not receive Excelsior Scholarship awards because they were fully packaged with other aid, are less likely to complete 30 credits in a year (40.4% vs. 52.1%) but more likely to do so than those who were not eligible. This difference is also true across race/ethnicity groups.

CUNY Students institutional retention rates were over 11 points higher in year one and for year two, institutional retention rate of Excelsior students was 7 percentage point higher than that of non-Excelsior students (based on preliminary data). Excelsior students had higher GPA than non-Excelsior students (2.86 vs. 2.40), based on full-time

first-time freshmen enrolled in fall 2017, spring 2018 and fall 2018.

The percent of full-time first-time freshmen taking 15 or more credits for the fall 2016 was 30.6 percent, for the fall 2017 was 40.7 percent and for the fall 2018 was 43.2 percent, showing a steady increase in numbers.

We are delighted that under the DREAM Act, eligible undocumented students will now qualify for TAP, the Excelsior scholarship and other forms of State aid. At CUNY, we have thousands of undocumented students who will directly benefit from your actions, and we applaud the Governor and the legislature for your national leadership on this issue.

We believe CUNY has about 6,000 undocumented students registered at our colleges. Many attend part-time due to cost. We believe the vast majority would attend full-time with the assistance of TAP and

Excelsior. We partner with the Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) to award the State aid programs for this population upon receipt and are excited to produce those awards this semester.

For award year 2018-2019, 59.3 percent of our registered undergraduate students are Pell recipients equaling 140,471 students, and 48.9 percent

of our registered undergraduates are TAP recipients equaling 104,679 students. Combined, 90,490 registered undergraduate students receive both TAP and Pell, or 31.5 percent. 110,088 full time enrolled undergraduate students received State aid funds (this number includes TAP, Aid-for-Part-Time Studies, Excelsior Scholarships, and all other State aid scholarships).

We disbursed \$954,028,607 in Federal aid to full-time undergraduate students, and \$398,068,355 in State aid. Over one billion dollars of financial aid funds are disbursed annually to our CUNY students.

At CUNY 80% of our students graduate debt-free. We are proud of this and thankful to the Governor and Legislature for their funding support that enables CUNY to remain affordable for so many young people.

CUNY's strength comes from the extraordinary richness and vibrancy of our large, diverse community. Through financial aid our students focus on navigating the college process, completing a degree and achieve their dreams, and we thank you for your extraordinary partnership in this work.

To: The NYS Senate Higher Education Committee

From: Mr. Jamell N.A. Henderson M.P.A., M.P.P., 4-Time CUNY Graduate and CUNY Rising Alliance Coordinator

To Chairperson Mary Ann Stavisky, the esteemed and honorable members of the NYS Senate Higher Education Committee, to Senator Kevin Parker, Senator Andrew Gounardes, Senator Julia Salazar and Senator Velmanatte Montgomery

My name is Jamell Henderson and I am a proud 4-Time CUNY Graduate receiving degrees from: A.A Business Administration, Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) '11; B.A. Political Science, Brooklyn College '15; Master of Public Administration, Baruch College via National Urban Fellows '16 and Master of Public Policy, The Graduate Center '19. I am 34 years old and I am proud to say that not only have I accomplished this historic achievement as a CUNY Student in 15 years, but as a proud and current resident of NYCHA Kingsborough Houses. I am also proud to say that I am a Black man who accomplishes all of this while living and surviving while Black in America. I come to you as the CUNY Rising Alliance (CRA) Coordinator, which is a coalition of over 20 different organizations that are united in educating, mobilizing and educating the students of CUNY to fight for a fully funded, high-quality CUNY for all.

Members of this esteemed committee, I come before you not to talk about numbers to you because I know my colleagues within the alliance will provide that data. I come before you to experience our experience; to experience the real CUNY experience. Prior to and since being the CRA Coordinator, students have shared with me the conditions that they have to unfortunately endure on their respected campuses as they pursue their degree. Students have shared with me from Brooklyn College how they are in overcrowded classrooms that have poor air quality, horrid lighting and off balance with the room temperatures during the seasons throughout the year. Students have shared with me from City College the despicable conditions that they have to endure while reading and studying in the library; from rodents roaming throughout the day, to mold and mildew gathered in books that they need to read.

Students from Queens College, BMCC, Hunter and Lehman have shared with me how they are feeling frustrated due to the poor quality of advisement they are receiving let alone having to wait another semester or even a year just to take a certain class in order to graduate because it's not available. Students from Kingsborough and Medgar Evers College have shared with me the lack of funding they get to operate student clubs to build student life, the lack of resources that are available or known to them because it's poorly advertised to help them make it

through academically or financially. Students from Bronx Community College, Guttman, York and City Tech have shared with me how they are enduring mental strains due to the difficult decisions they have to make; from paying rent or paying for their semester; taking out loans or is just unable to bring up their GPA because they are juggling so many things in their lives. These are the stories that keep me up sometimes and I want you to know that some of these stories I can relate to directly.

Members of this committee, Higher Education is not a toy to be played with; there are thousands of students who are depending on their CUNY degrees to lift their families out of poverty, to bring their incomes to the middle-class levels, who are looking for a better way of life and to become powerful residents of our beloved city and state. Think about this, there are students who come from my communities that are looking at the CUNY experience as their last resort before doing something that can greatly impact their lives in a negative way. There are students who are in need of you to represent their needs in making CUNY a fully-funded university where they will NEVER have to worry about coming out of their pockets again.

The state of New York has the 3rd largest budget in the country, following behind the state of California and the United States. We have the capacity to make history and make CUNY be fully-funded once again. I want you to imagine how much that will save the mother of 3 who lives in Brownsville who has to balance her education and her household on her own; the father of 2 who lives in Soundview who is making a decision to pay for school or pay for rent; think about the Ghanaian student who is in Harlem who chose our university but has to pay 10x more than a resident here in our state who really want to make this city their home but can't afford to survive here financially because of the horrifying costs of CUNY as an international student. Think about the RETURNING CITIZEN who did their time and wants to start a new way of life and what a fully funded CUNY would do for them; think about the student who is currently hiding somewhere on their respected campuses because they rather risk getting caught by public safety versus being out on the street or in a shelter to rest or to find a place to study.

Members of this committee, you all agree that Education is the key to success, the driving force behind the city and state; don't give us a rusted key. On behalf of the CUNY Rising Alliance, in the name of integrity, in the name of the students in my communities that are Black, Hispanic/Latinx; those students who are working two or three jobs while being the first in their family, or taking care of their family; in the name of the returning citizen who wants to start over and make a difference in their lives and for society; in the name of the students who are aging out of foster care; in the name of the student who lives in NYCHA, or homeless or in the shelter; in the name of the student that is experiencing hunger and is coping with mental health issues; in the name of the international student that wants to make NY their home and have chosen CUNY as their place to gain knowledge. We are asking that you fully fund CUNY to

improve our infrastructure, end hunger, hire more full-time faculty and staff, put an end to tuition, spread all resources to ALL campuses and improve student life, which in turn will create true positive outcomes for all students of today and tomorrow.

The ultimate power we have is choice; I am asking that you choose the CUNY student NOW!

Respectfully submitted,

YOUNG INVINCIBLES

New York State Senate Higher Education Committee Hearing on the Cost of Public Education

Submitted by Melanie Krugelis, Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy, Young Invincibles
October 24, 2019

Good morning. My name is Melanie Krugelis, and I am the Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy at Young Invincibles. Young Invincibles is a policy and advocacy non-profit dedicated to elevating young adults in the political process and expanding economic opportunities for our generation. We work with young adults across the country and in our five state offices (New York, Texas, California, Illinois, and Colorado) to ensure that our voices are at the table when it comes to higher education, health care, workforce development, and civic engagement. I want to thank Senator Toby Ann Stavisky for bringing folks together for this important hearing on the cost of public education in New York State, and her leadership on the Senate Higher Education Committee. I also want to thank Senators Andrew Gounardes, Kevin Parker, Julia Salazar, and Velmanette Montgomery for their commitment to college access and success in New York City.

Today's hearing comes at a critical moment for New York's college students. Today, nine out of every ten jobs created in the United States go to those with a college degree.¹ In New York City, workers with a bachelor's degree earn, on average, \$550 more per week than those with a high school diploma.² While there are multiple pathways to a living-wage career, a college degree remains one of the best bets a person can make to attaining long-term economic stability. However, access to a quality postsecondary experience is not created equal. Nationally, white and Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) students graduate from college at rates nearly twice that of Black students and about 1.5 that of Latinx students.³ And while data shows that completion rates for students at both two-year and four-year public colleges are higher than for

¹ Goldstein, Steve. (2019). Nine out of 10 new jobs are going to those with a college degree. Retrieved from: <https://www.marketwatch.com/story/nine-out-of-10-new-jobs-are-going-to-those-with-a-college-degree-2018-06-04>

² New York State Department of Labor. Labor Statistics for the New York City Region. Retrieved from: https://www.labor.ny.gov/stats/why_go_to_school.shtm

³ Six-year college graduation rates for AAPI students: 70.3 percent; Black students: 41.0 percent; Latinx students: 49.6 percent; White students: 67.1 percent. Source: National Student Clearinghouse. (2018) Completing College – National – 2018. Figure 6. Retrieved from: <https://nscresearchcenter.org/signaturereport16/>.

students enrolled in for-profit colleges, the fact remains that students at public colleges — particularly those enrolled at our community colleges — are graduating at much lower rates than anyone at today's hearing would like.⁴

Evidence of this racial gap in college attainment can be seen in our public institutions right here in New York. Graduation rates across State University of New York (SUNY) colleges are higher than those at City University of New York (CUNY) campuses. At SUNY, the six-year graduation rate at the system's senior colleges is 68 percent,⁵ compared with a 55 percent⁶ completion rate at CUNY's four-year universities.⁷ The gap is present, and perhaps even more alarming, at the systems' community colleges: SUNY's community colleges have a 26 percent three-year graduation rate, as compared with 22 percent at CUNY's community colleges.⁸

What does this story of differing graduation rates tell us about the state of higher education equity in New York? One must look at the students currently served by these public college systems to see. Today, more than half of the student population at SUNY is white,⁹ while at CUNY, over half of the total student population are Black and Latinx students.¹⁰ Moreover, 45 percent of CUNY students are the first in their families to go to college, navigating a complex, costly, and time-consuming system without lived experiences from families to lean on for guidance.¹¹

How then can New York change course and ensure that its young people have equitable access to educational success and meaningful work? How can we ensure taxpayer dollars are supporting systems that propel more students from low-income families and more students of color into greater economic stability?

⁴ National Student Clearinghouse. (2018). Completing College – National – 2018. Figure 4. Retrieved from: <https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/SignatureReport16.pdf>

⁵ SUNY Fast Facts. (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.suny.edu/about/fast-facts/>

⁶ CUNY Matters, Keep on Moving Up. (2018). Retrieved from: <http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/matters/2018/02/16/keep-on-moving-on/>

⁷ CUNY Matters, Keep on Moving Up. (2018). Retrieved from: <http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/matters/2018/02/16/keep-on-moving-on/>

⁸ Center for an Urban Future. (2017). Struggling to the Finish Line: Community College Completion in New York State Retrieved from: <https://nycfuture.org/research/community-college-completion-in-new-york>

⁹ SUNY Fast Facts. (2019). Retrieved from: <https://www.suny.edu/about/fast-facts/>

¹⁰ CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. (2018). Retrieved from: https://www.cuny.edu/irdatabook/rpts2_AY_current/ENRI_0015_RACE_TOT_PCT.rpt.pdf

¹¹ The State of CUNY 2017: Where We Have Been, Where We Are At, and Where We Are Going. (2017). Retrieved from: <http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/cunyufs/wp-content/uploads/sites/48/2017/07/The-State-of-CUNY-2017-for-COPS-t-003.pdf>

To start, the state can also work to ensure that our systems are adequately funded to serve students, who are increasingly entering college from a variety of backgrounds — from the rising number of young parents enrolling in college, to the growing share of students juggling work and school, to the number of students experiencing homelessness in college.¹² Yet, our current paradigm for public higher education funding does not support that vision of postsecondary equity. Consider the curious case of the TAP Gap. Since 2011, state law has required that students with the greatest financial need — those eligible for the maximum Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) award — must be able to attend SUNY or CUNY tuition-free, even if state disinvestment from TAP meant the award no longer matched tuition. While ensuring that the state's most financially at-need students is laudable, the law required the universities — not the state — to fill in the gap when TAP doesn't cover tuition. This threatens the institutional ability to provide critical student supports such as counseling and advising services, full-time faculty and staff, and support with non-tuition costs that can make or break a student's ability to persist. This unfunded tuition mandate does not serve the state's public institutions, nor the students they serve. **It's time for the state to eliminate the TAP Gap by indexing the TAP award with tuition, so tuition no longer exceeds TAP grants and grows with the costs of college.**

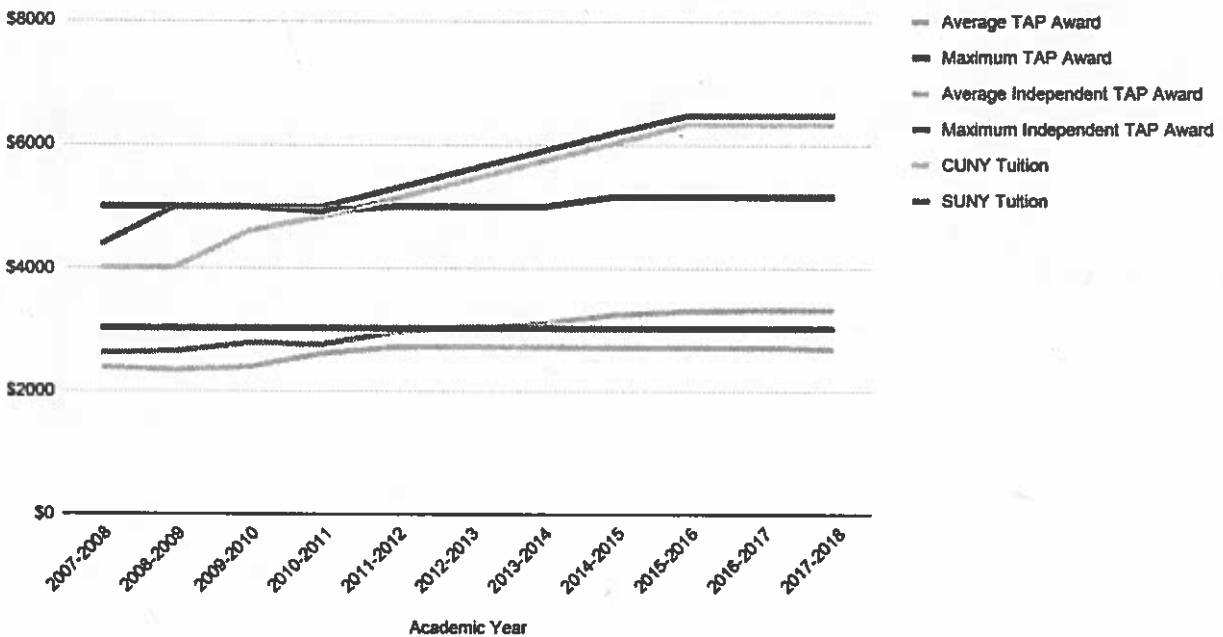
The continued underinvestment in the TAP award particularly harms those students on the independent TAP schedule, including homeless youth. A 2019 survey of more than 22,000 CUNY undergraduates found that nearly 15 percent of the surveyed undergraduates experienced homelessness in a given year — five percentage points higher than the share of New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) students in temporary housing.¹³ And while research suggests student homelessness is on the rise across the P-16 system, our state financial aid system does not adequately serve students who lack a reliable, safe place to stay at night. Under current TAP rules, unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY) are classified as financially independent student students, which essentially cuts how much TAP aid these students are eligible to receive. Today, the maximum award for an independent student is \$3,025, compared with a maximum dependent student award of \$5,165. In terms of average awards,

¹² CLASP. (2015). Yesterday's Non-Traditional Student Is Today's Traditional Student. Retrieved from: <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/public/resources-and-publications/publication-1/CPES-Nontraditional-students-pdf.pdf>; Hope Center. (2019). City University of New York #RealCollege Survey. Retrieved from: https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/HOPE_realcollege_CUNY_report_final_webversion.pdf

¹³ Hope Center. (2019). City University of New York #RealCollege Survey. Retrieved from: https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/HOPE_realcollege_CUNY_report_final_webversion.pdf

unaccompanied homeless youth receive \$631 less in TAP awards annually than their dependent peers. This limits the financial aid available to students who could most benefit from an investment in their education. In 2014, New York State amended rules surrounding dependent status for foster youth, orphans, and wards of the court, allowing those students to access the state's dependent status and thus receive a higher amount of aid. Unaccompanied homeless students, however, were not included in that revision. **Given the prevalence of homelessness on college campuses, the state should expand this dependency status change to students who are experiencing homelessness.**

The purchasing power of the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) has declined over the last decade — and unaccompanied homeless youth receive less than their dependent peers.



What else can be done to ensure that New York State honors taxpayers' investment in public colleges and supports its increasingly diverse student body to graduation? Invest in wraparound services that both research and students say improve their on-campus experience and increase the likelihood of completion. Take, for instance, the CUNY Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). ASAP is an initiative that helps students earn associate degrees within three years by providing a range of financial, academic, and personal supports including waivers for

tuition and mandatory fees for students, and providing students with transportation and textbook supports. A study by MDRC found that students enrolled in CUNY ASAP had doubled the graduation rates of their non-ASAP peers.¹⁴ In fact, the ASAP three-year graduation rate of 53 percent is more than three times higher than the national urban community college three-year graduation rate of 16 percent, and more than double that of similar CUNY associate degree-seeking students at 25 percent.¹⁵ CUNY's ASAP program has been so successful that it has been replicated in Ohio, which has seen similar improvements in retention and completion to that of CUNY. In addition, this model is being expanded regionally, with Westchester Community College most recently launching a similar program. Given the success of ASAP, CUNY has recently started replicating this model in the system's four-year institutions with the Accelerate, Complete, and Engage (ACE) program, which is currently piloting at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Lehman College. Students corroborate what the outcomes data show. In focus groups Young Invincibles held across New York City over the last year, students told us about the value they saw in the CUNY ASAP program. *"I feel like in college, ASAP is one of the best programs anybody can join,"* one student told us. *"If they bring it to the four-year colleges, I'd go back to school to purposefully get in that program."* As the state struggles to increase its graduation rates at public colleges, we should look at the model that's improving those rates by meeting students' needs where there at. It's time to invest in programs that move the needle on student completion and success. **New York State should contribute at least \$25 million to strengthen and expand the ASAP program and another \$25 million to grow ACE across all CUNY senior colleges.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and we look forward to working with the Senators present today and your colleagues to tackle the college affordability crisis, and ensure that all New Yorkers have access to a high-quality postsecondary credential.

