

1 BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE
2 STANDING COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

3 PUBLIC HEARING:

4 EXAMINATION OF THE COST OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION
5 AND ITS EFFECT ON STUDENT FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS,
6 STATE SUPPORT, TAP/GAP, STUDENT BORROWING, AND OTHER
7 CHALLENGES TO AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

8 Nassau Community College
9 1 Education Drive
10 Garden City, New York

11 Date: November 1, 2019
12 Time: 12:30 p.m.

13 PRESIDING:

14 Senator Toby Ann Stavisky
15 Chair

16 PRESENT:

17 Senator John E. Brooks (Co-Sponsor)

18 Senator James Gaughran (Co-Sponsor)

19 Senator Todd Kaminsky (Co-Sponsor)

20 Senator Anna M. Kaplan (Co-Sponsor)

21 Senator Kenneth P. LaValle

22 Senator Monica R. Martinez (Co-Sponsor)

23 Senator Shelley B. Mayer

24 Senator Kevin Thomas (Co-Sponsor)

25 Assemblymember Harvey Epstein

Assemblymember Judy Griffin

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1 SENATOR STAVISKY: Good afternoon, and
2 welcome to the Senate Standing Committee on
3 Higher Education, the hearing on the cost of higher
4 education.

5 We're at the -- on the campus of the
6 State University of New York, Nassau Community
7 College.

8 Today is November 1, 2019, and the time is
9 12:30, for the record.

10 First, I want to start by thanking
11 Senator Gaughran -- in no particular order,
12 Senator Gaughran; Senator Mayer; Senator Kaminski,
13 who will be here later.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, he's here.

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: Oh, he's here?

16 I'm sorry. Sorry about that.

17 SENATOR THOMAS: Introduce yourself.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Brooks;
19 Senator Martin -- Martinez; Senator Thomas, in whose
20 district we are currently meeting; Senator Kaplan.

21 And --

22 SENATOR KAPLAN: We have another senator
23 joining us.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: And -- what?

25 [Numerous parties cross-talking.]

1 And my friend and colleague
2 Senator Ken LaValle, who chaired this Committee for
3 many years, and has done a remarkable job.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He has his official
5 Stony Brook hat.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: And he's wearing -- not
7 that we allow commercials -- but he's wearing his
8 Stony Brook hat.

9 And all of my colleagues have co-sponsored
10 this hearing today.

11 And I especially want to thank:

12 Senator Gaughran's staff member
13 Marissa Espinoza;

14 Senator Kaminski's staff, Beatrice Armony.

15 Oh, and I forgot to mention, Assemblymember
16 Harvey Epstein.

17 And -- am I missing anybody?

18 No.

19 The Senate media who has traveled the state
20 with me;

21 And, my staff: Sabiel Chapnick,
22 Beth LaMountain, and my chief of staff,
23 Mike Favilla, and Tidy Abreu [ph.] from the Senate
24 Finance Committee.

25 And, lastly, let me thank Nassau Community

1 College and President Jermaine Williams for hosting
2 this event, and the help of his staff.

3 This is the final hearing that we are doing
4 at the present time.

5 We started at Brooklyn College last week.
6 Then we went to New Paltz on Monday. Buffalo on
7 Wednesday. Yesterday was Syracuse. And today we
8 are at Nassau Community College.

9 First, let me ask each of my colleagues if
10 they would like to -- let's start with Senator Mayer
11 from Westchester, the Chair of the Assembly -- the
12 Senate -- the Chair of the Senate Education
13 Committee.

14 I got home at 2 a.m. from Syracuse.

15 [Laughter.]

16 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you, Senator Stavisky.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: I spent, I think, four or
18 five quality time at the Syracuse Airport.

19 Senator Mayer.

20 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you, Senator Stavisky.

21 And thank you to all the participants here
22 today.

23 And thank you for the opportunity to come.

24 It was important to me as the Chair of the
25 Education Committee, and also representing all of

1 the students who attend all of the Westchester
2 Community College and all the colleges and
3 universities in my district, to ensure that I was
4 here, and particularly to hear about college
5 affordability, the most critical issue to the people
6 I represent, and to our communities at large.

7 So I look forward to hearing.

8 Thank you.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Martinez.

10 SENATOR MARTINEZ: Thank you.

11 Good afternoon, and thank you for being here
12 today.

13 Just like my fellow colleague just mentioned,
14 we just want to hear from you, from the experts,
15 from the students.

16 I myself a higher-ed student, still owe a lot
17 of money of loans, and will for a very long time.

18 So definitely making higher education
19 affordable is very important.

20 And we need to make sure that it's not only
21 affordable, but it's also equitable and attainable.

22 So, again, thank you for having us here.

23 I represent the 3rd District, which is out in
24 Suffolk County.

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Brooks.

1 SENATOR BROOKS: Good afternoon, thank you
2 all for being here also. It's a pleasure to be
3 here.

4 I had an opportunity to meet with the
5 president a little earlier in the year, and
6 discussed some of the issues here.

