



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Zellnor Myrie

Senator Myrie: "Save SUNY Downstate!"

ZELLNOR MYRIE March 25, 2022



BROOKLYN— Joined by a coalition of healthcare workers and labor and community leaders, **Senator Zellnor Y. Myrie (D-Central Brooklyn)** today called for \$159 million in emergency funding desperately needed to stabilize SUNY Downstate Medical Center. The hospital, New York City's flagship state-run healthcare institution, faces a significant funding shortfall after being designated a "COVID-only facility" by then-Governor Cuomo in 2020.

"Simply put, Downstate helped me— and this community— make it through the pandemic alive," **said Senator Myrie**, who was briefly hospitalized there in 2021 after contracting the virus. "This institution answered the call of duty, providing its patients the highest level of care when pressed into service as Brooklyn's only all-COVID hospital. It's unconscionable we would allow Downstate to face these staggering losses without support from the State."

On March 28, 2020, then-Governor Cuomo **designated SUNY Downstate as Brooklyn's sole COVID-only hospital**. This required the hospital to divert all non-COVID inpatient cases to other facilities, cancel all elective and emergent surgeries, close all clinics, and divert all obstetric patients to other hospitals. While treating COVID patients, Downstate **suffered significant shortages** of critical supplies and equipment.

The virtual "shutdown" has had severe financial impacts, even after the designation was lifted, and has resulted in a COVID-related deficit of \$159 million. SUNY Downstate is the nation's leader in training doctors from underrepresented communities and more physicians practicing in New York City have graduated from SUNY Downstate than from any other medical school.

"SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University is a lifeline to the Central Brooklyn community and the entire borough of Brooklyn," **said United University Professions President Frederick E. Kowal, Ph.D.** "Our public teaching hospital employs more than 4,000 workers and pumps millions into the local and state economies annually. During the early days of the pandemic, SUNY Downstate was the state's only COVID-19-only hospital. Our frontline employees, unvaccinated for months because a vaccine hadn't been developed, put their lives on the line as they treated and tested thousands of patients. Albany has underfunded SUNY's public teaching hospitals for decades. There is no time left to waste. Our hospitals must be properly funded this year."

"PEF represents hundreds of healthcare heroes who work at SUNY Downstate," **said NYS Public Employees Federation Wayne Spence.** "They sacrificed to deliver services to their fellow New Yorkers throughout the pandemic and they deserve the proper level of funding now to continue their vital work. We stand with Senator Myrie and urge the Governor, the Senate and the Assembly to craft a budget that meets the needs of our public hospitals and delivers on the promise to rebuild the state workforce."

"We all can agree that SUNY hospitals are the backbone of our public health care system, so it's time we funded them like they are," **New York State United Teachers President Andy Pallotta said.** "We're proud to stand with Sen. Myrie and his colleagues as we fight together for the state support that is so crucial to hospitals like SUNY Downstate, where our members work so hard — especially during the pandemic — to provide high-quality care to New Yorkers every single day."

"We all remember going to our windows and cheering for our frontline healthcare workers during the pandemic's darkest days," **concluded Senator Myrie.** "SUNY Downstate demonstrated its commitment and service to us. Now we must show our support for this vital institution, so it can continue to serve the community for years to come."