¹⁴ MDRC. (2019). Evaluating Replications of CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). Retrieved from: <https://www.mdrc.org/project/Evaluating-Replications-of-CUNY-ASAP#overview>.

¹⁵ The City University of New York. (2018). CUNY Expands Its Promising 'ACE' Program to Lehman College in Partnership With Robln Hood Foundation. Retrieved from: <https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2018/12/10/lehman-college-ace-program/https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2018/12/10/lehman-college-ace-program/>.

My name is Fay Yanofsky and I am the Brooklyn College University Student Senate Main Delegate. I want to briefly discuss the issues that matter to the students. I summarized my point as per your request Chair Stavitsky.

1. Mental health is one of the most pressing issues students are grappling with on all campuses. We need funding for our school counseling. At Brooklyn College, students only receive three sessions for a counselor. My classmate Daniel jumped off the George Washington Bridge because of depression and anxiety.

2. Adjuncts both need and are asking to be paid \$7,000 a course. Senator Jackson to your point about the raises, the faculty told me that if the state does not pay for these raises then it will come out of the CUNY budget and bankrupt the colleges; therefore, the adjuncts need your support.

3. Maintenance of Effort Bill is a 3 billion dollar investment to maintain our infrastructure, get rid of asbestos, and fix our broken elevators. The common answer we receive is the state does not have any money from to pay for these things. We have not received any money since 2013.

4. We need to close the Tap Gap! We have a 74 million dollar gap, which is the difference between the actual cost of tuition and what financial assistance covers.

5. Excelsior scholarship only covers 1-2% of students in the CUNY system.

6. An astonishing 48% of CUNY Students are food insecure and 15% of CUNY Students have reported homelessness at some point.

6. The Governor and the Mayor appoint the Board of Trustees and they are indirectly responsible for our tuition increases and they are not interested in stopping them. If we want to see any progress from this, we hope the legislative bodies across New York override their agenda that financially hurts students

Thank you for listening to our concerns.

**Testimony of
Leonard Blades
Vice Chair for Disability Affairs,
University Student Senate (USS),
NYS Senate Committee on Higher Education
October 24th, 2019
Brooklyn College
Brooklyn, NY**

Good afternoon.

Chair Stavisky, members of the State Senate Committee on Higher Education, and members of the Brooklyn delegation to the New York State Senate, my name is Leonard Blades, and I proudly serve as the Vice Chair for Disability Affairs for the University Student Senate (USS), CUNY's official student governance organization. I am also privileged to serve as the Chairperson for the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities (CCSD). I am currently a graduate student at the CUNY School of Professional Studies, pursuing an M.S. in Disability Services in Higher Education. Moreover, I am a proud alumnus of Brooklyn College, and a lifelong resident of Kings County.

Thank you for the invitation to testify at today's hearing.

I am here this afternoon to urge you to enhance access to higher education for thousands of New Yorkers by supporting our state's college and university students

with disabilities. Students with disabilities have enrolled in New York State postsecondary institutions in record numbers. According to the State Education Department (SED), there are more than 73,000 students with disabilities currently enrolled at New York State higher education institutions.

At CUNY, there are more than 11,000 identified students with disabilities, that's an increase of 50 percent over the last 25 years, according to the University's Office of Institutional Research. Fortunately, thanks to support from the state legislature, CUNY has a budget line in its operating budget specifically for providing services for our students with disabilities.

However, investment in critical support services has not kept pace with enrollment. In fact, if you factor inflation, investment in reasonable accommodations has actually declined. Moreover, CUNY's budget line for disability services has remained at the same amount, \$2.5 million, since FY 1993-94.

The good news is that there is now an opportunity to address this problem. The State Education Department is advancing a budget request that would provide supplemental support for students with disabilities at all four sectors of higher education in our State: CUNY, SUNY, private colleges and universities and proprietary institutions. The initial request for funding the SED program is \$15 million. Most importantly, SED funding plan will not replace existing CUNY funding for our students with disabilities. Once fully funded, the additional funding provided

by the SED program would nearly double CUNY's current operating budget for services to students with disabilities.

I have attached to my testimony the description of the State Education budget request for this item from FY 2019-2020. I have also included a brief summary of some of the ways CUNY could enhance support for our diverse student with disabilities population, should it receive adequate funding.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to thank both Senator Stavisky and Senator Gounardes for their leadership in this area. Senator Stavisky, you helped champion the successful legislative effort to fund our CUNY LEADS program, which provides invaluable career and academic guidance for our students with disabilities, not to mention enhanced employment opportunities. Your door has always been open to listen to our concerns, and champion our causes.

Senator Gounardes, during only your first legislature session as a member of the State Senate, you not only supported the SED funding initiative, but you co-sponsored our Disability Advocacy Day rally at the Capitol building, last February. More than 200 students with disabilities, from throughout the State, participated in that effort to raise awareness about the needs of New York State college and university students with disabilities.

I urge all our friends in the State senate to join us at next February's advocacy day, Moreover, please advocate in favor of the SED budget request for enhancing support services for college and university students with disabilities. Please support

this issue in Conference; and urge leadership to make funding for higher education a budget priority during the upcoming legislative session.

Thank you.

Testimony before the New York State Senate Committee on Higher Education on the cost of public higher education, financial aid programs, state support, TAP/GAP, student borrowing and other challenges to affordability and accessibility.

Thursday, October 24, 2019

Good afternoon. I'd like to start by thanking Chairwoman Stavisky and the rest of the Senate Committee on Higher Education for holding this hearing and inviting me to testify on behalf of CWA District 1 and CWA Local 1104 regarding this important issue.

My name is Andrew Dobbyn and I am a graduate student studying Philosophy at Stony Brook University as well as a teaching assistant. I also am a member of GSEU of CWA Local 1104. GSEU of CWA Local 1104 represents 4,800 graduate student workers at the SUNY school system across the state. I am here today to highlight the difficult affordability challenges that we as graduate student workers face.

In addition to tuition, SUNY schools charge their students fees, tied to course credit hours. Both undergraduate and graduate students are subject to these fees, charged at regular points throughout the academic year.

In recent years, the cost of these fees has risen steadily alongside tuition at public colleges and universities in the U.S. The increase in fees represents a financial response to the problem of inadequate state funding for public higher education. Fees often function as a backdoor tuition for public universities to circumvent state-imposed tuition caps and sustain their operating costs.

SUNY employs 5,000 graduate students as teaching and research assistants. Their duties range from teaching courses, to grading exams and papers, to conducting laboratory research. Graduate student employees with full appointments (0.5 FTE) are expected to work 20 hours per week for their departments and are compensated with an annual stipend and, in most cases, a tuition waiver. Most graduate and teaching assistants in the SUNY system are unionized public employees represented by the Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU), a division of the Communication Workers of America (CWA) Local 1104.

For graduate students engaged in full-time coursework, average fees across the four SUNY University Centers currently exceed \$2,000 per academic year. At the University at Buffalo (UB), which has the highest fees in the SUNY system, domestic graduate students pay up to \$2,600 per academic year in fees. For international graduate students at UB, fees can be as much as \$2,800 per academic year.

Graduate students employed by SUNY as teaching and research assistants are not exempt from these fees, which can constitute up to 25% of their annual stipend for those making the contractual minimum of \$10,158 (for the 2019-20 academic year). While stipend amounts vary considerably between campuses and academic departments, the average graduate employee stipend across the four University Centers is about \$20,000 per academic year for TAs and GAs with full appointments. For those graduate employees earning the average stipend, the amount they must pay back to their university each year in fees can represent as much as 17% of their annual income.

For graduate student employees, fees are effectively an employer-levied tax on their income that presents a significant financial burden for many. A substantial portion of their income that would ordinarily go towards making ends meet like paying rent and buying groceries must be paid back to their employer in the form of fees.

In many cases, these fees are used to fund systems and services that graduate workers utilize in their capacity as employees, such as the software programs used to collect and assess student assignments and submit grades. This constitutes a "pay-to-work" system in which employees are being charged for the maintenance and upkeep of the workplace, rather than the employer bearing full responsibility for such operating costs, as is the norm in most workplaces.

The state higher education institutions cannot close their funding gaps on the backs of graduate student workers, who already struggle to pay for basic needs like groceries and rent. We must put an end to this practice immediately.

As graduate students and employees of the SUNY system, we ask the committee to consider supporting legislation that would waive these fees for graduate student workers. S.3916 filed by Chairwoman Stavisky and A.7241 filed by Assemblymember Pichardo would do just that. This bill would exempt all graduate students employed by the state systems as Teaching Assistants, Graduate Assistants and Research Assistants (on .25 appointments Full-Time Equivalent and above) from paying fees. This bill passed the Senate last year and we are hopeful to see this move in the Assembly. As members of the Senate higher education committee, we urge you to support this issue and urge your colleagues in the Assembly to move this legislation and pass this bill this session.

Before I close, I want to also state our support for closing the Tuition Assistance Program gap. The Tuition Assistance Program spends \$900 million a year to support more than 300,000 students. However, SUNY and CUNY are forced to fill the difference between TAP awards and the actual cost of tuition. This is especially taxing on the state higher education systems budgets as tuition costs grow. This has cost public higher education institutions \$700 million since 2012. By forcing these institutions to fund this gap with their operating revenue, the state is harming students and putting additional pressure on those school systems to tighten budgets - including on the backs of graduate student workers. By closing the growing gap between the State Tuition Assistance Program and the actual cost of tuition, New York State is making good on its promise to make higher education affordable to all students.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share our testimony today and for your consideration of these important issues.

**TESTIMONY OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY ON THE FUNDING AND COST
OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION**

HEARING OF THE NY STATE SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

October 24, 2019, Brooklyn College
Andrea Vasquez, First Vice President

Good afternoon, Senate Chairperson Stavisky, members of the Committee on Higher Education and other Senators. On behalf of the PSC's 30,000 members, thank you for scheduling hearings throughout the state to examine the cost of public higher education and its effect on student financial aid programs, including TAP and Excelsior. Thank you also for providing an opportunity at these hearings to address the crisis in funding for CUNY and SUNY caused by the TAP Gap and for highlighting in your notice the increased tuition burden on students and the need to explore ways to provide funding for New York's public university systems.

I want to begin by acknowledging the great advance made for CUNY students in the last legislative session: passage of the NYS Dream Act. As college faculty and staff who educate thousands of Dreamers, we were proud to support the legislation to give them access to State financial aid and proud to see that legislation finally become law.

The Dream Act is emblematic of our shared goal of providing access to college for as many students as possible. The members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education and the Senate Majority have focused effectively on access, as have the members of the Assembly Majority. New York has invested strongly in student access to public and private higher education through the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and made a much-publicized but relatively small investment in the Excelsior Scholarship.

New York's approach to college access has contributed to significant enrollment growth at CUNY, but the investments in the faculty, staff and student services needed to ensure the success of CUNY's growing student body have not followed. State investment in CUNY over the past ten years has resulted in a decline of 18 percent in the per-FTE student allocation to the senior colleges, controlling for inflation. This is an unsustainable trend of decline having a substantial impact on the quality of a CUNY education for its mostly black and brown student body. The years of disinvestment have been paired with annual tuition increases and growing tuition dependence, especially at the senior colleges.

I am here today to urge you to demonstrate your commitment to CUNY by closing the TAP Gap in the next budget and adopting a far more ambitious approach to CUNY funding. We need a New Deal for CUNY because, to put it simply, the current funding model for New York's four-year public universities is unsustainable.

The new Senate Majority and a rising, progressive political energy in our state made possible passage of not only of the Dream Act, but of historic tenant-friendly rent regulation, long-stalled farmworkers' rights legislation, environmental protections, and more. These are important victories, but there is so much more that must be accomplished for the people of New York, if we are truly going to combat inequality.

The voters who are powering the changes in the Legislature want a more equal economy and quality college education for every student, no matter their race, their income or their family's national origin. CUNY has been proven to combat inequality and to throw open the doors to the jobs and the ideas of tomorrow. Yet the current funding model for New York's four-year public universities is unsustainable. CUNY's senior colleges are in funding crisis and we need the Senate Committee on Higher Education to redouble your efforts to fight for CUNY.

CUNY should be well-funded and free, as it once was. CUNY students should have access to the courses they need to meet their graduation requirements. They should have well-staffed libraries, counseling centers and tutoring centers and advisors with manageable caseloads. Full-time faculty with the time to be mentors and provide individual instruction should teach the majority of courses and adjunct instructors should be well-paid and respected for the vital role they play at CUNY.

TAP helps students afford CUNY, but the TAP Gap undermines their success.

A central problem in financing the the public university systems in New York State is the structural deficit—or TAP Gap—in the State's primary financial aid program, the Tuition Assistance Program. The TAP Gap is a systemic, compounding problem in how the state underfunds financial aid for the CUNY and SUNY four-year colleges.¹ Here's how it works: Students at public colleges qualify for TAP awards up to \$5000 based on their family income, and CUNY and SUNY are required to provide an unfunded discount to their remaining tuition that is applied in addition to the TAP award. The unfunded tuition discounts are proportional to the TAP awards. Students who qualify for the maximum TAP award receive an unfunded tuition discount equal to the difference between \$5000 and the cost of tuition (currently \$6930). This means a student who pays full tuition pays \$1930 more per year to CUNY than the State pays to fund the education of a low-income student who qualifies for the maximum TAP award. That is an outrageous unintended consequence for a university where 60 percent of full-time undergraduate students have annual family incomes below \$30,000. Students with slightly higher incomes, who qualify for smaller TAP awards, receive proportionally smaller unfunded discounts.

Not increasing the tuition burden on low-income students is a good thing, but the TAP Gap cost CUNY senior colleges \$70 million last year. This revenue loss amounts to more than twice the revenue generated by tuition increases over the last two years. CUNY predicts that the TAP Gap will increase to \$82 million this year because of the latest \$200 tuition hike.

The TAP Gap grows with every tuition hike—and it will grow larger now that the Dream Act has made TAP aid available to more students. Last year, approximately 67,000 students at CUNY senior colleges received TAP aid. But every CUNY student, whether they qualify for TAP or not, is harmed by a budget that has less money for instruction and less money for direct student services that help students to stay enrolled and to graduate on time.

¹ TAP discounts became law in 2011 and have increased annually. In the 2016-2017 academic year, CUNY senior colleges provided \$51 million in TAP tuition discounts (or credits). By 2018-18 the most recently concluded academic year, CUNY senior colleges provided \$70 million and CUNY estimates that the total cut increased \$12 million for every \$200 tuition hike. Thus, CUNY's TAP Gap for the current year is likely to be \$82 million before students receiving TAP under the Jose Peralta NYS Dream Act are counted.

CUNY, which enrolls a higher percentage of low-income students than SUNY, is affected to a greater degree than SUNY by the TAP Gap. And since CUNY enrolls a higher percentage of students of color than SUNY, this means New Yorkers of color are also disproportionately harmed by the TAP Gap. At CUNY 77 percent of undergraduate students are people of color. At SUNY, the percentage of students of color is 43 percent.

Private non-profit colleges, which charge higher tuition than CUNY, are not forced to provide a tuition discount when they accept TAP-eligible students. In fact, private colleges receive more revenue from the State than CUNY and SUNY colleges receive for each maximum-TAP-eligible student that they enroll. Private non-profit colleges receive the maximum TAP award of \$5165 for each maximum-TAP-eligible student they enroll, while SUNY and CUNY colleges receive only \$5000 per maximum-TAP-eligible student.

Combined with the lack of funding for mandatory costs, the TAP Gap is hollowing out the senior colleges. Brooklyn College lost out on \$7.2 million last year due to the TAP Gap. Queens College lost \$6.7 million.

CUNY has implemented four straight years of internal budget cuts.

With mounting unfunded operating expenses and an ever-widening TAP Gap, senior colleges like Brooklyn and Queens have implemented four straight years of internal budget cuts. This year, the colleges face shortages of supplies and equipment, broken computers, reduced hours for writing and tutoring centers, and reduced hours for libraries. Faculty and staff lines are being left unfilled. As of last month, Queens College, for example, has no Director of Counseling Services, no Director of the Tutoring Center, no Registrar and no Director of Graduate Admissions. The Counseling Center at Queens is down from seven full-time employees to four, to serve 20,000 students. There are only 10 full-time advisors serving students here at Brooklyn College's the Center for Academic Advisement and Student Success and just four full-time psychologists employed by Brooklyn College's Personal Counseling Program. There are 18,000 students at Brooklyn College. The recommended ratio is 1 psychologist to 1000 students.

To meet this year's budget reductions, fully enrolled course sections have been cut at some colleges as the colleges have increased enrollment thresholds that constitute a full course. Here at Brooklyn College members have reported that courses were cut in larger numbers and later than usual, some only two or three weeks before the start of the term. Cuts to course offerings began this Fall at Queens College in the departments of Secondary Education, Political Science, Anthropology, Media Studies, and Philosophy. The English department at Queens, which was ordered to cut its budget by \$67,000 in Spring 2020, planned to eliminate 800 out of 1,000 student seats in required writing courses. We hear that push-back from the union and the department has successfully driven the administration to pull back at least some of these draconian cuts to the English program.

To be clear, course section cuts result in "savings" because adjunct instructors lose paid course assignments. A cancelled course can push an adjunct who earns most or all of their living at CUNY into poverty. For some, it can mean a loss of health insurance. When word of the cancellation of a course comes two weeks before the start of the semester, many adjuncts have no savings or other income source to fall back on. It is a crisis!

Full funding for CUNY should be the Committee on Higher Education's goal.

CUNY needs the TAP Gap closed immediately. We urge you to make funding to close the entire TAP Gap at CUNY a top priority for the Senate in this budget session. It should be the first victory in a serious and sustained

campaign to implement an ambitious New Deal for CUNY. The New Deal should make CUNY tuition-free. It should require funding for adequate ratios of full-time faculty to students, staffing levels that make it possible to provide the services students need, manageable caseloads for counselors and advisors, good pay and working conditions for adjunct instructors, and modern facilities and equipment.