7 I think we all recognize how important a
8 college education is to people and the opportunities
9 (indiscernible).

10 It's clearly the door to open their future.

11 And I think, all across the nation, we see
12 how students are struggling with student debt, long,
13 long after their graduation.

14 So I think it's important we -- we discuss
15 funding issues here, and some of the other
16 challenges that we have.

17 So I'm -- it's great to see a good turnout,
18 and I look forward to what we hear and learn today.

19 Thank you.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

21 And to my colleague on the Higher Education
22 Committee, Senator Gaughran.

23 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Thank you,
24 Madam Chairwoman, and thank you for your leadership
25 on this committee, and traveling around the state,

1 and also coming out from Queens to Nassau.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Oh, that's easy.

3 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: And as you may know, that
4 Nassau was once part of Queens. But now we are --

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: Until 1898.

6 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: -- we are now our own
7 vibrant county.

8 And I thank the students and the educators
9 who are here, because we're going to be facing some
10 difficult issues when we go back to Albany in
11 January and are presented with the budget.

12 These are some difficult economic times, and,
13 in particular, the loss to New York of the ability
14 to fully deduct our state and local taxes has put a
15 tremendous amount of pressure on the system and on
16 the people that we represent.

17 And we have one of the greatest public --
18 higher public education systems in the country.

19 I know, I graduated Stony Brook University.

20 And we have additional fiscal challenges as
21 well because, as everybody knows, many students are
22 now going into the community-college system and into
23 the state-university system, who might, at some
24 other point, have gone into private college. But,
25 because of the economics, that is something that

1 we're doing -- they're doing.

2 And that is something that we have to factor
3 as we go to Albany, to try to make sure that we're
4 getting as much money as possible to our
5 higher-education system, our public system, so that
6 our kids can excel.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

8 Senator Kevin Thomas from Suffolk.

9 SENATOR THOMAS: No.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: No, Nassau.

11 We're in his district.

12 [Laughter.]

13 SENATOR THOMAS: Hi, everyone.

14 I'm state Senator Kevin Thomas, and welcome
15 to my district.

16 I'm so glad NCC is here, providing a sound
17 education for a lot of our youth here and young
18 adults.

19 Before becoming a state senator, I was a
20 legal-aid attorney, defending students against
21 student-loan debt when they'd get sued when they
22 default.

23 I know how big of a problem student loans are
24 in this country, and that's why, as Chair of
25 Consumer Protection of the state Senate, I'm looking

1 at ways of trying to figure out a way of reducing
2 that burden on them.

3 You know, when the student-loan program was
4 created decades ago, it was to, basically, get
5 people out of poverty.

6 These days, it's just putting them in there
7 forever.

8 And we need to change that in this country,
9 and I'm looking forward to hearing from all of you
10 here about how we can do that.

11 Thank you so much.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

13 Senator Todd Kaminsky.

14 SENATOR KAMINSKY: Thanks very much.

15 I echo the colleagues of all my sentiments.

16 The Long Island delegation is very dedicated
17 to taking this issue on.

18 I look forward to hearing what all the
19 witnesses have to say today.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Assemblymember
21 Harvey Epstein.

22 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: I thank you,
23 Senator.

24 Thank you for including me in this panel.

25 Really looking forward to hearing what's

1 going on.

2 Growing up here in Nassau County, I hear the
3 struggles of friends and peers.

4 And it's really great to hear what we're
5 going to be able to do, going forward, on this in
6 the Senate and the Assembly to fix the problems we
7 have in higher ed.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Former chair of the
9 Committee, Senator Ken LaValle from the
10 1st District.

11 SENATOR LaVALLE: Thank you, Madam Chairman.
12 I would simply say:

13 That the Governor should fully fund both the
14 SUNY and CUNY systems.

15 That I know this Committee has always
16 advocated for the smallest tuition presence in a
17 student's life.

18 And I think we should continue that -- that
19 sentiment.

20 And -- but most importantly, the Governor
21 needs to fully fund both systems.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Anna Kaplan from
23 Nassau County.

24 SENATOR KAPLAN: Good afternoon, everybody.
25 I represent the 7th District, so I have a

1 lot of students in this wonderful institution.

2 Thank you, Senator Stavisky; thank you for
3 putting this together so that we could hear from our
4 professionals and also from our students.

5 We'd like you to know that we want to
6 represent you and be your voice, and we want to work
7 with you to find ways that we can ensure the
8 American Dream for every person who wants to get
9 that higher education, and to help them, and lift
10 them.

11 That's our goal, and I'm just very glad to be
12 here and to be part of this.

13 Thank you.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

15 And before I introduce the first group of
16 people who are testifying, I want to acknowledge the
17 presence of Cary Staller, a SUNY trustee, and a very
18 active one, with whom I met earlier this year.

