



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

## Senate Democrats Rollout EducateNY Plan

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS March 13, 2017

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Albany, NY - The Senate Democratic Conference today announced a comprehensive package to help millions of New York families who earn up to \$150,000 receive free tuition to SUNY and CUNY institutions and increased aid for New Yorkers attending private colleges and universities as well as help with housing and living costs for the neediest New Yorkers. The package, EducateNY, will help ensure that state government incentivizes more New Yorkers to earn advanced degrees and empowers New York students to achieve a higher education without incurring crippling debts. This plan is the most comprehensive college affordability proposal and will provide real help to more New York families than alternative options and plans.

“Education is the great equalizer in our society, and a highly educated workforce is essential in the modern economy,” Senate Democratic Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said. “Too many of our young adults are unable to earn an advanced degree due to prohibitive costs or they are saddled with unbearable debts once they graduate. The EducateNY program will help millions of New Yorkers earn advanced degrees and start investing in our economy rather than paying off loans for decades. The Senate Democrats understand that for our state’s long-term economic strength, we need to invest in our kids now.”

Senate Democratic Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris said, “Half-measures will not help struggling New York families and that is why Senate Democrats’ EducateNY plan is the best option for making college more affordable. Senate Democratic proposals will ensure more of our students get a college degree without assuming crippling debt. Now is the time for real results, not unnecessary compromises that lessen the assistance we should be providing hard-working New Yorkers.”

Senator Toby Stavisky, Ranking Member on the Senate Higher Education Committee and sponsor the EducateNY Plan, said, “A college degree has become a necessity for young people to be competitive in the job market and yet it remains out of reach for so many of our students. We need to change our approach to funding our state colleges and universities because the right to an education should not be determined by socio-economic status. A prospective student should not have to apply for burdensome student loans and spend years paying off the debt. The EducateNY package, which includes my bill to eliminate tuition for state residents at CUNY and SUNY schools, will level the playing field for middle-class families across the entire state.”

Senate Democratic Policy Group Chair Daniel Squadron said, “New Yorkers shouldn’t have to choose between a college education and crushing debt -- and even feeding their families. Increasing access to affordable college education for more people expands opportunity and is an investment in the state’s future. Thank you to the Democratic Conference for continued focus on this important issue.”

The Senate Democrats’ EducateNY program will help middle class families struggling with rising higher education costs and will provide essential aid to millions of struggling, lower income families who have been left behind in previous college affordability plans. The EducateNY plan includes the innovative EducateNY Grant Program, which will make SUNY/CUNY tuition-free for millions of New York students including Dreamers. The

EducateNY plan will also assist New Yorkers with grant awards for students including Dreamers at private colleges and university increase aid to “Higher Education Opportunity Programs,” and invest more resources in housing and food security initiatives.

As part of the EducateNY plan, the Senate Democrats are also calling for additional funding for SUNY and CUNY’s operating budget to cover mandatory costs increases, including employee fringe benefits, contractual agreement increases and building rentals. These extra funds will also be directed to empower SUNY and CUNY to hire additional full-time faculty to improve the quality of education offered to New York students and to provide an increase in Community College Base Aid.

The Senate Democratic Conference’s legislative package includes:

- Free SUNY/ CUNY Tuition through EducateNY Grant Program.
- A new Scholarship Program for New York students attending in-state private colleges and universities.
- Allows undocumented students to be eligible for tuition assistance
- Increase community college base aid.
- Additional funding for SUNY/ CUNY to hire more full-time faculty.
- State coverage of all SUNY/ CUNY Maintenance of Effort costs.
- Expansion of the STEM Incentive Program.
- College Student Success Initiative to combat student hunger and homelessness.
- Restoration and Expansion of Higher Education Opportunity Programs.

Senator John E. Brooks said, “Today, far too many college graduates are strapped with paralyzing debt at the beginning of their careers. Student debt is crippling our economy and preventing graduates from buying homes and starting businesses on Long Island and across

New York State. Graduates need relief, and we owe it to our future generations to fix this problem now and make college affordable for all.”

Senator Neil Breslin said, “It is imperative that we reduce barriers for students who are seeking to expand their academic pursuits through higher education. By making college more affordable an increased number of people will have the chance to expand their horizons and pursue a greater number of career opportunities.”

Senator Leroy Comrie said, “Any effort of the state to make higher education more affordable must benefit all New York students—not just those with the means to attend college full-time. The Democratic Conference’s proposal will make higher education more affordable without limiting the ways by which all New Yorkers can pursue higher education.”

Senator George Latimer said, “Benjamin Franklin said, ‘An investment in knowledge pays the best dividend.’ What we as a conference are doing today is calling for true investment in New York. Providing support that allows low and moderate income students to further their education and backing it up with the necessary financial commitment is an important step to growing New York throughout the 21st century.”

Senator Kevin Parker said, “The proposed legislation will make college much more affordable for students in my district and across our State. We can no longer allow financial hardship to hinder our students from receiving a first-rate education. I stand eager to work with my colleagues this session to realize a truly affordable and sustainable plan to educate our kids.”