Start by helping us to advocate for the full closure of the TAP Gap now, and urge the Governor to provide funding to close the TAP Gap in his Executive Budget. When the legislative session begins, make adding funding to close the TAP Gap your “must-have.” Make it your must-have when leadership consults about the budget negotiations, and fight hard in conference to make full closure of the TAP Gap the priority of the Senate Majority. Have the will to demand more for CUNY and SUNY and the imagination to see beyond the table targets. Challenge other Senators to fight for CUNY and SUNY as well.

The PSC supports Free CUNY and other financial aid reforms, but urges the Senate to also address the University’s operating budget so students have the support they need to succeed.

At CUNY, class size, course availability, teaching conditions and learning conditions are as much issues of economic and racial justice as financial aid and college costs. But these justice issues that directly affect student graduation rates, the quality of a CUNY education, and even the futures that CUNY students imagine for themselves, are often given short shrift in Albany. They are all but ignored when the operating budget allocation for the senior colleges remains essentially flat.

Our union supports the movement for free CUNY, if it is also a movement for quality CUNY. Improving TAP and Excelsior, which benefits a very small number of CUNY students, is one possible way to achieve “free.” The problems with Excelsior are well documented. The PSC continues to support reforms to TAP that would benefit part-time students and low-income independent students without children. But we caution that a structural solution providing funding to close the TAP Gap must be provided first, before reforms to TAP and Excelsior are implemented. Otherwise, every reform that expands the pool of TAP or Excelsior recipients also accelerates the State’s disinvestment in CUNY.

Filling the TAP Gap will allow for investments in the classroom and in student services that will improve CUNY’s ability to help students to persist in their studies and progress toward graduation, especially if the investments are paired with more robust financial aid. The success of ASAP—the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs initiative—in increasing graduation rates by more than two-fold proves that such investments make a difference. SEEK and College Discovery offer further examples. These programs demonstrate how low-income students with poor high school preparation can succeed and graduate from CUNY, if they have the right supports. But most CUNY students are not enrolled in ASAP, SEEK or College Discovery.

Scaling up ASAP and similar programs is another possible path to a free CUNY. The PSC has testified many times that ASAP is a fine example of what a free and well-funded CUNY can achieve for students and for New York. Or eliminating tuition altogether and shifting financial aid to other college costs may be the kind of ambitious, radical approach New York needs. However, we envision achieving a free university, a free and quality university must be our goal.

CUNY's enrollment success should be supported, not underfunded.

Last week, CUNY announced that freshman enrollment has reached another record high. Freshman enrollment at CUNY has increased 17 percent in the last 10 years, even as freshman enrollment has remained flat nationally. Over the last 20 years, CUNY's overall full-time-equivalent enrollment has increased by almost 70,000 students.

What an achievement! CUNY has been there for students as New York City public schools have steadily and substantially improved graduation rates. CUNY has been there for students as the economy has shifted and a college degree has become prerequisite for most careers. CUNY has been there as increasing numbers of immigrants have come to our city seeking a better life. But CUNY's enrollment success has come at a cost.

State funding for CUNY senior colleges has failed to keep up with enrollment and with inflation. It fell 18% per full-time equivalent student between 2008 and 2018, when adjusted for inflation. Graduation rates for CUNY students are lower than they should be in large part because the University has inadequate resources to fund the investments that are known to improve student retention and success: access to full-time faculty, high-contact advisement and counseling, smaller classes, and good teaching conditions.

Since 2011, the Executive Budget has provided an essentially flat operating budget allocation for CUNY senior colleges. The State funded increases in the cost of CUNY's fringe benefits and kept year-to-year increases to the colleges to two percent. The fringe benefit funding is critical, but it is far less than CUNY needs to cover its year-to-year mandatory cost increases. The only other revenue increase at the senior colleges has come from tuition hikes. These are the terms of the basic Maintenance of Effort included originally in the SUNY2020 law. The Compact between the State, the students and the University did not work out as legislators hoped. Lawmakers voted for SUNY 2020 in the belief that the annual student tuition hikes would be paired with increased State investment. They were not. SUNY 2020 also brought us the growing "TAP Gap."

Sixty-five percent of *full-time undergraduates* attend tuition CUNY free because their tuition is covered by state or federal financial aid (though they pay other significant college costs, like books and transportation). But not all students are able to attend CUNY full time. In Fall 2018 there were 80,000 part-time undergraduates at CUNY and there were 58,000 full-time undergraduates paying some or all of their tuition. (Plus 30,000 graduate students and 275,000 non matriculated adult continuing education students.) Most of the 58,000 full-time undergraduates paying some or all of their tuition have annual family incomes from 35,000 to 80,000. These are working families supported by office workers and support staff, civil servants, teachers, nurse assistants, and the like.

Conclusion

There is money to support this vision for a New Deal for CUNY. It would take a small portion of the State's \$175 billion budget. There is money to be had by passing tax reforms that make the rich and corporations pay higher taxes. The Governor has the power to set spending and revenue limits in the budget, but the Legislature can and has negotiated for more progressive taxation and critical investments.

The Legislature showed last year that laws once thought impossible to change can be rewritten, that provisions once assumed outside of New York's reach can now become law. In the Senate, you passed progressive legislation last year with the alacrity of a new majority. The PSC urges you to attack the funding crisis at CUNY

this year with the same urgency. We ask you to approach the problems of affordability and access with the same ambition and imagination. And we urge you to get started today.

UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS

Chairperson Stavisky and distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education, thank you for providing the opportunity for United University Professions (UUP) to testify at this hearing regarding the cost of public higher education in New York State, its effect on the Tuition Assistance Program and other important student aid offerings, as well as the affordability and accessibility of a SUNY education.

My name is Dr. Frederick E. Kowal and I am the president of United University Professions. UUP is the largest higher education union in the U.S., representing more than 37,000 academic and professional faculty and staff at 29 State University of New York campuses, System Administration, Empire State College, and SUNY's public teaching hospitals and health science centers in Brooklyn, Buffalo, Long Island and Syracuse.

Our members serve hundreds of thousands of students and patients at our colleges and universities, health sciences centers and state-operated public teaching hospitals directly administered by SUNY.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continuing support and approval of programs and initiatives that we see as vital to the students and patients we see and serve every day.

And as we seek to incorporate everyone into a diverse society and a prosperous state, I thank you for your support for SUNY's opportunity programs and your decision to vote to restore funds cut to these incredibly successful programs in the 2019-20 Executive Budget. We thank you and other legislators for your keen interest and support in closing the "TAP gap"—the difference in state State's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) aid and SUNY tuition that must be made up by colleges. Details about the situation follow further into this testimony.

And thank you for this chance to address the issue of funding for public higher education in New York state.

The cost of education

SUNY's mission statement requires the State's University to "provide to the people of New York educational services of the highest quality, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population in a complete range of academic, professional and vocational postsecondary programs including such additional activities in pursuit of these objectives as are necessary or customary."

Yet, access to SUNY is a major obstacle for thousands of New Yorkers, some of whom simply can't afford the cost of a SUNY education. Others don't receive—or don't qualify for enough—student aid and are forced to take out tens of thousands of dollars in student loans as they work toward their college degrees.

In its May report on student debt, the U.S. Federal Reserve reported that 54 million Americans took on debt—including student loans—for education. U.S. student loan debt surpassed \$1.6 trillion in 2019. Last year, 2 in 10 students who still owe money were behind on their payments, the Reserve report said.

In New York, the average student-loan debt per borrower expanded to 36 percent from 2007 to 2017, rising more than \$8,000 to \$30,899, according to report by LendEDU, a student loan finance company. Our state is No. 7 in LendEDU's ranking of the 10 states with the highest student debt.

Students must also factor in room and board, books, incidental expenses, lost income, and other related costs of attending college—which far exceed SUNY's tuition. Full-time student fees and room and board at SUNY state-operated campuses total to roughly \$19,000, more than two and a half times tuition. Tuition itself accounts for about a quarter of the total costs to students of attending college each year.

Lack of state support

As student debt rises, so does the percentage SUNY students pay for their education—in large part because of the lack of new state funding for SUNY. In 2007-08, tuition and fees from SUNY students accounted for 25 percent of SUNY's operating budget, with the state providing the rest of the funding. In 2019-20, students are paying 65 percent, with the state

chipping in the remainder. This is unfair to students and is unsustainable formula for SUNY.

SUNY's state-operated campuses have never recovered from a series of slashing state funding cuts that took place during the Great Recession; aid dropped from \$1.36 billion in 2007-08 to \$700 million this year—that's a decrease of nearly 50 percent, or a third of its core operating budget.

Of all state agencies, SUNY took the greatest hit in terms of budget cuts—and unlike other agencies, the University has never been made whole. Several years of flat funding for SUNY has only served to harm and financially hamper cash-strapped campuses even further.

These cuts have caused financial chaos at campuses like Fredonia, where the college last year considered cutting undergraduate and graduate programs to help close a nearly \$13 million budget deficit. In May, Fredonia officials proposed an academic reorganization that could help the college save about \$1.6 million which still leaves a large budget gap.

Stony Brook University, which faced a \$35 million deficit in 2017, instituted a hiring freeze. Last year, the university merged three foreign language programs into a single department, and suspended admission to undergrad programs in theatre arts, cinema & cultural studies, comparative literature, adapted aquatics and pharmacology. Binghamton University also ordered a hiring freeze in 2018 to help reduce a \$12 million budget gap.

In January, SUNY Downstate Health Science University's College of Health Related Professions was cash-strapped to the point where there wasn't enough funding for it to hire enough staff and faculty. This could jeopardize the school's reaccreditation.

The need for support

With proper state funding, SUNY's focus can move to expanding programs and hiring more full-time, tenure-track faculty, initiatives that will make the University more accessible to New Yorkers seeking a quality public college education. These moves will also help SUNY campuses attract—and more importantly—retain students.

One way to achieve that is by increasing funding for SUNY's successful Educational Opportunity Program. These are proven, life-changing programs that provide clear paths to a college education—and often, good-paying jobs—for those who might otherwise be denied access to college.

Through the EOP, students—many of whom are from some of the state's most economically distressed areas—receive specialized advisement, counseling, tutorial services, and summer programs. These students, who are mostly underprepared for college work when they enter the program, thrive in the EOP.

The EOP graduation rate exceeds 65 percent, exceeding the national average for public higher ed colleges and universities. More than 70,000 EOP students have earned SUNY degrees. And with smart, targeted investments in this critical program we can do even more.

Thirty-three percent of SUNY's state-operated campuses have EOP graduation rates ranging from 70 to 88 percent. Not surprisingly, the EOP is a program in high demand; SUNY annually receives more than 30,000 applications for just 2,500 available EOP seats. More funding will allow the programs to expand, increasing access to thousands more students each year.

TAP gap woes

More state funding is also necessary to close the TAP gap—the portion of SUNY tuition that campuses must waive for TAP awardees. The gap has swelled to \$70 million. TAP and other state financial aid programs help provide accessibility to a public college education, which is still out of reach for many qualified students.

About a quarter of students at state-operated campuses receive the maximum TAP grant of \$5,165—which covers only 75 percent of SUNY undergraduate tuition. SUNY campuses must cover the remainder out of their budgets. In many instances there is a correlation between the SUNY Campuses that accept the most TAP eligible students and our campuses that are facing financial shortfalls.

From 1974 to 2010, TAP covered 100 percent of SUNY tuition at state-operated campuses. But the gap has grown as state aid funding to SUNY has dropped. More than 40 percent of TAP students attend SUNY schools; over one-third of SUNY students at state-operated campuses receive TAP aid.

The TAP gap is equal to the annual salaries of over 500 new full-time, tenure-track faculty. These additional hires could increase advising, counseling, tutoring, and course offerings necessary for students to complete their education, and complete on time.

SUNY medical schools hurting

Our state-run academic medical centers in Brooklyn, Stony Brook and Syracuse hold dual roles—as safety net hospitals serving all who walk through their doors regardless of their ability to pay, and as teaching hospitals that provide accessible, affordable medical education to student doctors and medical professionals.

Both are important, and both require adequate funding to serve their students and the tens of thousands of patients they treat each year. Yet, state support for the hospitals was reduced in the 2019-20 budget due to the elimination of \$87 million of state operating funds in 2018.

Our hospitals rely on this funding—which was at \$153 million before the Great Recession—to help offset costs associated with caring for large numbers of underinsured and uninsured patients and fund the medical schools by more than \$200 million annually.

This show of support from the state wasn't without a price; in return for this funding, SUNY's academic medical centers pay for their employee fringe benefits and debt service costs, a total annual expense nearing \$500 million.

The elimination of this portion of operating funds will undoubtedly impact the ability of the medical schools to provide an affordable, accessible education to thousands of students each year. SUNY's state-owned hospitals do not turn a profit and shouldn't be expected to do so. That is not their purpose.

Without full state support, the hospitals will be hard-pressed to properly fund their medical schools, which attract most of their students from the Empire State.

More New York City physicians have trained at Downstate than at any other medical school; 67 percent of its students are New York City residents. In February, SUNY Downstate's medical school was ranked fourth nationwide by Castle Connolly Medical (a healthcare rating company for consumers) for training the next generation of physicians. At Syracuse's Upstate Medical University, 80 percent of its class of 2021 is made up of students from New York State.

Focus on transparency at SUNY campus foundations

In February 2018, the state Comptroller issued a hard-hitting report that found that more than half of SUNY campus foundations haven't been audited by SUNY over the last 10 years. Of those foundations, two of them—the UB Foundation and the Stony Brook Foundation—control as much as \$1.1 billion in assets, which is more than half the assets of all the campus foundations combined.

The Comptroller found that contracts bid by the UB and Stony Brook foundations—including services for lobbying, fundraising and entertainment—were not bid competitively and were awarded based on referrals or companies they had worked with before. The report said that the UB Foundation paid nearly \$240,000 in salaries and fringe benefits to two retired UB staff members who returned to work, allowing the employees to bypass Retirement and Social Security law finance caps.

Since SUNY isn't auditing the foundations on a regular basis, the inner workings of these organizations are murky, to say the least. The public has a right to know how much money the foundations have, where it came from, where it's going and how it's being used.

Our cash-strapped campuses need help, and the foundations are doing precious little to provide that help, even though they were established to serve the academic missions of our colleges and universities. In fact, most people who donate to the foundations don't know—or realize—that

these non-profit organizations are private; many believe they are donating to the campus.

The foundations use their SUNY affiliations to raise funds, which are invested in higher risk, higher reward investments. It helps them avoid regulation and transparency requirements that other state entities must adhere to.

UUP has been behind AO4367/S06275, which if approved would compel CUNY and SUNY campus foundations and their subsidiaries to submit annual reports and to post them on the SUNY website. Those reports would include financial information, contract vendor data, and a list of foundation and SUNY employees, including salaries, job titles and descriptions.

What we have now is a situation where the issue is not just the lack of transparency, but serious concern over how these hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent. These dollars should be used to help campuses and aid students in their pursuit of a college degree—and a better life. Making SUNY foundations accountable and transparent is a solid step toward making public higher education a priority again.

Conclusion

On behalf of the entire UUP membership, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

Our union appreciates this opportunity to provide the committee with detailed information to help it examine and address these important issues.

Our hope is that the information we've provided will help shine a spotlight on these problems and explain why it's imperative that the state make a solemn commitment to investing in the future of public higher education in New York state.

We greatly appreciate your time.

Thank you.

UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS

Chairperson Stavisky and distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Higher Education, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify at this hearing regarding the cost of public higher education in New York State.

My name is Rowena Blackman-Stroud and I am a longtime resident of Brooklyn. My family and I have utilized the healthcare services provided by SUNY Downstate Health Science Center in Central Brooklyn. I am also president of the SUNY Downstate Medical Center chapter of UUP. UUP is America's the largest higher education union, representing more than 37,000 academic and professional faculty and staff at 29 State University of New York campuses, System Administration, Empire State College, and SUNY's public teaching hospitals and health science centers in Brooklyn, Buffalo, Long Island and Syracuse.

Our members serve tens of thousands of students and patients at our colleges and universities, health sciences centers and state-operated public teaching hospitals directly administered by SUNY.

There are more than 2,500 members in UUP's SUNY Downstate chapter, including those who work as doctors, medical technicians, researchers, assistants, therapists, professors and clinical instructors. More than 5,500 people work at Downstate, which is Brooklyn's fourth-largest employer.

As with all SUNY campuses, Downstate provides a ripple effect in terms of state dollars invested in the medical center. Research has shown that every dollar invested in Downstate returns about \$12 to the local economy.

A symbiotic relationship

Downstate has multiple roles, but my testimony focuses on the medical center as a safety net hospital serving all who walk through their doors regardless of their ability to pay, and as a teaching hospital that provides an accessible, affordable medical education to student doctors and medical professionals. The medical center and the medical school have a symbiotic relationship; both rely on each other to survive and thrive.

As part of its mission, Downstate is the anchor for training roughly 1,000 residents and fellows, and 800 medical students each year. These students, residents and fellows rotate among 15 area hospitals and are key to the day-to-day operation of these facilities. These physicians-in-training take care of patients 24 hours a day.

The area hospitals cannot function without the services the fellows and residents provide. Instead, they work with Downstate—which organizes the residency and fellowship programs that bring these young healers to the hospitals that require their skills.

Downstate is the only state-operated medical school in the five boroughs, and as such, has become a pipeline of doctors and medical staff to New York City. More New York City physicians have trained at Downstate than at any other medical school; 67 percent of its students are New York City residents. More than half of Brooklyn's physicians in certain specialty areas have trained at Downstate. These are astonishing numbers and show the crucial importance of SUNY Downstate to Brooklyn residents as well as New Yorkers across the state.

Downstate's medical school ranks fourth among medical schools nationwide with graduates who hold an active license to practice medicine. It is twelfth among American medical schools in the number of graduates in faculty positions at U.S. medical colleges. In February, the medical school was ranked fourth nationwide by Castle Connolly Medical (a healthcare rating company for consumers) for training the next generation of physicians.

Yet, dwindling state funding to this facility—as well as SUNY's public hospitals in Stony Brook and Syracuse—threatens the viability of these facilities. In 2017-18, the state eliminated its \$87 million subsidy to the hospitals—necessary dollars that helped the non-profit hospitals fund their medical schools by more than \$200 million annually.