19 First, we have Robert Megna, the chief
20 operating officer of SUNY, and former budget
21 director.

22 ROBERT MEGNA: That will travel with me
23 forever.

24 Hi, I am Bob Megna. I am the chief operating
25 officer.

1 I am the father of two SUNY
2 great-institutions' graduates, and the proud father
3 of a SUNY faculty member.

4 On behalf of Chancellor Christina Johnson,
5 I would like to thank Chairperson Stavisky, members
6 of the Senate, and other legislative members, and
7 legislative staff, for allowing me this opportunity
8 to the discuss this matter, this critically
9 important matter.

10 And I would also like to acknowledge and
11 thank Chairman Merryl Tisch, our entire SUNY board
12 of trustees --

13 By the way, Cary Staller is a critical member
14 of the finance committee at the board of trustees.

15 -- for their leadership and support, and the
16 great work of our executive leadership team, and
17 presidents across all 64 SUNY colleges and campuses.

18 SUNY is in the process of finalizing our
19 fiscal-year 2021 budgetary proposal, which you will
20 hear much more about from Chancellor Johnson at the
21 joint legislative budget hearing in January, and
22 also in our November board of trustee meeting which
23 is in just a few weeks.

24 However, I appreciate the opportunity to
25 share the most recent data we have on New York's

1 transformative approach to an affordable and quality
2 public higher education.

3 Excuse me.

4 I know that you are aware that SUNY is the
5 largest comprehensive system of post-secondary
6 education in the nation.

7 We serve more than 400,000 full-time students
8 every year, and with credit-bearing courses,
9 continuing education and community outreach
10 programs, which do not always show up in enrollment
11 statistics, by the way, that total increases to
12 nearly 1.4 million students annually.

13 We are unique and, therefore, have unique
14 challenges.

15 In addition to our community colleges,
16 four-year colleges, and graduate and doctoral
17 research centers, we operate medical schools,
18 hospitals, a law school, and a national laboratory
19 right here on Long Island at Brookhaven.

20 With the support of Governor Cuomo and state
21 legislators, despite the challenges of a vast system
22 with diverse needs, we have grown our commitment to
23 being accessible and affordable while continuing to
24 excel on the quality of the education that we
25 provide every student entering through our doors.

1 In fact, I am very pleased to share
2 that Professor Stanley Whittingham of
3 Binghamton University was just awarded the
4 Nobel Prize in chemistry for one of the most
5 profound inventions of our day: the lithium ion
6 battery.

7 Every time you charge your smartphone, you
8 can thank Dr. Whittingham for his work while at
9 SUNY.

10 By the way, he is our 16th Nobel laureate.

11 This story of affordability and quality
12 extends to all of our campuses.

13 U.S. News and World Report released its
14 rankings last month of the nation's best colleges,
15 and 21 of ours were listed on the national and
16 northeastern lists, including Stony Brook, the
17 University at Albany, the University at Buffalo,
18 Oswego, FIT, and many more.

19 Further, Forbes recently released its list of
20 the 2019 best-value colleges, and 10 different SUNY
21 schools topped the list, including Farmingdale on
22 Long Island, New Paltz, Maritime, and others.

23 23 of SUNY's 30 four-year colleges were also
24 featured in CNN Money's "2019 List of Best Colleges
25 For Your Money," including Buffalo State,

1 SUNY Purchase, SUNY Old Westbury, SUNY Delhi, and
2 more.

3 While Kiplinger's ranked
4 Binghamton University as the top public school for
5 value in the country, 14 other SUNY schools made
6 that select list.

7 Your ongoing support for our infrastructure
8 and academic facilities that help to attract the
9 best teachers, and which deliver groundbreaking
10 research, will help to further build on these
11 achievements.

12 Because of the support of the Governor and
13 legislators, we have delivered on affordability, and
14 because of the innovation of programs like the
15 Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), and the
16 Excelsior Scholarship, New York is truly set apart
17 from many other states.

18 You have prioritized affordable and quality
19 education, and it's showing in one of the most
20 important metrics available: social mobility; and
21 the enormous impact SUNY and our students and alumni
22 have had on local economies in every region and
23 corner of the state.

24 One-third of the state's college-educated
25 workforce have a degree from the State University of

1 New York, with 55 percent of resident undergraduate
2 students attending SUNY and CUNY tuition-free.

3 How does this break down?

4 I think we need to look at Pell, TAP, and
5 Excelsior.

6 In 2017-18, 90,000-plus students at all SUNY
7 campuses were offered a Pell grant.

8 51,000, or, 56.3 percent, of Pell recipients
9 were offered the maximum Pell award allowable,
10 \$5,920.

11 Alongside Governor Cuomo and his team, we are
12 working with New York's congressional delegation to
13 see additional resources and better eligibility
14 requirements for Pell and federal work study in the
15 reauthorization of the federal Higher Education Act.

16 New York's TAP Program has been a
17 life-changing experience for hundreds of thousands
18 of students across all campuses.

