

Ahmat Adam Djouma

University at Albany

Testimony at 2021 Higher Education Joint Legislative Budget Hearing

February 4, 2021

Good afternoon honorable members of the legislature,

My name is Ahmat and I am a student at State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany majoring in Political Science with a sociology minor. I'm also a student who is blind registered with the office of Disability Resource Center. It is my hope that my education at University at Albany will set me on a path for a career in law or government.

Disabilities offices across the state help many students with disabilities with the limited resources that they are given. I can say my academic success is all due to the work of many people that work in these offices. The disabilities offices go above and beyond in supporting the students. These include but not limited to providing accommodation like braille, accessible textbooks, making course materials accessible, and providing professional trainings to instructors. With increasing number of students with disabilities at colleges, these offices cannot support all students with limited funding. I am hopeful this budget year that the legislature will provide the funding that is greatly needed for colleges to continue providing this support.

According to the New York State Education Department's website, there are more than 889 students with disabilities known to my college. I am proud to be part of a statewide

movement of college students with disabilities at 75,000 strong! According to HEATH, a clearinghouse for data on postsecondary education and disability, for every student known to college offices of disability services, there are two other students with disabilities who have not yet identified themselves as individuals who need reasonable accommodations. Such individuals are particularly at-risk for struggling academically and dropping out of college.

The New York State Education Department's budget request includes \$7 million for enhancing support services for students with disabilities at New York State colleges and universities. My college's share of these funds would make a critical difference in its ability to outreach and extended critical services to the many students with disabilities on my campus who have yet to request reasonable accommodations and support services.

On behalf of the students with disabilities at SUNY Albany, I strongly support the State Education Department's "Enhancing Supports & Services for Postsecondary Success of Students with Disabilities" funding proposal in its 2021-2022 Executive Budget Request.

I thank you for your commitment to equal access for New York State's college students with disabilities.

Ahmat Adam Djouma