Our hospitals also relied on the subsidy—which was at \$153 million before 2007-08—to help offset costs associated with caring for large numbers of underinsured and uninsured patients. This show of support from the state wasn't without a price; in return for the subsidy, SUNY's academic medical

centers pay for their employee fringe benefits and debt service costs, a total annual expense nearing \$500 million.

The elimination of the subsidy will undoubtedly impact the ability of the medical schools to provide an affordable, accessible education to thousands of students each year. SUNY's state-owned hospitals do not turn a profit and shouldn't be expected to do so. That is not their purpose.

Without state subsidy support, the hospitals will be hard-pressed to properly fund their medical schools, which attract most of their students from the Empire State.

Serving a diverse community

As a public hospital, Downstate primarily serves Central Brooklyn, home to nearly half of Brooklyn's 2.5 million residents. The area is highly diverse; about two-thirds of Central Brooklyn community members are black. According to the U.S. Census, more than half of Central Brooklyn families live below the poverty line, and many of the working poor are without health insurance.

Over half of Downstate's inpatients have Medicaid, and 1 in 3 patients have Medicare. Just one of every 8 patients have private insurance. Yet, Downstate turns no one away, even if they can't pay for care.

For decades, these realities created a primary care vacuum in Central Brooklyn. As a result, many residents have—and must rely on—hospital emergency rooms for basic health care. There continues to be a large unmet need for health care in this community. Besides providing primary care, Downstate also offers secondary and tertiary care—levels of highly specialized treatment for patients with serious, chronic diseases that other hospitals can't—or won't—address. Patient care at Downstate is not about the financial bottom line, it's about treatment. It's about healing.

Downstate provides services such as:

- A regional neonatal intensive care unit for North and Central Brooklyn;
- A state-of-the-art pediatric intensive care unit—opened in October—to care for the most critically ill infants, children, and adolescents.

- Special care units, including those for coronary care, stroke, and epilepsy;
- Surgery for children with congenital heart defects;
- A kidney transplant program;
- A plastic and reconstructive surgery program with a focus on children with cleft palate and facial deformities;
- Renal dialysis, including a home dialysis program and a special dialysis program for children;
- A nationally recognized program for HIV/AIDS
- A pediatric obesity program; and
- State-of-the-art emergency departments for adults and children

If Downstate is reconfigured, many of these services will be lost to the residents of Central Brooklyn. Downsizing Downstate would force tens of thousands of people who need specialized, ongoing care into the already overcrowded waiting rooms of local emergency departments. The surge of patients from Downstate would simply swamp nearby hospitals, severely weakening inpatient and outpatient services at these facilities.

As it is now, patients at Downstate and surrounding hospitals wait for hours for care in emergency rooms. At the Kings County Hospital Center, which is already under severe strain, patients must wait months for clinic appointments. Kings County, located across the street from Downstate, also share staff on many services, including their emergency medicine departments and large programs for diabetes, HIV/AIDS, infectious disease, cardiology, and oncology.

More primary care practitioners are badly needed. There is a serious shortage of primary care providers in Brooklyn; emergency departments are overwhelmed with people seeking basic care, which only drives up the cost within our healthcare system.

It could take several years to train enough new primary care doctors to meet Downstate's needs. Downstate's medical school and its University Hospital of Brooklyn are well-positioned to play major roles in training these practitioners.

There is also a vital need for more clinical services—not less—in Central Brooklyn. As the sole academic medical center in Brooklyn, the clinical services it provides accent its educational mission.

Downstate's University Hospital of Brooklyn serves over 300,000 outpatients, 62,000 emergency room patients, 12,000 hospital admittances, and delivers over 1,200 babies annually, according to data from SUNY. Downstate has nine outpatient sites, 16 clinical departments, numerous specialty centers, and sponsors five school-based health clinics.

Conclusion

Thank you for this opportunity to address you today.

I hope the information I've provided illustrates the importance of SUNY Downstate to the Central Brooklyn community, as well as patients from New York City, Long Island and statewide, and our students.

We greatly appreciate your time.

Thank you.

1. My name is Julieta Schiffino. I am the Associate Director of Financial Aid Services at the SUNY Welcome Center, SUNY System Administration. I have been 15 years at SUNY.
2. Thank for your attention in this important issue of funding higher education.
3. Our office is located in NYC. and we help students learn about the 64 campuses with in the SUNY system. We work closely with student, families, community organizations and high school guidance counselors. Allowing student and families to be aware of all SUNY has to offer is allowing NYC students to have more access to a higher education
 - We provide students information about different majors and the application requirements for each campus. There are over 4,500 undergraduate degrees and certificate programs.
 - We offer a variety of workshops on college preparation, host open houses, on the spot admissions events, placement testing and bus trips to visit campuses.
 - We visit high schools, attend college fairs, and provide training and updates to high school counselors and community-based organizations.
 - Students and families can also make one-on-one appointments on admissions information and financial aid.
 - We promote financial aid awareness events and workshops. We host and organize financial aid completion events throughout the state of New York. We and provide financial literacy workshops.
 - We train high school guidance counselors and community organization on financial aid
 - We are educating NYC students and families on the new Jose Peralta Dream Act (there are approximately 30,000 undocumented students graduate from NY high schools)
 - We are doing outreach to make sure all of our campuses are prepared to welcome undocumented students on their campuses
 - We act as a liaison for students living in NYC to all SUNY campuses
4. How we are required to do more with less?

Approximately 19 percent of NYC households live below the poverty level. The median household income is \$50,000, as opposed to \$55,000 for the rest of New York State.

The cost of living is higher in NYC than the rest of the New York State.

Only 11 percent of NYC students attend SUNY, as opposed to 38 percent

for the rest of New York State. CUNY has a 48 percent capture rate of NYC students.

Most NYC students choosing to attend a SUNY school would have to live on campus, bringing extra living expenses. The housing expense is greater than SUNY's tuition and fees.

Students with a zero expected family contribution would need to borrow the maximum amount allowed for freshman students in direct loans.

Parents may need to borrow a PLUS loan in order for their student to attend SUNY. This is making an education at SUNY prohibitive for NYC students. The same student can attend a CUNY school, live at home, and receive a refund from the Pell grant that he or she may use to purchase books(and even this is changing) - and avoid taking out a loan. CUNY is a wonderful option for many students, I myself am a CUNY graduate but students should have the option to go away if they desire and for some students living at home may not be the most optional environment for their academic success.

5. Currently, we only have two admission advisors and zero financial aid advisors, only an Associate Director. Many of us our working longer hours, not knowing if we will be compensated for our time. We do not have enough computers or laptops to help students. There are a growing number of first generation students applying to college; they need more support not less.

There is an increasing equality in America especially for those without a college degree it is critical that we not only inform students but also help them succeed.

I urge you to increase the budget for higher education at SUNY. This will allow us to invest in hiring more professionals, increase our tools and professional development, give us the ability to engage with students digitally, add more services to our offices, and develop a SUNY need based scholarship for NYC students. There is an increasing income equality in America especially for those without a college degree. Help SUNY provide access to more students and start eroding income inequality.



Testimony

to the
Senate Standing Committee on Higher Education
on the
Examination
of the
Cost of Public Higher Education
October 24, 2019

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NYSUTs ED 39, Chair
to the
Senate Standing Committee on Higher Education
Toby Ann Stavisky, Chair
and
Co-Sponsors
Andrew S. Gounardes
Velmanette Montgomery
Kevin S. Parker
Julia Salazar
on the Examination of the
Cost of Public Higher Education
October 24, 2019*

Senate Higher Education Hearing

Chairperson Stavisky, honorable members of the Legislature and distinguished staff, I am Roberta Elins, President of the University College Employees of the Fashion Institute of Technology (UCE of FIT) and Chair of NYSUT's Election District 39, representing SUNY Community Colleges. Today I am testifying on behalf of the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT). NYSUT represents more than 600,000 teachers, school-related professionals, academic and professional faculty in higher education, professionals in education, in health care and retirees statewide. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the cost of public higher education, student borrowing and other challenges to affordability and accessibility.

My testimony represents the concerns of over 80,000 higher education faculty and professional staff who work in colleges and universities across the state. These include the members of United University Professions at the State University of New York, the Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York and the faculty and staff at nearly all the SUNY Community Colleges in this state.

Access to quality public higher education is a crucial component of the state's efforts to recruit and retain businesses and industries. As businesses consider where to locate, they are drawn to locations with an available pool of highly trained and educated employees. The State University

of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY) help to fulfill that requirement by instructing and preparing New Yorkers for current and future job opportunities. A growing number of employment opportunities require advanced degrees, which further underscores the need for greater state investment in public higher education. Properly funding these institutions will help to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to an affordable, quality education as offered by CUNY and SUNY.

Affordability and Accessibility

A student's ability to attend a public institution of higher education, and complete their degree on time, depends on a number of factors — many of which involve financial resources, as well as student and academic supports. A lack of financial resources can severely limit one's ability to attend college as a full-time student, pay tuition and student fees and purchase textbooks or other required course materials — without incurring crushing debt.

Due to the student debt crisis, much time and attention has been paid to affordability, however, more attention must be paid to accessibility. NYSUT has stressed the need for increased student access to quality public higher education that provides students with the ability to enroll in the courses they need, and not delay their graduation because a course is only offered one semester a year. It means a student will have direct access to student and academic supports to help them successfully navigate and complete their degree program.

Over the years, both SUNY and CUNY have designed programs to provide students with supports that meet the definition of meaningful access. Programs such as CUNY's Accelerated Study in Associates Programs (ASAP) and SUNY's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) have proven track records and help students complete their education. However, both programs are restricted due to funding limitations, and have requirements that applicants must meet in order to be accepted and continue in the program.

CUNY's ASAP program was started in 2007, at six community colleges, to improve completion rates by providing wraparound services to students. When the program was created, less than

four percent of CUNY community college students completed an associate degree within two years, and only 13 percent did so within three years. Many studies have examined the ASAP program, which has since been expanded to serve students attending nine community colleges. These studies concluded that the program is cost-effective — the average cost-per-degree for an ASAP student is lower than for the costs for those receiving a standard college education. Other studies have also shown that retention and completion rates are significantly higher for ASAP students, when compared to other groups of students. Six years after beginning a CUNY ASAP program, 63.3 percent of ASAP first-time freshmen had earned either an associate or baccalaureate degree (or both) vs. 43.3 percent of comparison group students.

SUNY's EOP program was created in the 1960s and recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. It was applied at the State University College at Buffalo with 249 students and has since been expanded to 48 SUNY campuses. The program has graduated more than 70,000 students. EOP alumni continue to live in New York State and go on to become prominent figures in our communities. The 2016, six-year baccalaureate graduation rate for EOP students is nearly 70 percent.

SUNY's EOP program offers students support services, such as academic, career and personal counseling, tutoring and supplemental instruction. The program also provides financial assistance to cover non-tuition related expenses (e.g. books, supplies, etc.).

The academic and student supports offered by both EOP and ASAP go a long way to not only address affordability issues but also to increase access. Public higher education is not a one-size fits all model. Students often have various needs that must be addressed. These needs can range from housing to food insecurity to health care or other personal issues. We call upon the state to provide a significant increased investment in our public higher education institutions to help them better support students' ability to attend and complete their degree programs. NYSUT believes that all students attending SUNY and CUNY should be afforded the academic and student supports offered through ASAP and EOP.

Community Colleges

At this time, I would like to discuss community colleges. As you know, community colleges educate and prepare students for the workforce as well as provide the foundation for those students who move on to four-year campuses or universities. Community colleges educate all types of students, they help to advance social mobility and are located where students live and work. They often collaborate with regional businesses and employers to develop and provide training to address local workforce needs.

Notwithstanding the Legislature's commitment to community colleges, state funding to these campuses is not commensurate with the provisions of the state education law. State education law stipulates that the state shall pay 40 percent of the operating costs of these campuses, however, the state is not meeting its obligation.

As the attached Charts A and B illustrate, both SUNY and CUNY Community College students are paying the lion's share of operating costs of these campuses. Over the ten-year period from 2008-09 to 2018-19, SUNY Community College students went from paying 40.8 percent of the operating costs to approximately 41.4 percent. While the state's contribution for the same period decreased from 30.8 percent to 25 percent. We see a similar trend for CUNY Community Colleges during the same time period, where the student share increased from 32.3 percent to 40.6 percent, while the state share decreased from 28.9 percent to 23.7 percent.

In order for our campuses to maintain and enhance academic programming and supports, their state funding needs to be increased and stabilized. Even though enrollment on some campuses has decreased, operational costs have risen. As recently noted, SUNY Community College enrollment across the board has decreased by 5,684. Reductions in community college enrollments are related to an economy that is doing well, and a decrease in the state population that is projected to continue.

Our campuses rely on state funding to offer programs and student services that not only respond to current and future business needs, but will also attract potential students. In the absence of

predictable funding, campuses are forced to raise tuition and/or limit courses and programs, which diminish their appeal to future students and potential business partners.

The 2019-20 New York State Enacted Budget provided community colleges with the greater of a \$100 FTE increase or an established floor of 98 percent of the 2018-19 funding level. We appreciate the Legislature's work and continued support in including this language, which is a good step to help address issues related to declining enrollment at community colleges. While this year's enacted budget established a funding floor, unfortunately, it did not insulate all SUNY community college campuses from enrollment declines. A number of SUNY community college budgets will be lower than they were in 2017-18.

NYSUT continues to advocate for the adoption of a hybrid FTE funding methodology, as proposed by SUNY for their community colleges. During budget negotiations earlier this year, SUNY and NYSUT reached an agreement on statutory language to codify the hybrid methodology. The language and proposed hybrid methodology would provide SUNY Community Colleges with a greater of a level of support using a three-year average, or the FTE dollar amount for the college. This methodology change will provide our community colleges with some level of security and allow them to strategically plan for their future, as well as provide them with additional financial support, as outlined in the attached Chart C.

Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) Gap

Both SUNY and CUNY four-year campuses have been grappling with the growing tuition credit, which is an unfunded mandate that started in 2011, with the enactment of the tuition plan. All TAP students receive a tuition credit based on their income — with higher-income students receiving the lowest credit and lower-income students, who receive a maximum TAP award, getting the highest credit to fully cover the cost of their tuition.

As noted in the attached Chart D, you can see the rapidly rising cost of the TAP tuition credit, which now stands at nearly \$130 million for both SUNY and CUNY, and will grow to at least \$150 million in 2019-20.

It is our understanding that a \$200 tuition increase would cost each system an additional \$10-15 million. Campuses with high numbers of TAP students are penalized by the need to cover the TAP Gap without any state reimbursement. Existing law ensures that TAP students receiving a maximum award are made whole and provided access to CUNY and SUNY. Unfortunately, however, that access is compromised by the tuition credit. As noted above, the TAP Gap increases with every tuition increase, which is intended to cover the tuition credit along with other costs. Since the tuition credit has quickly grown over the years, institutions are left with less or very little money to invest in new faculty and other student initiatives to support on time completion.

When we have discussed the TAP Gap in the past, we focused on four-year campuses. However, this is becoming an issue at some of SUNY's Community Colleges, as tuition for the 2019-20 year has pierced the TAP limit of \$5,165. We raise this issue as we expect additional campuses to also exceed the TAP limit. While the law regarding the tuition credit only applies to four-year colleges, it is unclear who will be responsible for covering this difference at the community college level.

Ultimately, students are paying the price for the TAP Gap requirement. In order to mitigate a situation that grows with every tuition increase, and one that is starting to appear at community colleges, NYSUT urges the Governor and the Legislature to provide SUNY and CUNY four-year and community college campuses with state reimbursement to cover the full cost of the TAP credit.

Conclusion

For a number of years the executive and enacted budgets held SUNY's and CUNY's instructional core budgets relatively flat. Unfortunately for our students, this has been the case for far too many years and needs to be addressed. While funding for instructional core budgets has remained flat, operational costs continue to rise. Without funding to address these operational costs, including the TAP Gap, we are endangering student affordability and access to public higher education as well as the quality of the education they receive. A significant state

investment is needed to reverse this trend and to preserve and enhance the quality of education our students receive.