19 Last academic year, over 108,000 students
20 were offered a TAP grant. 63,000, or, 62.3 percent,
21 of TAP recipients were offered the maximum TAP
22 award.

23 And, the Excelsior Scholarship Program has
24 opened the door to 24,000 SUNY and CUNY students in
25 just its second year of enrollment.

1 This has been a particularly powerful
2 resource for students at our community colleges,
3 where, because of the support from Governor Cuomo
4 and the Legislature, students are able to focus on
5 learning.

6 Excelsior students at community college have
7 a graduation rate of 30 percent, nearly three times
8 higher than their peers.

9 We have also seen an increase in the metrics
10 for on-time graduation at four-year colleges, with
11 full-time Excelsior Scholarship freshmen taking
12 15 or more credits their first semester. That's an
13 increase of over 7 percent.

14 EOP:

15 Since its inception more than 50 years ago,
16 the Educational Opportunity Program, or "EOP," has
17 graduated more than 75,000 people who otherwise may
18 not have gone to college, or, have the supports
19 needed to succeed while with us.

20 Today we have 11,000-plus EOP students
21 enrolled at 48 campuses.

22 These students come from
23 economically-disadvantaged backgrounds, with
24 a family income of less than \$46,000 per year
25 for a family of four.

1 They're academically underprepared when they
2 start their time with SUNY, averaging 6 to 11 points
3 lower than general admits on their high school
4 averages, and approximately 250 points lower on
5 their combined SAT scores.

6 But, and this is the critical point, because
7 of the supports and services we are able to provide,
8 EOP students have a first-time, full-time retention
9 rate of over 82 percent at our four-year campuses,
10 and a higher overall graduation rate than their
11 non-EOP peers.

12 Chancellor Johnson recently held
13 the very first program honoring EOP students
14 for their academic excellence, campus
15 leadership, and perseverance, at the first
16 Norman R. McConney, Jr., Awards for EPO Student
17 Excellence, named for the man who helped
18 Assemblyman Arthur Eve shepherd this program into
19 the success that it is today.

20 Reenroll to Complete:

21 These are more programs that we're focused on
22 right now.

23 This past summer we announced the first
24 results of our unique and innovative program to
25 reenroll students who left SUNY campus prior to

1 completing their degree.

2 So far, we have engaged students at
3 52 campuses in the months before their first
4 student-loan payment comes due.

5 And I am proud to share that, so far,
6 6,000-students-plus have come back to SUNY. More
7 than half have returned as full-time students.

8 In the process of reenrolling these students,
9 Reenroll to Complete has recovered over \$12 million
10 in tuition revenue for SUNY campuses.

11 In addition to the recovered tuition, the
12 project is expected to increase retention and
13 completion rates.

14 More importantly, and I think I heard the
15 discussion before we even started today, what do we
16 do about student debt?

17 Well, one of the most important things is to
18 make sure our students complete on time. And
19 Reenroll to Complete is being very effective at
20 that.

21 I want to highlight that this effort was the
22 direct result of PIF funding, another initiative
23 supported by the Governor and this Legislature.

24 Thank you for that.

25 Community college funding:

1 In the last state budget, Governor Cuomo and
2 legislators delivered much-needed support for our
3 community colleges with increased funding.

4 These campuses are the lifeblood of the
5 communities they serve, providing workforce
6 training, skills, and economic security.

7 In a good economy, when fewer people are
8 looking for work, sometimes community college
9 enrollment can decline.

10 Because of the support you provided, they are
11 better able to plan for future growth and local
12 training.

13 And I would add that we have a significant,
14 we think, up to maybe 30 percent, of folks attending
15 our community college are in non-credit-bearing
16 courses, where they're doing workforce training, or
17 other -- learning other important skills, to get
18 work in the economy that we live in today.

19 They're not counted as students, so that
20 never shows up in the enrollment numbers.

21 And I think it's critically important to
22 remember that.

23 So let me end on that point.

24 It's been a privilege to come before you
25 today, and I look forward to working with all of

1 you.

2 And, again, happy to answer any questions.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: We'll do the questions at
4 the -- after everybody has had a chance.

5 We'd like to welcome Dr., Reverend,
6 Calvin Butts, who has really led the college at
7 Old Westbury in such a wonderful and creative
8 manner.

9 I was out there a number of years ago, at his
10 invitation, and we thank you for your service.

11 Dr. Butts.

12 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: Good afternoon.

13 Our new president here had difficulty finding
14 this building.

15 I know no one else had the same problem that
16 I did.

17 [Laughter.]

18 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: Before I begin,
19 I'd like to thank Senator Stavisky and members of
20 the Committee for your leadership and support of our
21 great state.

22 I would especially like to thank the
23 Long Island-based members of the Committee,
24 Senator Gaughran and Senator LaValle, for their work
25 on behalf of higher-education institutions of Nassau

1 and Suffolk county.