Senator Roxanne Persaud said, “State government has a responsibility to help more New Yorkers achieve a higher education without incurring crippling debts. That is why I am proud to join my Senate Democratic colleagues in supporting the EducateNY plan. Making

advanced degrees more affordable, providing greater financial aid to more New York families, and investing in our state's future is a win-win-win and that is why we need to pass these common sense proposals immediately"

Senator James Sanders said, "For far too long, a lack of financial means has prevented bright young people from becoming the stars they were destined to be. I support tuition-free public college throughout the state. Last session I introduced the New York Promise Program, which would do just that, for qualifying students, and ensure that our children have access to the educational opportunities necessary to compete in today's economy."

NYSUT Executive Vice President Andrew Pallotta said, "Our SUNY, CUNY and community college systems are a gateway to the middle class and the most affordable way for New York students – no matter where they live -- to gain the knowledge and skills they need to climb the economic ladder. We appreciate the Senate Democrats' recognition that a greater state investment in public higher education is the key to all efforts to expand opportunity and access. More state support would allow our SUNY, CUNY and community colleges systems to add more full-time faculty and enhance course offerings, giving students, once they enroll, and the best chance to graduate on time and without the burden of crushing debt."

Dr. Barbara Bowen, President, Professional Staff Congress/ CUNY said, "The Senate Democratic Conference proposal makes the essential connection between college affordability and college resources. The 27,000 professors and academic staff represented by the Professional Staff Congress commend the SDC for including new funding to address the acute shortage of full-time faculty at CUNY and allow the University to support both full-time and part-time faculty. By investing in faculty, the SDC invests in students. Nothing has a greater proven effect on student success and graduation rates than access to time with individual faculty. While we would like to see even faster movement to increased funding for community colleges, we are applaud the SDC initiatives to support the neediest students

and to include undocumented students in eligibility for financial aid. It is not uncommon at CUNY for students to be forced to choose between buying lunch and paying for a subway ride. The SDC proposal would go far toward alleviating this cruel dilemma. As the final budget is negotiated, we call on the legislature and the executive to address the needs of all students and to recognize that increased resources for faculty are essential for student success.”

United University Professions UUP President Frederick Kowal said, “It is encouraging to see the state legislature engaging fully on the issues faced by public higher education institutions in New York state. With these proposals, Senate Democrats are addressing the need for expansion in the ranks of fulltime faculty and staff to meet the educational needs of all students, while also providing the means by which families, regardless of their economic resources, have the chance to take advantage of world-class educational opportunities. As we move through the next several weeks of budget negotiations, I am hopeful that public higher education will continue to receive the attention it needs so that New York’s public universities can continue to provide affordable, accessible, and high quality education for all.”

#### **ADDITIONAL INFO:**

Free SUNY/ CUNY Tuition through EducateNY Grant Program:

- Over the next three years, this program would increase the number of families eligible to receive free SUNY/ CUNY tuition starting in the first year for those earning \$150,000 or less.
- In addition to the free SUNY/ CUNY tuition proposal, the Senate Democrats’ EducateNY Grant Program provide New York students attending in-state private colleges and universities with tuition grants.

#### Increase Community College Base Aid:

- EducateNY would increase community college base aid over a three-year period by \$250 per FTE (Full-time Equivalent).

#### Additional Funding for SUNY/ CUNY Faculty Budget:

- Increases the number of full-time faculty for CUNY and SUNY that will allow for increased course offerings as well as reduce class sizes.

#### State Coverage Maintenance of Effort Costs:

- Additional funding would be provided for all SUNY and CUNY mandatory costs, including collective bargaining costs and other non-personalservices costs such as utility costs, building rentals and other inflationary expenses incurred.

#### STEM Incentive Program:

- Expanded the STEM Incentive Program should be to allow Independent Sector students to choose the college or university that is the best fit for them to ensure New York State can meet the workforce needs of the marketplace and grow its economy.
- The State is projected to have nearly a half-million STEM jobs by 2018, the third highest in the country.
- Provides \$10 million in funding to increase eligibility for students attending private colleges and universities.

### College Student Success Initiative:

- Establishes a new College Student Success Initiative for SUNY and CUNY initiatives to reduce homelessness and hunger on campuses.

### Restore and Expand Opportunity Programs:

- The Senate Democrats have concerns with proposed cuts to vital opportunity programs which have been included in the 2017-2018 Budget proposal. Removing funds from these essential education assistance initiatives will harm students, especially those who require government assistance the most.
- To address these concerns, the Senate Democrats EducateNY proposal will not only restore the planned cuts, but will also increase aid to these opportunity programs to help ensure they will assist more struggling students and New York families.

To review the tentative cuts included in the 2017-2018 Budget proposal as well as the tentative increases as part of the EducateNY plan, please visit:

<https://www.scribd.com/document/341746272/Restoration-of-Higher-Education-Opportunity-Programs>