#47507

ARR/AB

Chart A

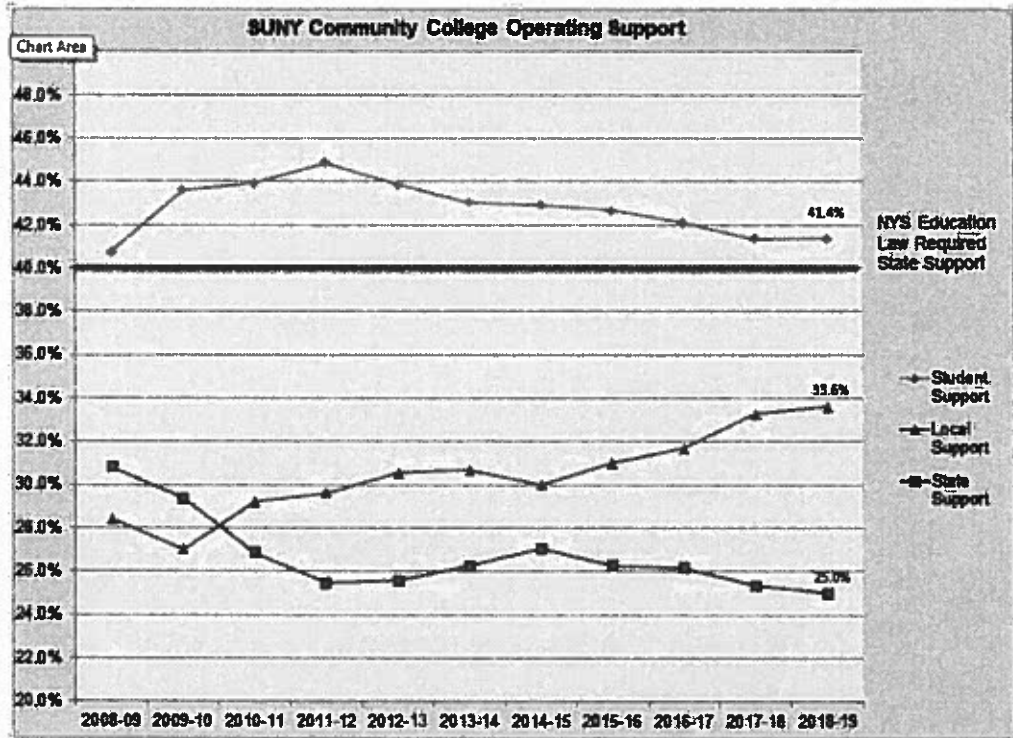


Chart B

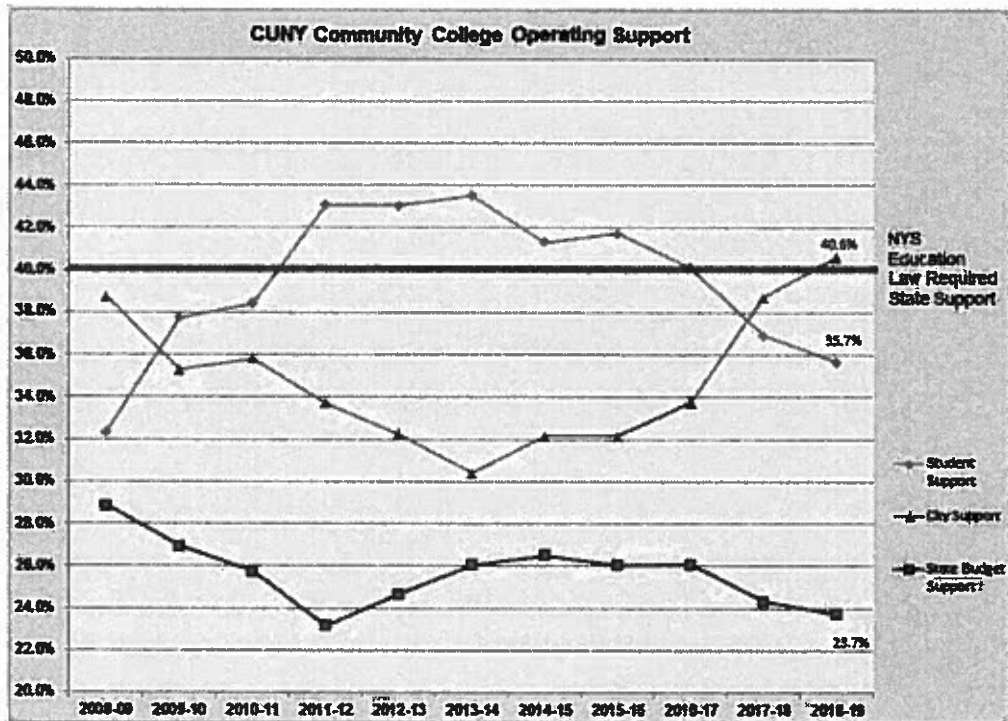


Chart C

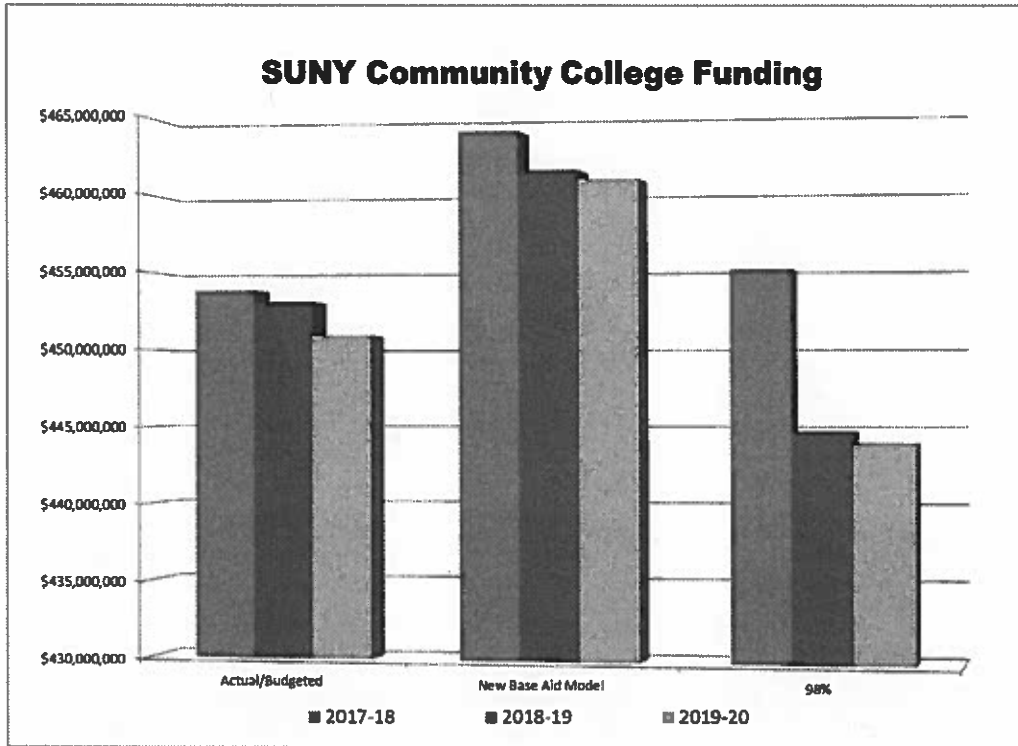
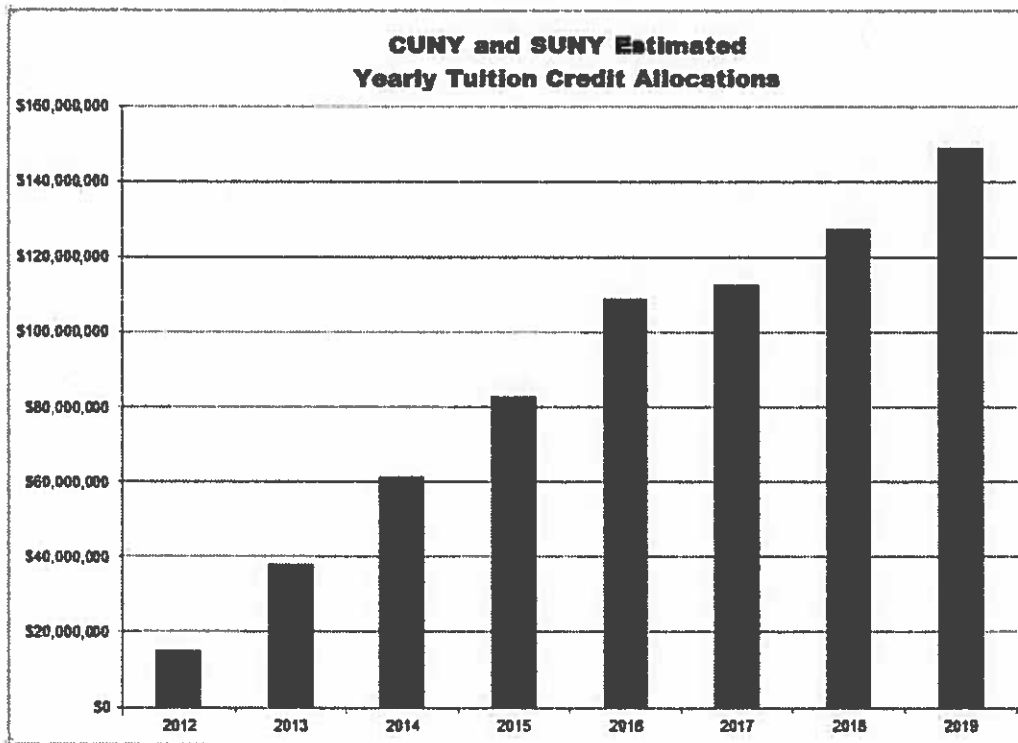


Chart D



Timothy Hunter

City Tech Student Government President

Higher Education Public Hearing

Before I begin, let me say good afternoon to all those who took time out of their schedules to be here. I know many of the people who are testifying here today are taking their days off of work, school, and even in some cases watching their children so that they could testify for the preservation of a Higher Education here in NYS. Senator Stavitsky, let me first commend you and your colleagues for recognizing this Higher Education tour is needed, however, it is well overdue. In a time where elevators aren't functioning, the TAP GAP is increasing, and food pantries on every campus is promised by the governor but not always fulfilled.

My name is Timothy Hunter Student Government President of New York City College of Technology, the elected representative of 17,000 of your constituents and other New Yorkers, that attend CUNY throughout New York City, and some commuting from places like New Rochelle, Long Island, Westchester County, and even Buffalo. Throughout my student leadership journey, I have met many of these diverse students that CUNY serves daily. I know some of these students personally as we have worked together to advocate for higher education on my journey in student leadership, which lead us from CUNY classrooms to Student Government meetings, from Student Government meetings to protests, and from protests to lobbying in Albany for a chance to save public higher education. My journey to becoming a

student leader starts way before I was even born. My mother was a graduate of the Medgar Evers college class of '96 a graduate of the Special Education program there. Upon completion of her Bachelor's degree, she was offered a scholarship to SUNY New Paltz to continue her master's degree in education. For a first-generation immigrant to come to this country, initially making her money from babysitting and caring for other people's children, then by chance enrolling in Medgar, and becoming an educator in special education during the turn of the decade where many schools are focusing on inclusivity, and accommodations in the classroom, my mother as a woman of color in education was and still is a beacon of light to her students. However, is this where we want the inspiring story of New York State Public higher education to end?

Let us face the facts. Our elected officials in Albany claim to be the most progressive elected in the country. However, we don't cover our state faculty contracts, which now has CUNY Senior Colleges like your alma maters, are struggling to break even. Those same Masters classes that were affordable when you enrolled, now face excellence fees at every turn. The same faculty that once were proud to call themselves teachers of CUNY, are adjuncts who are tired and fed up receiving their increases, that they deserve, at the expense of our students. Tutoring getting increased across the board, students not being able to attend college due to the "predictable tuition increases". It seems that we have Educational Opportunity programs that seem to be more like a game of Russian Roulette instead of actual Opportunity Programs for students who come from low-income communities, while ASAP and SEEK have proven time and time again their success rate, they have yet to be expanded upon, just cut and replaced time and time again. Even our Excelsior Scholarship which has seemingly become the pride and joy

of higher education in NYS has alleviated the financial burdens of only about 1% of the CUNY students, and even that percentage if they cannot maintain 30 credits in a year, in the most expensive city in the world, they will now be saddled with loans that our university boasts aren't needed in "The greatest urban university in the world".

If I learned everything from my mom's hardships here, it is that in times of struggle, we cannot just focus on the problems, but we need to focus on some solutions. If the state is as truly progressive as they say they are, I challenge you the senators of this state to take the following steps to save the students and the schools.

Save our Students - These "predictable" Tuition hikes are anything but predictable for students who aren't student leaders. It is demoralizing, when you pay off the money that you owe to your university, and because the state doesn't want to cover the basic needs of our universities, tuition must continue to rise. Not only that but due to many who walk through the doors of our institutions to see its crumbling facilities and schools saddled in budget deficits have wondered if Higher Education is a priority of our elected leaders in the state of New York. If we cannot afford to put adequately paid adjuncts in front of our students, we are doing a disservice to our students and our constituents, by not allowing them to receive the best education they can receive. The state needs to stop these tuition hikes by providing enough funding to put the trustees in a comfortable position to vote no on a tuition hike. Our university's success shouldn't be dependent on generous donations and the exploitation of students. We need to make sure the senate prioritizes the revitalization of our universities.

Save our Schools - This should be done by closing the TAP GAP that is nearing 86 million dollars, and raising the TAP Award so that it now matches the incremental increases of tuition that have occurred over the past 8 years. Students are constantly told if they receive the financial aid they shouldn't care about the TAP GAP. However, schools' operational budgets are nearing the red, because they are not only dealing with the TAP GAP, but they are also dealing with the Labor Reserves that are eating away at their operational budgets. More than 3 million dollars will be coming out of my school's budget alone to go into CUNY's labor reserve to fund the faculty negotiations. Not including whatever comes from this last year of tuition hikes which will also going to go towards contracts.

The increasing of tuition should not be used to balance the books of the state. We are creating a system that is NOT SUSTAINABLE. I am sure that the Senate does not want to leave a legacy of passing so many progressive laws, and forgetting to fund the reason why they're all considered progressive. We cannot neglect the future of New York, many of our graduates will become taxpayers, teachers, professors, city council members, Assembly members, and even State Senators. I say this because some already have. Let us not neglect our CUNY education. We should do our best to FUND CUNY NOW! The ball is in your court, and as the chairperson of Higher Education Committee, and a benefactor of CUNY education, I expect nothing less than a fight from you and your counterpart in the Assembly Deborah Glick. Senators. Don't let us down, don't let the students, and the people of New York State suffer. Please show your peers

the way and let them know the importance of CUNY and funding higher education. Let us solve this problem before it is too late.

Blessings everyone, I'm Wayne Dawkins from York College. I'm an immigrant who continues to look up to the united states and more-so the great state of New York as the epitome of freedom to be, to think and to most importantly believe. I believe that if we work together we can achieve great things.

We are here today to talk about higher education and whether its is accessible, affordable or anywhere in between both. The truth is we have a far way to go. Excelsior Scholarship was my dream, I remember wondering what options I had in life and thinking college wasn't one of them. I could not afford college to be honest, and I had no support to get through it but the state announced the excelsior scholarship. Its amazing to be in a country and more so such as great state where people discuss the value of higher education and statistically show its benefits. But lets push the conversation further to ask whether the college investment we make in our economy is good for our lives.

The expectation is that we are going to being to save on the cost of college tuition while having excelsior scholarship but those who have it or have had it will tell you it's not readily accessible. I accumulated over thirty credits last year but still lost excelsior scholar mid spring semester. The back charge for spring and fall 2018 came up to more than six thousand dollars. Where do I, a struggling college student who was depending on free tuition, find access to 6 thousand dollars if I showed that I needed that. IF only 3.2% of students make excelsior scholarship then is it really accessible?¹

Through the summer of 2019 I was anxious over where I would get six thousand dollars to be in college. I begged family and friends and borrowed. My credit score will never recover from this and the apartment I lost will never be attained since now moved back in with my father. My father wants me to be a carpenter and he uses every opportunity to show me that higher education isn't worth it. But for me it is, I develop piece of mind knowing that I'm improving the person I am. I am becoming a more informed version of the person I am and can be with an education. I could also see that around my friends because when we got on the train we would have talks about how differently we see things, value, religion and culture.

But this semester some of those friends aren't here with me. When I lost my apartment I had six friends from York College at my going away party. Only 4 are back this semester. Only 2 are full time. I was almost one of them who didn't make it this semester but thank god I'm here part time to tell you the story. I begged, borrowed and plead then and now I stand in-front of you doing the same. Please do something about higher education.

At York College the numbers are dim, we start with a budgeting deficit of over one million dollars and that is the deficit of a fully funded college with the bear minimum. As a student focused on environment and politics my analysis shows that our school cannot begin to address being sustainable without a well-funded budget. I'm begging you please to make an investment into higher education.

I begged to get into a broken system and its incumbent on me and you senator to fix it. The people in this room cannot allow it to continue this way. We must do something, anything. At York college we have a whole building shut down due to molds, our building and grounds staff struggle to recycle and compost due to how underfunded and under staffed they are. Our libraries close early. Our adjuncts are underpaid. But some of these same professors love to teach us. There are staff who are pleased to see

¹ Tom Hillard "Excelsior scholarship serving very few New York Students"
<https://nycfuture.org/research/excelsior-scholarship>

us there a next semester until graduation. Auxiliary staff who like to ask us what we learned that will make a difference.

So as you can see the value of my higher education is broken and fragmented. There are pieces that keep us going but there are also pieces that hold us back. We cannot go forward at the pace that we are going without a well-funded school, an affordable school. A school without gaps in its tap funding. And a school where free tuition does what it says it will do without being a burden to students.

Jane Guskin
Student, CUNY Graduate Center
Testimony for NYS Senate hearing at Brooklyn College
October 24, 2019

My name is Jane Guskin. I am a CUNY Graduate Center student, adjunct faculty member, alumnus, and the child of an alumnus.

The current funding situation at CUNY is dire. Hundreds of core classes have been cancelled for the spring semester across all campuses, setting back graduation timelines for thousands of students. Classes that remain are over-enrolled, so students will get less attention from faculty. As class size grows, faculty do more work for the same pay. Adjunct faculty earning poverty wages teach more than half of CUNY classes. Many of us struggle to earn a living and cannot provide the level of instructional support that students deserve. Student services have been slashed; counseling centers have months-long wait lists and writing centers have cut their hours. Tuition keeps going up, putting a CUNY education increasingly out of reach of New York City's poor and working-class people.

You know all this already. When will you stand up to Governor Cuomo and do the right thing for CUNY students and workers? There is plenty of money in New York to fully fund CUNY. What is lacking is the political will to redistribute it equitably.

Are you waiting for hundreds of us to disrupt your offices with marches and occupations? Are you waiting for us to show up at your homes at 6am with drums and bullhorns? Are you waiting for us to follow you around on your lunch break to remind you, while you eat, that CUNY is starving, that nearly half of all CUNY students are going hungry and have no secure place to live? Are you waiting for us to back a challenger who will vote you out of office? Are you waiting for us to strike? Don't underestimate our power. Students, faculty, and staff are united and ready to fight for CUNY.

Dylan Rice / Kevin Rogers
SUNYSA



The State University of New York
Student Assembly

NYS Higher Education Committee

Testimony of Trustee and President Austin Ostro

State University of New York Student Assembly (SUNY SA)

October 22, 2019

State and federal financial aid programs continue to greatly benefit the students of SUNY. Above all, the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), New York's largest grant program, administered by the Higher Education Services Corporation aids eligible students in attending in-state postsecondary institutions.² TAP Grants are based upon New York State family taxable income at the maximum level of \$80,000. For qualifying students, Tap provides grant funds up to \$5,165 to cover the costs of tuition. As the panel can imagine this is enormously helpful in covering the cost of tuition for middle and low income students. The Number of SUNY students at state-operated campuses and community colleges have risen to represent 40 percent of the total number of TAP recipients across the state.³ This participation rise represents both a silver-lining in covering the cost of education, but a bleak future for campus operating budgets.

There continues to be a consistent gap in the funding mechanism which penalizes campuses for accepting and matriculating students who utilize the Tuition Assistance Program. Institutions of public higher education across the state are obligated to cover the difference between the maximum TAP award and the cost of tuition at each campus. Currently, SUNY resident undergraduate tuition reaches \$7070⁴, while the maximum TAP award is \$5,165⁵, leading to a \$1905 gap in funding per student.