2 Thank you both very much.

3 I must also state for the record my gratitude
4 for the leadership and commitment of New York State
5 Governor Andrew Cuomo.

6 I met with Andrew Cuomo a few years ago and
7 asked him specifically, I think before he enjoyed
8 the title of Governor, to do something for the state
9 university. And, doggone it, he did it.

10 There were initiatives like the
11 Excelsior Scholarship Program, Start-Up New York.

12 He has shown the public the valuable and
13 important roles the campuses of the State University
14 of New York and City University of New York play in
15 our state.

16 As some of you may be aware, I recently
17 completed my 20th year of service as the president
18 of State University at Old Westbury. And I will
19 step down from my day-to-day role as president in
20 January of 2020.

21 In my time at Old Westbury, I have borne
22 witness to the struggles our students undergo to
23 earn money for school, to get to class on time, to
24 excel in their studies, and then, as alumni, to make
25 headway toward the lives they want for themselves

1 and their loved ones.

2 We have a unique student body, as many
3 presidents do.

4 And I'm here to tell you that these men and
5 women work very hard, very, very hard, to earn their
6 degrees, and, to use what they've learned to serve
7 the state of New York.

8 Unfortunately, our campuses today have become
9 over-reliant on tuition payments.

10 In my first full year on campus at
11 Old Westbury, we had 2,992 students, and received
12 \$9.9 million in direct State support, and
13 \$9.7 million in tuition.

14 This year, with the largest enrollment in the
15 college's history of 5,128 students, we will benefit
16 from \$10.1 million in State support and more than
17 \$32 million in tuition revenues.

18 We on campus have no control in determining
19 contractual increases, utility increases, and
20 whatever unfunded mandate is coming our way next.

21 We were grateful that funding was made
22 available for the initial phase of contracted raises
23 for our employees this year, and we hope that
24 continues.

25 Even so, the leveling off of State support

1 forces us to expend funds in preexisting programs
2 and activities, funds that, instead, could be used
3 for new academic programs, personnel, and services.

4 In other words, it is time to increase direct
5 support for State-operated campuses after years of
6 not having done so.

7 Among the many benefits of this would be the
8 improvement in our ability to hire more full-time
9 faculty to teach our students.

10 The most recent data shows that, roughly,
11 43 percent of faculty teaching at SUNY four-year
12 colleges and university centers are part-time, and
13 we need to reduce that number.

14 There will always be a place for part-time
15 and adjunct faculty, no question, especially in
16 those areas where specific targeted expertise can
17 only come from someone in the industry or from the
18 community.

19 However, our students lose significantly when
20 large swaths of our class schedules are taught by
21 part-timers.

22 Maintaining and improving quality in academia
23 also means maintaining and improving the physical
24 plants of our campuses.

25 In the case of SUNY Old Westbury, we are

1 desperately in need of an expansion and renovation
2 of what is now our natural-sciences building into a
3 state-of-the-art STEM center.

4 Our natural-sciences building opened in 1985.
5 Other than some improvements in technology and a few
6 roofing projects completed during my tenure, the
7 building looks and functions as it did when it
8 opened.

9 That building lacks sufficient classroom and
10 academic laboratory space to service current demand;

11 That building suffers from crowded research
12 laboratories, insufficient for the current number of
13 researchers and for current technological demands;

14 That building requires expansion to
15 accommodate expected growth;

16 And that building is experiencing end-of-life
17 issues with core utilities and services.

18 We are proposing a \$130 million expansion and
19 renewal of the natural-sciences building.

20 This is key to Old Westbury's ability to
21 provide STEM instruction to meet growing local
22 demand in a marketplace where the fastest-growing
23 fields are in health care and related industries.

24 At the same time, it will augment our
25 longstanding ability to prepare men and women for

1 under -- from underrepresented backgrounds for
2 careers as physicians, scientists, dentists, and
3 more.

4 This is very key.

5 Unfortunately, recent changes from the
6 State's budget office requires SUNY to use capital
7 funds for critical maintenance only, and do not
8 allow for the development of new projects.

9 We need both.

10 We need both.

11 Priority capital projects could be completed
12 on all of SUNY's State-operated campuses with an
13 additional \$250 million in capital funding in each
14 of the next five years.

15 We need both.

16 This was a request put forward by SUNY last
17 year, and is one you must consider in the new budget
18 year.

19 Our campuses need it, our faculty and staff
20 deserve it, and our students are demanding it.

21 So how can we make those needed investments
22 and maintain affordability?

23 First, provide funding to eliminate the SUNY
24 tuition credit, better known as the "TAP gap."

25 Prior to 2011, low-income SUNY and CUNY

1 students would have their tuition costs covered by
2 the State in full through TAP.

3 In each year since, SUNY and CUNY colleges
4 have had to cover the difference between State TAP
5 awards and the actual tuition price for these
6 students.