This combined figure cost SUNY and CUNY statewide a total of \$139 million dollars last fiscal year.⁶ A funding shortfall of hundreds of millions of dollars over the last 8 years. Individual campuses must finance this funding shortfall through operating costs before they are able to allocate funding for measures of quality education and critical student services.

There are two aspects of public higher education in New York State that remain true. The cost of tuition and the gap in funding for the Tuition Assistance Program both continue to rise.⁷ Since 2009, tuition at state operated campuses has risen 63%, contributing to an increase in the SUNY TAP gap from \$20 million in 2012 to nearly \$65 million in 2018. The shortfall in funding for the program has required SUNY and CUNY to allocate millions of dollars of operating costs over the years in which the gap has existed. Overall, the gap has resulted in students and their families paying more for less. The lack of

² "TAP Eligibility & Income Limits." *NYS Higher Education Services Corporation - TAP Eligibility*, www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/financial-aid/types-of-financial-aid/grants/tap-eligibility.html.

³The State University of New York, *An Analysis of the Tuition Assistance Program* <https://www.suny.edu/about/leadership/board-of-trustees/meetings/webcastdocs/Attachment%20C1%20-%20Tap%20Report.pdf>

⁴ SUNY Smart Track - Empowered Financial Planning, Tuition and Fees <https://www.suny.edu/smarttrack/tuition-and-fees/>

⁵ Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC), TAP Award Amounts <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/financial-aid/types-of-financial-aid/grants/estimate-your-tap-award.html>

⁶ It is time to fill the GAP in TAP, PSC CUNY https://www.psc-cuny.org/sites/default/files/GAPTap_Coalition.pdf

⁷Reichman, Hank. "A New Deal for SUNY and CUNY." *ACADEME BLOG*, 2 Jan. 2019, academeblog.org/2018/12/24/a-new-deal-for-suny-and-cuny/

investment by the state to provide funding in this matter has severely diminished the ability of individual campuses to provide services to students and enhance the quality of education offered. For example,⁸ SUNY Fredonia's core operating budget has declined from an all-time high of \$17.8 million in 2008-2009 to approximately \$11.3 million in 2018-2019, for a cumulative loss over the last ten years of roughly \$53.2 million. This is due to the combination of stagnant funding, a widening TAP gap, and rising institutional operating costs, and Fredonia is not alone.

With increased investment by the state in institutions of public higher education students can receive quality services such as mental health counseling, academic advisement, and gender and sexuality resources at an affordable cost. It is imperative that the state invest in SUNY as the students have selected the State University for its commitment to providing the people of New York educational services of the highest standard, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population in a complete range of academic, professional and vocational postsecondary programs.

No hearing would be complete without drawing attention to the plight of graduate students who suffer from insufficient support for stipends. Stipends aid students in offsetting tuition costs to advance their education. We urge the committee to review graduate student financial support and invest in research opportunities for students who are pursuing advanced degrees. Similarly, important programs such as EOP and CSTEP deserve your continued support.

With respect to loan programs, state policy should focus on enhancing grant availability, and accessibility, thus minimizing the burden of student debt. Availability for Excelsior Scholarships, NYS TAP, and New York Aid For Part-Time Study should be enhanced, and thresholds lowered to increase participation. We should concentrate our efforts on defining access to higher education as an economic investment in the future of the state of New York.

The Excelsior Scholarship, in conjunction with other student financial aid programs, allows some students to attend a SUNY or CUNY college tuition-free. This program continues to succeed as it aids students in graduating on time and with less debt. The Student Assembly urges the state to expand the promise of the Excelsior Scholarship and implement measures that would allow for a greater number of students to apply the scholarship to their academic success. Alterations regarding the course credit minimum for the scholarship would allow for typical students to pursue their education free from the 30-credit calendar year mandate in which it may not be viable for all. Furthermore, expansions of the program to cover additional costs associated with pursuing a degree such as fees, books, room, and board would alleviate excessive student debt and the need for additional employment while matriculated.

The Student Assembly urges the state to invest in public higher education by funding the shortfall created by the Tuition Assistance Program, making amendments to current financial programs available to students, and recognizing its fundamental role and responsibility to offer a world class education at an affordable cost. With an increase in funding and expansions of aid programs campuses across the state

⁸ "Fredonia Budget Issue 'Serious'." *Fredonia Budget Issue 'Serious'* The Post Journal ,26 Dec. 2018, www.post-journal.com/news/page-one/2018/12/fredonia-budget-issue-serious/.

NYS Higher Education Committee
Testimony of Trustee and President Austin Ostro
State University of New York Student Assembly (SUNY SA)

October 22, 2019

On behalf of the SUNY Student Assembly, and the 1.4 Million students of our great University system, I very much appreciate the tireless efforts of Senator and Committee Chair Stavisky for hosting a series of hearings across the State of New York to address the cost of public higher education, financial aid programs, and other challenges to the student with respect to affordability and accessibility.

The Student Assembly is the recognized system-wide student government supporting the students of SUNY. We are comprised of Student Leaders from across the state and represent the students of the many University centers, colleges, technology colleges, and community colleges. In addition, we are also involved in advocacy on the local, state, and federal level. The President of the Student Assembly serves as the head of the organized student government for all 64 campuses in the system and holds the position as the only student member of the SUNY board of trustees. Twice annually the Student Assembly brings together hundreds of student leaders from across the state and beyond to participate in student leadership conferences, where the organization's advocacy priorities are finalized, and members are offered the opportunity to network and learn leadership skills from students, campus and system administration, and world class faculty through various workshops and lectures.

Additionally, Student Assembly representatives meet on a monthly basis to coordinate advocacy efforts and further refine strategies towards the advancement of quality and affordability in public higher education. We operate a variety of committees focused on promoting academic excellence throughout the system and highlight areas of campus safety, disability services, gender equity, and sustainability.

The Student Assembly urges the state to recognize and act upon the magnitude in which under funding public higher education has on the delivery of services and the quality of education across the system. The Committee clearly identifies the benefit to the state as an accessible State University due to the return on investment made by students pursuing higher education in New York. ¹Graduates of SUNY are more likely to work and live in New York and continue to stimulate local and state economies through employment and taxes; currently SUNY campuses contribute \$28.6 billion annually to New York's economy. Adequately funding higher education holds the potential to yield a greater return on investment for the state as students, faculty, and staff from across the SUNY system continue to enhance the quality of life and economic prosperity in their communities.

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Schultz, Laura. "The Economic Impact of the State University of New York." www.rockinst.org, Nov. 2018, Pg3, rockinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/11-1-18-BTN-SUNY-Drives-NYS-Economic-Engine.pdf.

will be equipped to provide a higher quality education and student services that address the backgrounds and needs of all students.



**TESTIMONY
OF THE
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP
BEFORE THE
NEW YORK STATE SENATE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE
REGARDING
THE COST OF HIGHER EDUCATION
OCTOBER 24, 2019
Brooklyn, New York**

Good afternoon. My name is Santana Alvarado and I am the Chairperson of the New York Public Interest Research Group and a college student. I am a Senior at Hunter College. As you know, NYPIRG is a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded by college students in 1973 to engage their peers in civic life. NYPIRG's broad programmatic work provides students with a range of opportunities to participate in public affairs and advance responses to social problems that matter most to them. In collaboration with and guided by professional staff—researchers, organizers, advocates and attorneys—students tackle pressing issues while learning and developing professional-level skills that will boost their prospects for success in college, the job market and throughout their lives. Our Board of Directors solely consists of college and university students elected from campuses with NYPIRG chapters across the State.

We appreciate this opportunity to share our perspectives on the costs of higher education in New York. NYPIRG intends to deliver both verbal and written testimonies at each of the five hearings held by the Committee. Today I will focus both broadly on higher education as well as specific issues regarding costs in the City University system.

To start, NYPIRG thanks the Legislature for passing the Jose Peralta DREAM Act this year, for restoring funding to critical higher education programs cut in the executive budget, and for advocating for the elimination of the “TAP Gap” and more robust “maintenance of effort” legislation.

Investing New York's tax dollars into public higher education is a clear win for individual New Yorkers and a win for the state's economy as a whole. A study on SUNY found that for every \$1 spent on education, the economy reaps \$8 in benefits.¹

¹ Rockefeller Institute of Government, “The Economic Impact of the State University of New York” <https://rockinst.org/issue-area/the-economic-impact-of-the-state-university-of-new-york/>, accessed August 16, 2019.

College-educated workers earn more than their high-school educated peers – by an average of \$17,500 per year for millennials, as found by the Pew Research Center. As wages increase, so do tax revenues which support any number of public services. The average bachelor's degree holder contributes \$278,000 more to local economies than the average high school graduate through direct spending over the course of their lifetime; and an associate degree holder contributes \$81,000 more than a high school graduate.²

What's more, there is an increasing need for a college degree in today's economy. The availability of blue collar jobs that do not require a Bachelor's degree has decreased by 30 percent since 1991. Nationally, New York ranks in the top four states with the highest decrease in blue collar jobs.³ It has become more of an economic necessity to hold a bachelor's degree, particularly in New York.

However, state maneuver sold as efficiency measures have starved CUNY and SUNY campus budgets and put student support services and educational quality at risk. One maneuver which cuts CUNY and SUNY budgets has been the growing "TAP Gap." The tuition price per student at senior colleges (\$6,930 at CUNY 4-year schools and \$7,070 at SUNY 4-year schools)⁴ continues to outpace the maximum Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) award (reimbursed to schools at a rate of \$5,000 per full-TAP recipient)⁵ resulting in an increasing "TAP Gap." While students who receive the full TAP award haven't had to pay the difference, the individual colleges have had to absorb the loss in revenue. Last year, CUNY reported a \$74 million TAP Gap.⁶

Another maneuver has been the state's underfunding of mandatory cost increases. While the state promised in 2011 to maintain its funding levels from year to year as it raised the tuition burden on students, the state has not included funding for inflationary or other mandatory cost increases like electricity and staff contracts. That has created another gap in state funding for mandatory costs. According to SUNY New Paltz Vice President for Administration and Finance, revenues are simply not keeping pace with necessary increases in expenditure. One factor among others cited was no increases in direct state support since 2012.⁷ CUNY Baruch College's President released a statement this July 2018 that they expect a \$5 million budget shortfall and are implementing across the board department budget cuts and vacancy-control measures.⁸

The erosion of state support and the creation of growing funding gaps is translating into an erosion

² Rothwell, Jonathan. "What colleges do for local economies: A direct measure based on consumption." *Brookings*, July 28, 2016, www.brookings.edu/research/what-colleges-do-for-local-economies-a-direct-measure-based-on-consumption/.

³ Buffie, Nick, and Tillie McInnis. "Highest to Lowest Share of Blue Collar Jobs By State." April 10, 2017, <https://bluecollarjobs.us/2017/04/10/highest-to-lowest-share-of-blue-collar-jobs-by-state/>.

⁴ Supra 4.

⁵ New York State Higher Education Services Corporation. The New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), <https://www.hesc.ny.gov/pay-for-college/apply-for-financial-aid/nys-tap.html>.

⁶ City University of New York, 2019-2020 Operating Budget Request and Four-Year Financial Plan; January 14, 2019, <http://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/budget-and-finance/FY2020-Budget-Request-for-OBF-Site-1.pdf>.

⁷ The New Paltz Oracle, "Budget Cuts Costs on SUNY New Paltz Campus," November 8, 2018, <https://oracle.newpaltz.edu/budget-cuts-costs-on-suny-new-paltz-campus/>.

⁸ Baruch College, Message from the President, FY19 Budget Reduction, July 9, 2018, <https://www.baruch.cuny.edu/facstaff/documents/07092018-FY19BudgetReduction.pdf>.

of student services and quality of education. Students have experienced firsthand, the difficulty in getting into the classes they need to graduate, limited services such as library hours, and advisement gaps across the CUNY and SUNY system. According to a CUNY survey, over a third of CUNY students reported not being able to register for a course they needed for their major. Of those students, half couldn't register because there were not enough seats available.⁹

Starting in 2017, NYPIRG has been interviewing students who were experiencing difficulties funding the costs of their education, from tuition and textbooks, to related costs like food and childcare. Scores of interviews later, we have gathered insights into the impacts of state divestment in higher education; state and federal financial aid, scholarship, and grant programs; and who benefits from current programs and who is still left out.

CUNY Students Struggle with Rising Tuition and Other Costs

Despite the clear benefits of public higher education for the health and prosperity of the state, students have been shortchanged: the state routinely underfunds CUNY and SUNY and costs get pushed onto students and their families. Beginning in 2011, nearly constant tuition hikes have raised tuition rates by more than 42%.¹⁰ While New York's substantial financial aid and opportunity programs have shielded some students from these hikes, there are many who fall through the eligibility cracks or who cannot apply for reasons outside of their control. We'll review some of these shortfalls later.

With every tuition hike, New York continues to rely on students and families, many who struggle to keep up with rising costs, rather than addressing years of state underfunding. Recent CUNY City College of New York graduate Andreina Martinez described life for the average CUNY student, where many students have to make tough choices just to receive an education:

“Last year I was concerned with tuition being raised, that I would have to take out a loan but I managed my classes so that my financial aid didn't run out. A lot of things in high school I took for granted. Like for instance, in high school, you get a metro card provided and don't have to pay \$130 every month. Textbooks are very expensive in college and even if you rent them, they cost a lot of money. It's hard trying to maintain a decent lifestyle like trying to eat healthy and those things while being in school full time or part time. I often still do not have enough money to eat.”

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to freeze all tuition rates at senior and community colleges to protect college affordability.**

⁹ City University of New York, “2016 Student Experience Survey A survey of CUNY undergraduate students,” http://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/oira/institutional/surveys/2016_SES_Highlights_Updated_10112016.pdf.

¹⁰ SUNY tuition for Academic Year (AY) 2010-2011 was \$4,970, and CUNY was \$4,830. The so-called “rational tuition” policy allowed for \$300 annual increases for 5 years, or a total of \$1,500 by July, 2016. NY's Final State Budget for AY 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 allowed for three \$200 dollar increases, bringing tuition to \$7,070 at SUNY and \$6,930 at CUNY, hence tuition has increased 42%. See: <http://www.suny.edu/smarttrack/tuition-and-fees/> and <http://www2.cuny.edu/financial-aid/tuition-and-college-costs/tuition-fees>. Calculations performed by NYPIRG.

CUNY Students Face Reduced Services

For many students, limited course offerings, overloaded classes, and even limited advisement are the cause for graduation delays. According to a CUNY survey, over a third of CUNY students reported not being able to register for a course they needed for their major. Of those students, half couldn't register because there were not enough seats available.¹¹

Hunter College student Stephanie Moy struggles to get the courses she needs while running out of financial aid:

“As a full time student with an internship and volunteer extracurricular activities, working a part time job in order to fund my education is another stressor making it all the more difficult to have a successful higher education career. Because of the limited course selections, it makes it more difficult to rearrange my class schedules to allow availability for a part time job. Having been at Hunter for nearly four years, I have seen a decrease in diversity and availability of course offerings throughout the semesters, making it harder to finish elective requirements for my majors. In addition to that, there were days I did not have time to meal prep and bring lunch from home, leaving me no choice, but to either buy lunch at school or skip out on meals because I simply could not afford it. This is why CUNY schools need more funding for more opportunities to expand financial aid programs.”

Former Bronx Community College student and Student Government Vice President and current City College of NY student, Hussein Abdul sounded the alarm over possible library hour cutbacks at BCC:

“They would always say there were cuts across departments but never gave us a number. Amongst the budget cuts, our library hours have been cut. Once again, this is not unique to BCC. Across CUNY, colleges are experiencing short library hours. It's funny because when I was younger my mother would force my brother and I to go to the library. She would scream, and shout, and force us to go study when all we wanted to do was chill and relax. Yet, here we are today, screaming and shouting for access to the library—to be able to use the library past 5 o'clock on a Friday.”

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to enhance funding for CUNY and SUNY by closing the “TAP Gap” and include mandatory costs in its base funding equation in order to help students get the classes they need to graduate, reduce class sizes, and bolster student advisement.**

¹¹ City University of New York, “2016 Student Experience Survey A survey of CUNY undergraduate students,” http://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/oira/institutional/surveys/2016_SES_Highlights_Updated_10112016.pdf.

Students Succeed In Proven Opportunity Programs – Why Are They Routinely Cut in The Executive Budget?

Opportunity programs, which are designed for educationally and economically disadvantaged students, have a steady track record of success in increasing graduation rates among the most at-risk students.¹² In general, students in opportunity programs are individuals who have come from low-income communities and often rank low on traditional measures of collegiate admissions standards, such SAT scores, high school GPA, and class standing.

New York State has several opportunity programs in place to help increase access to higher education: Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK), Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP), College Discovery, Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), and Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP). These programs take a comprehensive approach to college access and affordability by building in academic counseling, mentoring, and coverage of related costs such as free metrocards, textbooks, and child care. This approach works, and increases graduation rates. All students deserve this model of a holistically supported education and New York State and City must make the investments to make it happen.

Latsha Lee, a student at Bronx Community College, credits ASAP with her success as a student, while worrying about the consistent cuts that Governor Cuomo proposes year-after-year in the Executive Budget. She says:

“Before I enrolled in ASAP, I worked full-time and was a full-time student as well. It was difficult to manage everything: I am a mom – I have two young boys (5 and 6), working full-time, plus taking 5 classes, helping out with the rest of my family. I do have a fear of not graduating on time. If I lose my financial aid, or I’m no longer able to be enrolled in ASAP for whatever reason, I won’t be able to afford to continue.”

Despite the track records of the successes of these programs, each year the Executive Budget proposes cuts and forces the Legislature to fight to restore programs instead of building on them.

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to expand funding to the opportunity programs listed above.**
- **NYPIRG recommends that the state looks to programs such as CUNY’s Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) as a model for free public college which addresses the all-in costs of higher education and has proven to increase graduation rates.**

Current State Financial Aid Programs Fall Short – And Students Fall Through Cracks

Inflexible award schedules do not support on-time graduation for too many students. Both Excelsior Scholars and TAP recipients are limited to accessing their aid in fall and spring semesters

¹² For an example of the success of opportunity programs, see State University of New York’s Office of Opportunity Programs, <http://system.suny.edu/oop/>.

alone. The Excelsior Scholarship mandates 30 credits per year to maintain eligibility (or else the scholarship turns into a loan), the award is not available for summer and winter sessions. While scholarship recipients can maintain eligibility by taking 12-credits per semester in the fall and spring, they must pay out of pocket for the additional 6 credits in the winter or summer sessions. Meaning, the state's new "free tuition" scholarship is not always tuition-free, even for those who qualify, maintain eligibility, and receive the award.

What's more, the Excelsior Scholarship is a last-dollar program. It does not provide any aid to qualifying students whose tuition is covered already, but who could, for example, use Pell Grant money to offset textbook, housing, or transportation costs.

Anthony Vancol, a Queens College senior receives the Excelsior Scholarship, but points out that it is not the program that he read about in local papers. Vancol pointed out:

"I'm taking full-time courses and working, but Excelsior is not paying for my living expenses-my food and metrocard. I'm barely getting by. Students don't know what they are going into, the fine print is not what people see, they are just seeing the word free tuition, and that isn't what this is. If you don't meet the requirements, it becomes a loan. A lot of students currently receiving the scholarship really don't know that. If I had had an advisor with enough time to look at my paperwork, I would have known certain classes I took didn't even qualify towards my major. Now Excelsior and TAP don't want to cover those classes and I am on the hook."

TAP recipients are eligible for the award in the fall and spring semesters as long as they take a minimum of 12 credits per semester. However, with the exception of some opportunity programs or for some students with disabilities, the award is only available for up to 8 semesters. In order for students to reach the credits required for graduation on time (often 120), they must take 15 credits per semester or add summer and winter session classes. And when TAP recipients take winter and summer classes, they must pay out of pocket.

Ariana Hernandez, a College of Staten Island student, shared her story too:

"Last semester I received aid from TAP and Pell; however, my financial aid has been taken away from me now. I decided to change my major a few months ago, and, despite being told that this would not affect my financial aid, I got a notice at the start of the semester that there weren't enough credits for financial aid to cover me.

Right now, my parents are paying out of pocket to keep me in college, and sooner or later we might have to start taking out student loans, which I really don't want to do. In addition, I might not even have enough credits to graduate on time, and I think winter and summer courses are going to be a massive toll on me, financially and mentally. The fact that programs like TAP are not offered to winter and summer students leaves me stuck between not wanting to become a financial burden on my family and wanting to graduate as quickly as possible. The financial burden of living expenses such as textbooks, utilities, and food on campus really impacts what I'm going to do in the future."

For some students, a 15-credit course-load is a reasonable ask. This is supported by the 12 percent increase in students taking 15 credits per fall and spring at CUNY and the 4 percent increase at SUNY. However, 15 credits per semester is simply unrealistic for some. The issue is particularly acute for working students. Currently, students nationwide work an average of about 30 hours per week. At least a quarter of all students – and about a fifth of all students who enroll on a full-time basis – are also employed full-time while enrolled.¹³ We’ve heard from students who struggle to balance their full-time course load, jobs, and personal obligations. In a recent report put out by the CUNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, of students that work, 79 percent reported that they work to pay for living expenses and over a third of those who work believe that having a job negatively impacts their academic performance.¹⁴

Yerania Aguilar transitioned from Queensborough Community College where she was part of the ASAP program, to Queens College at which point she received the Excelsior Scholarship but could not meet the credit requirements and had to repay the scholarship in the form of a loan:

“I started off in the ASAP program at QCC and was able to smoothly manage my course load and graduate on time because of the support I received from the opportunity program. However, when I enrolled at Queens College and heard about the Governor touting free college for all through Excelsior, I was quick to sign up only to find out when it was too late that I needed to fulfill a 30-credit requirement for the entire academic year. Because I found out too late, I had to pay back \$800 for Excelsior since I didn’t take the required number of classes which would have been five classes instead of the four that I took.

Five classes, for many students, including myself, is too much to set as a universal standard for all students. At most, I can handle four classes if I want to get good grades in all of them. For the state to expect students to meet unrealistic academic goals... it’s setting students up to fail.”

Robust financial aid programs exist to safeguard low and middle income students from the financial barriers which can impede college completion. Financial aid barriers in the winter and spring semester must be lifted. It could even promote early graduation for those looking to jumpstart their careers or postgraduate studies.

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to provide TAP and the Excelsior Scholarship during winter and summer sessions and to expand aid for use beyond covering tuition.**

Despite prisons being called “correctional facilities,” they do a dismal job in turning lives around. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, nationwide about two-thirds of released state prisoners were re-arrested within three years and three-quarters within five.¹⁵ Too often, prison is

¹³ 2016 Student Experience Survey, CUNY, http://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/oira/institutional/surveys/2016_SES_Highlights_Updated_10112016.pdf.

¹⁴ City University of New York, “2016 Student Experience Survey A survey of CUNY undergraduate students,” http://www2.cuny.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/page-assets/about/administration/offices/oira/institutional/surveys/2016_SES_Highlights_Updated_10112016.pdf.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, “3 In 4 Former Prisoners In 30 7 | Page NYPIRG Cost of Higher Education Testimony

a revolving door. And it's a revolving door that impacts certain communities worse than others. According to the Cuomo Administration, nearly half of New York inmate population is African American, nearly one quarter is Hispanic, and nearly one quarter is white.¹⁶

The currently high recidivism rate helps no one. The connection between higher education and reduced recidivism has been well established. A study conducted by the University of California at Los Angeles found that "[a] \$1 million investment in incarceration will prevent about 350 crimes, while that same investment in education will prevent more than 600 crimes. Correctional education is almost twice as cost effective as incarceration."¹⁷

While prisoners can sometimes get access to educational courses now, they are ineligible for the federal Pell Grant program as well as TAP. Since the vast majority of inmates are low income, they usually cannot afford college courses while in prison.

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to provide TAP eligibility for incarcerated individuals.**

Graduate TAP began in 1974-1975, helping 22,253 New York graduate students with an average award of \$302 with a maximum award of \$600. The program has fluctuated greatly over the years with regards to the number of students receiving the award, the maximum award available, average award distributed, and the amount of money the state invested in the program. Before TAP for graduate students was completely eliminated in 2009-2010, it served 7,251 students.¹⁸

The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that jobs requiring master's degrees and professional degrees will grow by 22% and 20%, respectively, from 2010 to 2020 – faster than any other level of education.¹⁹ According to the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, a worker with a high school diploma can expect to earn \$1.3 million over a lifetime, while a worker with a bachelor's degree will earn \$2.3 million and a worker with a master's degree will earn \$2.7 million over a lifetime.²⁰ While the benefits of advanced degrees are clear, financial aid programs are either non-existent or uninviting to prospective graduate students, many of whom already hold student loan debt.

States Arrested Within 5 Years Of Release," April 22, 2014, see:

<http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/press/rprts05p0510pr.cfm>.

¹⁶ New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, "Under Custody Report: Profile of Inmate Population Under Custody on January 1, 2013," see:

http://www.doccs.ny.gov/Research/Reports/2013/UnderCustody_Report_2013.pdf.

¹⁷ Audrey Bazos and Jessica Hausman, UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research Department of Policy Studies, "Correctional Education as a Crime Control Program," p 2, March 2004, see:

<http://www.ceanational.org/PDFs/ed-as-crime-control.pdf>.

¹⁸ New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, "Graduate Level TAP AY 1974-1975 thru 2009-2010," Neal Warren, September 2013.

¹⁹ United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Occupational Outlook Handbook, Projections 2010-2020," <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/about/projections-overview.htm>.

²⁰ The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, "The College Payoff: Education, Occupations, Lifetime Earnings," Page 2, August 15th 2011,

<http://www9.georgetown.edu/grad/gppi/hpi/cew/pdfs/collegepayoff-summary.pdf>.

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to expand TAP to eligible graduate students.**

Vulnerable Students Need Support Services to Access Higher Education

The goal of effective college aid shouldn't be to just cover tuition, but to cover the added costs that can hamstring student success. If costs including textbooks, transportation, food, housing and childcare are standing in the way of a student's educational success, then they must be addressed.

The cost of child care can be a significant barrier toward accessing a degree. According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, just 8 percent of single mothers who enroll in college graduate with an associate or bachelor's degree within six years, compared with 49 percent of women students who are not mothers.²¹ Single mothers with only a high school diploma are over three times as likely to live in poverty as single mothers with a bachelor's degree.²²

While the average cost of private child care or daycare in NYC can be prohibitively expensive (roughly \$25,000 a year²³), enrolling a child in daycare at CUNY can cost as little as \$5 a day. It's unsurprising that access to affordable child care increases degree completion rates. A study by Monroe Community College in Rochester, NY, found that student parents that used the child care center there were 30 percent more likely to stay in school. CUNY and SUNY child care centers are a unique and powerful tool for socio-economic mobility.

Melissa Estrella took ten years to get her Associate's Degree, simply due to the fact that she was unaware of child care at Bronx Community College and as a result took a break from her education. She shared her story with us:

"I've been at BCC off and on since 2009. I took time off when I had my kids because I honestly didn't know about childcare at CUNY. It's \$5 a day here, that's super cheap. I was going here and I had no idea it existed, I would've finished school a lot quicker if I had known. I had to drop a couple of semesters because I didn't have child care."

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to robustly fund CUNY and SUNY child care centers.**

NYPIRG commends the work of CUNY and SUNY staff, often in collaboration with our campus NYPIRG chapters, student governments and the community at large, to stock and maintain food pantries in compliance with the mandate from Governor Cuomo that every CUNY and SUNY campus create food pantries. That mandate came in part as a response to a report by groups including NYPIRG entitled *Hunger on Campus*. The report looked at food insecurity on campus,

²¹ Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Investing in Single Mothers' Higher Education: Costs and Benefits to Individuals, Families, and Society." <https://iwpr.org/publications/investing-single-mothers-higher-ed/>.

²² Institute for Women's Policy Research, "Investing in Single Mothers' Higher Education: Costs and Benefits to Individuals, Families, and Society." <https://iwpr.org/publications/investing-single-mothers-higher-ed/>.

²³ Bernard, Tara Siegel. "Choosing Child Care When You Go Back to Work." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 22 Nov. 2013. www.nytimes.com/2013/11/23/your-money/choosing-child-care-when-you-go-back-to-work.html.

and how that may undermine the educational success of untold thousands of students.²⁴ Consistent with prior studies, 48 percent of survey respondents reported food insecurity in the previous 30 days.

Taking a closer look at the approximately 1,800 students who reported experiencing food insecurity, thirty-two percent believed that hunger or housing problems had an impact on their education, from foregoing textbook purchases, to missing or dropping classes. Students that are hungry and homeless must get the services they need.

- **NYPIRG urges the Legislature to include monies in the budget to support operating expenses food pantries across campuses at SUNY and CUNY.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

²⁴ NYPIRG, *Hunger on Campus, The Challenge of Food Insecurity for College Students*, October 2016, http://www.nypirgstudents.org/reports/Hunger_on_Campus_NYPIRG.pdf, accessed November 30, 2016.

Anthony Vancol
Student at Queens College
Student Board Rep. For NYPIRG

10/17/19

Testimony for Higher Ed. Hearing.

Hello Senate Higher Ed. Committee,

My name is Anthony Vancol. I'm a current undergraduate student at Queens College studying as a psychology major. I'm also a proud alum of Queensborough Community College, who graduated in the spring of 2018. I enrolled at Queensborough in fall of 2016 as part of the ASAP program. The program as you know, helped me out as new incoming student, coming from a low to middle class income household with an advisor, unlimited metrocard for transportation, textbook stipends, and leftover tuition coverage. I took 15 credits each semester or more to make sure that I graduated within a two year time frame. Without the EOP like ASAP, I would have not graduated within two years. And that's for certain. The support that I got from the program aided me to focus on my education and propelled me and my peers in the program to graduate in a two to three year time frame. Programs like ASAP help increase and improve graduation rates. Therefore, more investment needs to be implemented in these EOPs to keep the successful graduation rates maintained and also needs to be expanded to four year institutions to increase the success in graduation rates as well.

After completing my studies at Queensborough in spring 2018 and deciding to go to Queens College in the Fall. That summer I had to decide whether I would be choosing to accept the excelsior scholarship to help me financially to go to college, since ASAP wasn't going to follow me to my upcoming four year school, unlike EOPs such as College Discovery. My mother was struggling physically and I wasn't working. I didn't know how my financial aid or tap was really going to cover my tuition at Queens College, so I wanted to see how the opportunity of a free tuition scholarship program like excelsior could really improve my education.

Being new to Queens College and being improperly advised from certain departments I registered for 12 credits in the fall of 2018. At the end I only passed 9. I was going through a difficult adjustment period from a two year to a four school. I didn't get that much support since I wasn't part of an EOP. The student to faculty ratio was so unequal that it made it impossible to have coherent advisement. Unless I made the effort to be involved on my campus, I wasn't being informed about the services that were available to help me out. I was not working. I was food insecure. I was delaying buying textbooks to pay for metrocards. And I was being psychologically evaluated at my school as well.

I went to advisement at my school to get help on how I should deal with my studies for spring 2019 and the rest of the academic year. I was rushed, not explained thoroughly, misguided and expected to pick courses on my own accord based on the information that was given to me. I registered 20 credits thinking if I add 9 from fall and take a summer course I can meet the requirements. Midway through the semester I got a phone call from the bursar dept at Queens saying that only two courses were being applied towards my tap and everything else isn't. I was shocked and didn't fully understand at the time. However, because the majority of the courses I was taking were not applying to my major. It wasn't being applied towards tap.

After completing my daunting and stressful spring 2019 of 20 credits, I was mentally and physically exhausted. I couldn't afford to take a summer course, therefore I didn't.

In the early spring of 2019, my psychological evaluation revealed that I had a learning disability called mild processing delay. This past summer I was also diagnosed with ADHD. Throughout the majority of my academic career I was not accommodated for my disabilities. Since being in college, the support that I previously which really benefited me successfully in completing my degree was really ASAP. ASAP gives students holistic approaches and provides students with the services of attentiveness, understanding, and financial support. It was really crucial for students like me.

Please increase funding into the programs like ASAP and expand them into four year institutions, which would increase more timely and increase graduation rates for students within CUNY!

Thank you for the time you've devoted towards reading my story and hearing it as well.

Testimony of Juvanie Piquant

College: New York City College of Technology

Good morning. My name is Juvanie Piquant I am a second - year student majoring in Law & Paralegal Studies. I am the alternate senator at University Student Senate (USS) representing New York City College of Technology, and a state board representative for the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG).

Organization Descriptions:

University Student Senate- *With the mission of preserving the accessibility, affordability, and excellence in higher education within the City University of New York; the organization is charged with protecting the rights of the student body, furthering the cause of public higher education and promoting the general welfare of its student constituents and the University. The USS delegates are responsible for the representative governance of the 500,000 students of the twenty-five CUNY campuses.*

NYPIRG- *A nonpartisan, statewide nonprofit organization founded by college students founded in 1973 to engage peers in the importance of civic engagement.*

On the behalf of CUNY students and myself we are thankful for the opportunity to share our perspectives on the climate of Higher Education in the State of New York and seek ways we can advance the effectiveness and progression of higher education. Growing up in Brooklyn New York, having a father who worked as an adjunct at Brooklyn College, aunts, and uncles attending CUNY institutions has shown me what CUNY can do for me and what it has done for others. I remember being a little girl coming to class with my father walking the halls of many CUNY campuses being inspired. One day I looked up to my father and said "Dad I am coming to CUNY for college, there is no place I would rather be." Fast forward many years later, I am here, inspired, hopeful and driven more than I have ever been in my entire life.

Rising Tuition Costs Results into Colleges Absorbing the Costs of Revenue

It is imperative that the investment into Higher Education is taken into serious matters. Everyday CUNY students suffer from many issues that hinder their progression from pursuing a degree. Issues such as food insecurity, tuition hikes, lack of campus resources such as; feminine hygiene disposal bins in restrooms, dysfunctional amenities on campuses; malfunctioning elevators, escalators and more affect us everyday.

New York City College of Technology, Third Year Student : Human Services Major, Celia Gomez (Feminine Hygiene):

" I was a freshman I felt very awkward, I was putting my pad away. I felt very gross disposing it outside in the garbage that everybody throws out their stuff in. There were other girls and I know we go through the same thing but it still made me feel uncomfortable and awkward. I felt like nobody needs to know that I am on my period, nobody needs to know I am going through it. It's like my personal life. It was kind of messy, it was just extremely gross. It would of been much better if each time I went to the bathroom, I had a disposable bin where I could throw my

menstrual pad away. Also, when you are on your period it smells, why would I or anybody else want to put that outside where everyone else throws their stuff away. I also see used tampons and pads on the toilets because I am guessing the girls feel uncomfortable throwing it away in front of people outside and it is kind of gross.”

Budget deficits, that result in the underfunding of CUNY puts the financial burdens on the backs of students resulting in various hardships. For example, prolonged graduation rates, students dropping out due to not being able to withstand the cost of living and high tuition costs. Since the start of 2011 tuition hikes have raised tuition by more than 38%. The tuition price per students at senior colleges (\$6,730 at CUNY 4-year schools) the rising tuition costs outpace the Maximum Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) award that is (\$5,165).

Students who receive the maximum TAP award do not have to pay the difference, on the other hand individual colleges have to take responsibility to obtain the loss of revenue as a result CUNY reported a \$86 million dollar TAP GAP. Tuition burdens have risen upon students. New York State has not incorporated funding for inflationarity or additional imperative costs such as staff contracts, electricity and more resulting into an additional GAP in state funding for mandatory costs. The costs of revenue are not equivalent to keeping up with necessary increases in expenditure. The lack of funding results into direct hardships on the back of students that results in a lack of resourceful and quality education. For example, short amount of library hours have affected students tremendously in regards to their success through everyday life at CUNY, tutoring, broken elevators and escalators creates an accessibility burden for students as well.

New York City College of Technology , Student Government Association Treasurer, Jevaunnie Muir (Library Hours):

“In 2017 I was taking a pre calculus course, working full time taking night classes from 8:00-9:40PM. My everyday life would be working and then going straight to class; I was trying to maintain my grades but I did not have much time during the day to study. I would depend on the library on campus to borrow materials such as a scientific calculator and books for the class due to the high cost. Full time students had a hard time keeping up with that class due to the rigor of the course material. The library would close extremely early at 7pm as a result after class I would never have the time to study and get the materials I needed to fulfill my assignments. It was hard to get the tools that i needed to maintain my grade in that class. I would either have to leave work early to get the materials that I needed or call out of work but that was not the only hard thing for me; the lack of tutors we had available for the topic I was studying in calculus, made it hard for me to grasp the material. They would only be available at a certain time of the day, the latest tutor would stay until 5PM on campus. I received either a “B” or “C” as my semester grade. I truly believe if I had less hurdles in receiving assistance in tutoring and getting the course materials I needed on a consistent basis I would of done much better in my pre calculus class.”