7 The gap between the maximum TAP award and the
8 State pays at SUNY, \$5,165, and the actual cost of
9 tuition at SUNY, \$7,070, has left SUNY campuses
10 grappling with more than \$70 million shortfall.

11 This issue is particularly impactful for SUNY
12 Old Westbury which has a long and proud tradition of
13 serving students from low- and middle-income
14 families.

15 In this academic year, the TAP gap will cost
16 SUNY Old Westbury 2 1/2 million dollars.

17 Our campus makes up just 1 percent of SUNY's
18 undergraduate enrollment, yet endures nearly
19 4 percent of the system's total TAP-gap shortfall.

20 At SUNY Old Westbury, and across SUNY,
21 students are feeling this loss in funding in their
22 classrooms, career-planning services, and counseling
23 centers.

24 In terms of the total New York State budget
25 expenditure, the cost to close the TAP gap seems

1 nominal.

2 The last idea offered today would not lower
3 the cost of higher education, but it would directly
4 impact students and build upon the incredibly
5 meaningful achievements of the Excelsior Scholarship
6 Program.

7 "Crisis" is no longer a strong enough word to
8 describe the \$1.5 trillion of student debt facing
9 our nation's college students.

10 In nearby Massachusetts, a zero-interest loan
11 program to support residents who attend college
12 within the commonwealth's borders has been in place
13 for nearly 30 years.

14 Today, between five and six million dollars
15 in loans are offered annually, paid for by the
16 debtors of prior years.

17 Through a no-interest loan program for its
18 residents, New York State has an opportunity to step
19 in where the federal loan processing and management
20 system is failing our students.

21 At the same time, you as our leaders would be
22 paving the way for our students to experience
23 brighter futures more quickly.

24 In closing:

25 I want to state clearly that I am very

1 optimistic about the future of our education in
2 New York State, and, specifically, the ability of
3 the campuses of the state university to continue to
4 make a valuable, affordable education accessible to
5 residents and taxpayers.

6 And by holding this hearing today, you have
7 shown your commitment and belief in the importance
8 of higher education in the lives of New Yorkers.

9 I want to say that some of the bold steps
10 that have been made recently have captured the
11 attention of all New Yorkers.

12 They've been bold steps, and I think
13 Excelsior was one of them.

14 But it did lift the spirits of our students,
15 of our communities; it was powerful.

16 And we may have to tweak it here or tweak it
17 there, but if we get it right, put in a no-interest
18 loan program, give us the money we need for the
19 capital projects, we guarantee that New York will be
20 an even greater state, a better state.

21 You don't have to be sick to get better.

22 We're not sick, and we're going to get
23 better, and I thank you very much.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: And we thank you.

25 And for the record, yesterday the Governor

1 was at SUNY Oswego.

2 Next, we have the team from
3 Nassau Community College, led by the president,
4 Dr. Jermaine Williams.

5 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: Good afternoon,
6 Senators and Assemblyman.

7 We appreciate that Nassau Community College
8 has been selected as one of the sites to hold such a
9 crucial conversation about such an important topic.

10 We know the calls to public higher education
11 is a factor that impacts equitable education,
12 access, completion, and post-completion success.

13 So, thank you for this opportunity.

14 By way of my comments, I'm going to share a
15 little bit about the college, a little bit about,
16 you know, our students, so you have that context.
17 And then some things that we're doing to address the
18 cost of public higher education.

19 Before I start with that, though, I want to
20 say, thank you to the college community who is here,
21 specifically to the students.

22 We encourage them to be civically engaged,
23 and they are here.

24 So if we could take a moment to give our
25 students a round of applause, I would appreciate it.

1 [Applause.]

2 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: By way, again,
3 Nassau Community College is the largest
4 single-campus community college of the 30 SUNY
5 community colleges. Right?

6 We serve more than 16,000 students, taking
7 credits during day, evening, or weekend courses, and
8 another 11,000-plus students who are involved in
9 professional and continuing education.

10 So we're the college of choice for one out of
11 four high-school-goers in Nassau County.

12 About 80 percent our students are from
13 Nassau County, and about 10 percent are from Queens,
14 and 8 percent are from Suffolk County,
15 respectively -- respectfully.

16 So we're a comprehensive, full-opportunity
17 institution of higher education.

18 And like our peers, we endeavor to serve all
19 those who can benefit from higher education as an
20 open-access institution.

21 We are an extremely diverse institution of
22 higher education, and we take pride in that.

23 The college is dedicated to high-quality,
24 low-cost education and career opportunities that
25 meet the regional needs and the interests of the

1 community it serves.

2 So we're committed to academic excellence,
3 and the dignity and worth of an individual.

4 To that end, we provide several opportunities
5 in regards to associate in arts, associate in
6 science, applied science, as well as a certificate
7 in continuing-education programs.