The City University of New York is a place where a person can come with nothing and leave with everything and more. It is an institution where you are surrounded with such driven, hopeful and inspiring

individuals. It is imperative that the investment into this institution is the topic of conversation and is acted upon now. As a student leader, I ensure that it is my moral obligation to continue standing up for my peers and myself in this fight for Higher Education and funding CUNY. The call of action is now and it is important for all of us to answer it. Our students are suffering, faculty are not receiving adequate pay. To the elected officials that claim to be progressive, they need to be progressive in acting upon the urgency of the Higher Education crisis we are going through right now. Senator Toby Ann Stavisky as the chairperson of the Higher Education Committee, I expect for our issues, concerns and stories be on the frontline of your agenda alongside with your colleagues. Education is not a problem, it is an OPPORTUNITY. Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". We must treat education as such and provide every single CUNY student an adequate, fair and quality OPPORTUNITY in achieving an education at the City University of New York, we must fund CUNY NOW!

Testimony to the Senate Higher Education Committee on the cost of public higher education.
Thursday, October 24, 2019, 11:30 a.m.
Brooklyn College, 2705 Campus Road,
Student Center 6th Floor-Maroon Room,
Brooklyn, NY 11210.

Honorable Colleagues:

Thank you for allowing the National Association of Social Workers-New York City (NASW-NYC) to present testimony to the Senate Higher Education Committee on the cost of public higher education. My name is Olanike Oyeyemi and I am the Associate Director for NASW-NYC. Our Executive Director, Dr. Claire J. Green-Forde couldn't be here today as she is traveling for a social work conference. The president of the NASW-NYC Board of Directors, Mr. Benjamin Sher sends greetings and on behalf of our over 5,000 members in NYC, we thank you for this opportunity. Throughout this testimony, we will provide both personal and professional implications of debt and we urge everyone to consider not only the financial cost, but the personal and quality of life sacrifices social workers and others make to pay back their loans.

The National Association of Social Workers is the largest membership organization of professional social workers in the country, with 55 chapters representing every state in the Union as well Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, Guam and the US Virgin Islands. NASW-NYC, along with NASW New York State, represents over 12,000 social workers in the state of New York. This issue is both personal and professional as we too are impacted by the high burden of student loan debt and the limited, restrictive, and underfunded loan forgiveness options available to social workers. We listen to our members and other social workers express worry and frustration around their high student loan debt, we empathize when young professionals and students express being disillusioned by the field as their hard earned sacrifices don't seem to be valued based on compensation and workloads, and we try to support those who tell us that they consider leaving the field all together for better paying jobs so that they can pay their debts and have some hope of a moderately comfortable life.

As the professional body of social workers, the largest mental health providers in this country, we would be remiss if we did not speak to the emotional, psychological, mental and physical health toll the stress of financial and student loan debt places not just social workers, but everyone. Anxiety and depression about making payments, where you will live, how you will make ends meet, struggling between paying your loans and your rent or putting food on the table, and questioning how you can support clients while you yourself need support are real concerns and weigh heavily on many.

Advocating for lower cost of higher education and loan forgiveness is critical not only for social workers but for the larger society as high college costs and college education funded primarily through student loans has become a national social issue, draining both the economy and deterring prospective college students from applying (Soine, 2014). Student debt in the United States is estimated at more than \$1.53 trillion. In fact, more than one-fourth of the country's 40 million student loan debtors are in default of their loans and by 2022, college debt will equal mortgage debt (Lisi, 2014). Furthermore, according to a 2012 article by Jamrisko and Kolat, between 1978 and 2012, the cost of undergraduate education rose by 1,120 percent thereby causing newer generations of students to face challenges and debt that previous generations of students did not. For NASW, it is critical that costs of higher education and student loan debt be addressed as social workers have been identified as one group of professionals especially burdened by educational debt (Asinof, 2006; Jones & Cohen, 2006, NASW, 2004).

According to the US Department of Labor (2016), social work is one of the fastest growing professions, with a 16% increase in jobs (much better than average) over the next 10 years. These positions will particularly grow in the health and behavioral healthcare field; child, family and schools and community-based agencies. As the United States population ages, the need for social work in supporting the elderly and in end-of-life care will also grow exponentially.

The expected growth in need for social workers and recognition of the unique training social workers bring, has not translated into living wages or salaries comparable to the years of professional training and skill required of a Master's-level social worker. Starting salaries for most MSW-level positions in New York State range from \$35,000 to \$55,000; with the average Master Level social worker being offered annual salaries in the low to mid \$40,000s. We take no issue with any organization

or profession and know that regardless of their training or areas of interest(s), individuals take honest paying jobs they like or that are available to make a living. We are also not implying that we are better than any individual or profession however; for the purposes of illustration, we ask you to consider the following in relation to the training and requirements for social workers and their pay compared to other professions. According to Glassdoor.com, the average salary for a barista in New York is \$21,000 to \$30,000 per year, which is clearly well below a living wage in NYC. Glassdoor indicates that the average salary for a Starbucks store manager is \$50,000 with that salary being around \$62,000 for those in NYC. The minimum training requirement is a High School degree or equivalent, with two years of retail experience. Social Workers are required to have a master's degrees and complete course work in addition to two years of internships to obtain their degree, engage in post masters training, and be licensed; yet, on average make close to, or significantly less than individuals employed at Starbucks and similar organizations. How can we attract people and retain them in the field that works to help vulnerable populations, is emotionally and mentally taxing, and requires significant personal sacrifices, when facing this reality?

Social work salaries are often constrained further by limiting funding contracts and tight budgets within the organizations with the high cost of living in New York City, average rents and expenses in most places being almost \$2000 a month, and the low wages, social workers are finding it harder and harder to make a living. We are aware of social workers employed in multiple roles in and outside of the field, just to make ends meet. Social workers who themselves need the same public assistance and benefits such as SNAP, that they advocate for their clients to receive, and social workers who are burnt out and make quality of life or family planning decisions because they simply can't afford it.

Dr. Claire's Personal Story

One example of the impact of student loan debt on quality of life decisions comes from our Executive Director Dr. Claire Green-Forde, who after years of paying loans, still has well over \$100,000 in student loan debt. She has spoken to the fact that no matter what she pays, at the end of the year, the principle is the same or a bit higher. Paying more each month on loans is the goal however; it means being unable to have a place to live due to the high cost of rent in NYC. Additionally, the high cost of living, low wages she's been offered in her over 10 years in the field, while also trying to address basic life needs has impacted her ability to adequately save towards her dream to be a homeowner. She shared that it also means that she is unsure if she will ever be a mother as the financial cost of children coupled with the cost of living and other expenses in New York don't make that dream seem attainable given her student debt. This is one example and one person willing to share a deeply personal story about the impact that a crushing student debt has had on them in hopes of illustrating both the financial and personal cost to all of you; she is not alone as there are others.

According to Yoon's 2012 study, most students enter the profession with a student loan debt. This was the first national study to examine the debt undertaken by MSW graduates, Yoon notes that in 2004, NASW reported an average loan debt for MSW graduates ranging from \$30,791 to \$47,094 for regular two-year programs, with one-year advanced standing graduates having loan debt between \$28,816 and \$36,728 (2012, p. 109). In 2007, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) reported an average of 72.5% of MSW graduates from 88 MSW programs amassed an average loan debt of \$26,478 (Yoon, p. 107). Many social workers use public settings to gain their professional training for clinical licensure, leaving in 3-4 years for a career in private practice. This constant turnover places a heavy burden on our public social services system, leaving many clients to experience a new social worker every few years and results in inefficient and ineffective care.

There are only four public education institutions in New York City granting an MSW degree - Lehman College in The Bronx, Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College in Manhattan, and Staten Island University at The College of Staten Island. The competition for acceptance into these fine programs is high; and students may have to delay admission 1-2 years if considering them. Students graduating from these programs still incur debt. In fact, we can speak of at least one case where a student was accepted into both a public and private social work program in NYC and chose the private program because the scholarships offered there off-set the education cost at a greater level. Therefore, students who enroll in a public institution for social work are facing very similar challenges to students who elect a private university.

Olanike's Personal Story

In order to attend social work school, I had to maintain a full-time job and take out student loans to help supplement the costs. These loans were in addition to the loans already incurred from my undergraduate studies which I did out of state and missed out on all the grants and in state financial assistance as a NY resident. Despite the high debt amount incurred for my degrees, I consider myself one of the lucky ones because I was able to apply for scholarships that covered a small portion of my tuition. Also, after graduating, becoming licensed, and working in public service agency, I was able to apply for and received the NY State Licensed Social Worker Forgiveness Program, where a portion of my loans were canceled for four years. Although,

these opportunities were incredibly helpful in reducing my debt, it took me being proactive, doing extensive research, fitting into certain eligibility criteria and then applying in hopes that I would be successful. To date, I am still repaying a significant amount of debt, which begs the question what are others who didn't have the same luck and opportunity as me dealing with?

NASW has employed a multi-tiered approach to its advocacy for reducing student loan debt. At the federal level, NASW has supported The Dorothy I. Height and Whitney M. Young, Jr. Social Work Investment Act (H.R.5447), which was introduced in Congress. The primary goal of the Reinvestment Act is to secure federal and state investments in professional social work to enhance societal well-being. It also focuses on fair market compensations, high social work education debt, translating social work research to practice, social work safety, lack of diversity in the profession, and state-level social work licensure. Congresswoman Barbara Lee (H.R. 1466) and Senator Barbara Mikulski (S.997), both social workers, have reintroduced this bill several times, most recently in the 113th Congress. Social workers, social work students, and the social work community could benefit from the passage of this legislation. Considerable advocacy will be required if this bill is to be passed. The legislation tracking website <http://www.govtrack.us> reports that there is a 0% chance that the bill will be enacted into law. At the state level, NASW was pivotal in expanding the Social Work Public Loan Forgiveness Program offered by HESC, and the organization continues to lobby for expansion of loans for people working in the public sector. HESC consistently reports the social work loan forgiveness program has more applicants than any other program they administer. Unfortunately, given the full amount of funds available is only 1.78 million, they are only able to serve a fraction of those in need. We strongly urge and encourage the Legislature and specifically, the Higher Education Committee to consider further expansion of this program. As part of our Social Work Investment Initiative, NASW-NYC has, and will continue to advocate for a substantial increase to the program, particularly for those working in the public sector, where salaries are low and staff turnover is high. NASW-NYC as part of its social investment initiatives lobbied for \$ 4 million for an additional loan forgiveness program for social workers.

With this advocacy, has been the reality that professionals seeking student loan forgiveness face a complicated and difficult process. Students are often under-educated about different types of scholarship opportunities, on the types of loans they have, what the payment requirements are, and how their jobs apply to requirements for serving under-served populations. Also, there needs to be more protection in place for student loan borrowers in general. In NY state for instance, loan service providers are neither licensed nor regulated although the student loan servicer industry has repeatedly been the cause for serious consumer protection concerns (FY 2020 Executive Budget Briefing Book). Gov. Cuomo, through his executive budget, is proposing a new statute that will ensure that this issue is addressed by making sure that no student loan servicers can mislead a borrower or engage in any predatory act or practice, misapply payments, provide credit reporting agencies with inaccurate information or any other practices that may harm the borrower (FY 2020 Executive Budget Briefing Book). A recent New York Times article by R.Lieber highlighted the difficulties one New Yorker had to successfully forgive a portion of his student loans.

Social work is a noble and valuable profession. Every day social workers support our state's most vulnerable and marginalized individuals and communities. They advocate and empower those who have been silenced, fight to eradicate racism and oppression, and support the resilience of people. This is a calling and a profession that people choose because they know being an agent of change will greatly benefit all in society. However, the profession suffers from crushing college debt and low compensation in a state where the cost of living can be quite high. We need our legislative representatives to increase access to loan forgiveness and reduce the cost of public higher education. We recommend the following:

- Reduce the cost of public higher education for MSW programs to zero or near zero
- Increase access to loan forgiveness for all New Yorkers employed in the public sector.

Thank you for your time today,



Dr. Claire Green-Forde, LCSW
Executive Director, NASW-NYC



Olanike Oyeyemi, LMSW
Associate Director, NASW-NYC



Benjamin Sher, MA, LMSW
President-Board of Directors, NASW-NYC

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Testimony of Jennifer Mishory
Senior Fellow and Senior Policy Advisor, The Century Foundation
New York State Committee on Higher Education: Hearing on Public Higher Education Costs
October 24, 2019

Thank you to Chairwoman Stavisky and members of the committee for inviting me to testify. My name is Jen Mishory, and I am a senior fellow at The Century Foundation, a national think tank focused on reducing inequality.

My education colleagues based here in New York, Yan Cao and Taela Dudley, work on a range of New York-specific education issues, but my work at The Century Foundation focuses more broadly on higher education finance and affordability. I plan to share our research on five relevant national trends at the federal and state level, and will touch on how those trends have played out here in New York.

First, the cost of college has increased significantly for today's students, in part due to state disinvestment: funding per student has fallen by about 11 percent in the past 20 years, with significant dips during recessions that most states never recovered from.¹ At the same time, the cost of delivering education has risen significantly. Combined, those two factors means that today, much of public education is privately funded: the individual student's share of public college costs is about 46 percent.² This change has occurred at a time when more low-income families are enrolling in college³ - a positive trend - but it means that costs have risen for people who can, on average, afford less. In fact, many families can afford far less, because wages for the lowest income earners have declined in the past three decades, it's even *more* difficult for families furthest down the income ladder than it would have been even if college costs had remained flat.⁴

The good news is that in many ways, New York does better than many other states in its aggregate support for public colleges. But tuition has still increased for New York students⁵ at a time when New York schools as a whole are almost certainly mirroring national trends and serving a lower income population than ever before.

Second, most states fund their community colleges, which serve a far more racially diverse and a much lower income population,⁶ at lower levels than their four-year institutions. Some of those disparities relate to research or other costs that universities incur that two-year schools do not.

¹ State Higher Education Finance, State Higher Education Executives Association, adjusted for inflation. https://public.tableau.com/profile/sheeo#!/vizhome/SHEF_FY18_Interactive_Data/About

² Id.

³ Education Pays, The College Board, <https://research.collegeboard.org/trends/education-pays>

⁴ Jen Mishory, Path to Debt-free College, <https://tcf.org/content/report/path-debt-free-college/>

⁵ Id.

⁶ Community College Research Center, Community College FAQs, <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Community-College-FAQs.html>.

the for-profit sector).¹³ New Yorkers similarly struggle with debt, where 59 percent of four-year public undergraduates carry an average of \$31,000 in debt.¹⁴

College completion also matters a lot, and repayment outcomes such as delinquency or default are worse when a student takes on debt and leaves without a degree. Beyond repayment success, however, student debt can also put a drag on other choices that may lead to longer term financial security. And high costs and the prospect of relying on debt deter students from enrolling at all, particularly those with a flimsier safety net for whom debt may be a riskier endeavor.

Indeed, joint analysis between The Century Foundation, Demos, and the Roosevelt Institute shows that the burdens of student debt are held unequally and inequitably: in particular, black students need to borrow more because they have less family wealth, and black borrowers struggle more in repayment with fewer family resources to rely on than white students and a discriminatory labor market that pays black workers less.¹⁵ Women also take on larger student loans and have less income to pay back those loans due to the gender pay gap.¹⁶ Taking on debt may be *necessary* to get ahead in an economy that still provides a significant wage premium for a degree, but a debt-financed system, rather than public investment financed system, can reinforce the racial wealth gap and other disparities.¹⁷

Some states have started to take a more comprehensive approach to tackling affordability challenges. For example, Century is participating in a multi-stakeholder effort in California to develop a plan to reform their Cal Grant program, removing eligibility barriers and covering enough non-tuition costs to account for financial need, or at least get close.¹⁸ The proposed framework creates an “affordability guarantee” to students, or a clear commitment to students on what they will be expected to pay. These efforts rest on research that having a clear an effective message about college costs can make a difference, and that it also brings state policymakers to the table to make good on that guarantee.¹⁹ Similarly, Washington state passed a bill last year requiring that their local large employers help fund training for their workforce and a large-scale investment in their financial aid system that created a free college

¹³ Michael Itzkowitz, *Want More Students to Pay Down Their Student Debt?* <https://www.thirdway.org/report/want-more-students-to-pay-down-their-loans-help-them-graduate>; Ben Miller, *Who Are Student Loan Defaulters?*, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-postsecondary/reports/2017/12/14/444011/student-loan-defaulters/>.

¹⁴ The Institute for College Access and Success, *Student Debt and the Class of 2018: Interactive Map*, <https://ticas.org/interactive-map/>

¹⁵ Roosevelt Institute, Demos, *How Student Debt and the Racial Wealth Gap Reinforce Each Other*, The Century Foundation, <https://tcf.org/content/report/bridging-progressive-policy-debates-student-debt-racial-wealth-gap-reinforce/>

¹⁶ *Women's Student Debt Crisis in the United States*, <https://www.aauw.org/research/deeper-in-debt/>

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Sandy Baum, Robert Shireman, Jen Mishory, *Expanding Opportunity, Reducing Debt*, <https://tcf.org/content/report/expanding-opportunity-reducing-debt/>

¹⁹ <https://tcf.org/content/report/free-college-stay/>; <https://tcf.org/content/report/financing-institutions-free-college-debate/>

**New York State Higher Education Public Hearing
Brooklyn College
Testimony of Sadat
Rahman, Former USS Delegate from York College
OCTOBER 29th, 2019**

INTRODUCTION

I am Sadat Rahman and I am a recent graduate and an alumni from York College with a BA in Sociology. I would like to thank the Senators for holding the hearing and for allowing me to speak today. Today I will be testifying about making sure we make CUNY FREE Again and the importance of preserving and investing in higher education . CUNY was free before, so I don't see any reason why it can't happen again. CUNY students go through many issues to keep up with their everyday lives. Students who go to any 4 year college have to work 2 jobs or more just so they can attend college and make ends meet. Issues like this really affect me personally because I know some friends who had to go through it. I will ensure that I am making my best efforts in advocating that CUNY is free again because this issue is so important to me and many other students who attend this institution. Every student should have the right tools they need to be successful in CUNY to ensure a better future. I would like to thank everyone for their time. Thank you.