8 I started here, unlike Dr. Butts -- the
9 Reverend Dr. Butts, July 1st of this year.

10 So I am -- today is about four months for me.

11 So if your question is going to be, you know,
12 what's the plan? let me answer that now, as I'm
13 spending several months getting to know the
14 community, both internal and external constituents,
15 to identify, you know, why it is we are where we
16 currently are at this institution.

17 This includes meeting with several of you,
18 as I've already done, so I can be familiar with,
19 you know, the county, the communities, of the
20 states [sic].

21 And after that time, I will be putting
22 forward, you know, some goals that people will be
23 able to see themselves in, a shared vision, to move
24 the college forward.

25 So, in case you all had the question of what

1 my goals are.

2 In regards to the cost of public higher
3 education, I would be remiss, after that
4 introduction, if I didn't thank all of you, excuse
5 me, and, you know, express how grateful we are for
6 the support, and the most recently completed
7 New York State budget cycle.

8 Your advocacy on our behalf resulted in
9 funding for improved learning environments for our
10 students which will help them realize their goals.

11 Thank you very much.

12 This recognition of our funding needs by
13 Governor Cuomo and yourselves truly shows how much
14 you understand the importance of community colleges
15 in our region, and across the states [sic].

16 And I know it goes without saying, but I will
17 say it since I have the opportunity, I hope that we
18 can count on your continued support to ensure that
19 we can still provide that educational opportunity
20 for our students.

21 And in light of last year's advocacy, and
22 knowing that we do need the continued support,
23 I want to share a little bit about this college.

24 So our college is comprised of about
25 42 percent of students who are part-time.

1 Okay? It's 42 percent.

2 They are -- they take less than 12 credits
3 per semester.

4 In regards to diversity, as it revolves
5 around race and ethnicity, about 40 -- excuse me,
6 35 percent of our students identify as White or
7 Caucasian, 30 percent identify as Hispanic or
8 Latino, 21 percent identify as Black or
9 African-American, 7 percent identify as Asian.

10 Our age: So about, you know, 74 percent of
11 our students are 24 or younger.

12 So when you think about the cost of public
13 higher education, that means more than one in four
14 of our students are 25 or older; more than one of
15 our 16,000-plus students are 25 or older as they
16 pursue their higher-education goals.

17 According to a recent study that's
18 administered nationally at community colleges, it's
19 a Community College Survey on Student Engagement,
20 more than 50 percent of our students indicated, who
21 responded, that they spend week -- excuse me, time
22 in the week providing for a dependent -- okay? -- a
23 spouse, a child.

24 And almost one in ten of those individuals
25 say they spend 30 hours or more providing for a

1 dependent.

2 So, again, the context of our college is
3 probably similar to the other 30 community colleges,
4 but it's part of the whole, and something that needs
5 to be shared.

6 When we think about the cost of higher
7 education, and maybe how all of you went through
8 higher education, and how often you worked, the same
9 survey:

10 85 percent of our respondents dedicate some
11 time during the week to work. Working for pay, mind
12 you -- okay? -- 85 percent of the respondents.

13 And it gets a -- you know, so -- and that's,
14 almost 70 percent are working 11 or more hours a
15 week.

16 All right?

17 Almost 50 percent, one in every two, are
18 working at least 21 hours a week. 21 hours a week.

19 More than a quarter, more than one in every
20 four, work more than 30 hours a week, at this
21 institution.

22 So when we think about funding public higher
23 education, this is the type of students, this is the
24 type of institution, that we're thinking about
25 funding for the present and for the future.

1 Clearly, clearly, the cost of whole higher
2 education matters to our community, especially to
3 our students as they attempt to manage, you know,
4 their -- the realities of life, and pursue their
5 educational and professional goals.

6 So as I -- as I close out with the last
7 segment, which is what we're doing to address
8 public -- the cost of public higher education at the
9 college, I want to share with you that we're putting
10 ourselves in places and spaces like this -- all
11 right? -- so that our voices are heard by the
12 decision-makers.

13 Those who are sharing, you know, what the
14 cost of public higher education will be, what the
15 support will be, essentially, for us, and we
16 advocate, you know, to make it shorter.

17 That's what -- that's one of the -- one of
18 the things we do, and we do that quite aggressively
19 at the college.

20 We pursue grant opportunities.

21 So Nassau Community College recently applied
22 for the SUNY Family Empowerment Community College
23 Pilot Program.

24 And this is a -- Governor Cuomo has,
25 thankfully, provided three years of funding to

1 launch the Family Empowerment Community College
2 Pilot Program, which provides customized support for
3 single parents attending SUNY and CUNY community
4 colleges.

5 In fall of 2018, there were 775 students
6 enrolled at Nassau Community College who identified
7 as single parents.

8 So you add that to the other statistics
9 I shared with you, 775 students that identified as
10 single parents.

11 Of the 775 single parents -- excuse me --
12 single-parent students, 90 percent, or, 694, almost
13 700, students were eligible for Pell.

14 Pell, of course, as we all know, is a federal
15 program that doesn't have the purchasing power that
16 it once had.

17 And I do hope that our federal delegation
18 will strengthen Pell support for community college
19 part-time students in the upcoming reauthorization
20 of the Higher Education Act.

21 So our plan with this response to this
22 request would be to offer on-campus child care to
23 35 single-parent students while they pursue their
24 degrees.

25 So, hopefully, we will receive this grant,

1 and that will be, you know, one thing that, you
2 know, we're doing to help with the cost of higher
3 education.

4 We also endeavor to learn more about our
5 students so we can address equity gaps.

6 As we disaggregate the data that I shared
7 with you, we find that there are extreme equity
8 gaps, especially by race and ethnicity.

9 So thanks to the leadership of
10 Governor Cuomo, Nassau Community College
11 participated in a survey administration led by
12 SUNY --

13 So thank you to SUNY as well.

14 -- that will help us receive quantifiable
15 data regarding the percentage of students who
16 experience food insecurity, hunger, housing
17 insecurity, or homelessness.

18 It's important that we know exactly, you
19 know, where we are so that we can place this in
20 perspective and really address this issue.

21 And if you want some national data, and if
22 you don't, I'm going to share it with you anyway,
23 that's kind of a setup there:

24 To put in perspective, there are some
25 articles that I can send at a later date if people

1 want, but, just 42 -- and this is studying several
2 community colleges, tens of thousands of students
3 nationally, community colleges:

4 42 percent to 56 percent of community college
5 students were food-insecure.

6 42 to 56 percent of community college
7 students were food-insecure.

8 46 percent to 51 percent of community college
9 students experienced housing insecurity.

10 12 percent to 14 percent of community college
11 students were homeless.

12 Homeless.

13 All right?

14 So it's important that, locally, we get our
15 finger on the pulse of how these pernicious
16 situations are impacting our college and our
17 students so that we can address them fully.

18 Furthermore, we also have the NEST at
19 Nassau Community College, which is a food pantry.
20 And they're committed to fostering the health and
21 well-being by providing nourishment and other vital
22 supports to all members of our campus community.

23 We're extremely thankful for this separate
24 501(c)(3) that is been around for several years, and
25 is a model food pantry, I would say, across the

1 nation.

2 Lastly, and I'll say, we also raise funds, so
3 these are things that we do internally.

4 Philanthropic endeavors, our non-for-profit
5 corporation, Nassau Community College Foundation,
6 was established in 1983.

7 And the mission is to be aligned with, you
8 know, our goals at the college, which is, you know,
9 providing -- and providing an independent avenue for
10 philanthropic aid.

11 So, hopefully, I have contextualized a little
12 bit about our college, which I think is -- really
13 resonates with other community colleges across the
14 state, and provides some thinking points as you and
15 your colleagues discuss the future of public higher
16 education in the state of New York.

17 Thank you, sincerely, for the opportunity to
18 share a bit about Nassau Community College, our
19 students, and the importance of the cost of higher
20 education.

21 I hope that we can continue to count on your
22 support, to ensure that we are able to provide
23 equitable resources, design and support educational
24 access, completion, and post-completion success for
25 the diverse body of learners that we currently seek,

1 and that we seek to serve in the future.

2 Thank you all for your time.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you, and thank you
4 for being our host here.

5 [Applause.]

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: And thank you for reaching
7 out when you first came to Nassau Community.
8 I enjoyed our meeting.

9 We have two other individuals who are going
10 to speak.

11 First, from Nassau Community College, first
12 we have, William Clyde, Jr., the director of the
13 Education [sic] Opportunity Program.

14 And let me just thank Bob Megna for
15 mentioning Arthur Eve.

16 We did a hearing in Buffalo, and
17 I acknowledged his incredible contribution to the
18 creation, really, more than 50 years ago, of the
19 Education [sic] Opportunity Program.

20 That and SEEK have been such an important
21 mechanism for students to do anything that they want
22 to do.

23 And, in fact, one of our colleagues, one of
24 our colleagues, was a product of the EOP Program,
25 Senator Robert Jackson. And he, at the New Paltz

1 hearing, acknowledged the contribution of EOP.

2 WILLIAM CLYDE, JR.: Thank you, and good
3 afternoon.

4 William Clyde, Jr. I'm the director of the
5 Educational Opportunity Program.

6 I'm New York City, born and raised.

7 I'm a graduate of Bronx High School of
8 Science.

9 I have wanted to say that in front of you.

10 [Laughter.]

11 WILLIAM CLYDE, JR.: And, Senator Brooks is
12 my -- I'm a constituent, I'm a legal resident, live
13 in the village on West Smith Street.

14 I've been a director here at Nassau Community
15 College only for 9 months now. But in my prior
16 history, I was the HEOP director at LIU Post.

17 So I am very well-versed in opportunity
18 programs, what they do, and how successful they are.

19 I'll keep my remarks short. I know the folks
20 want to ask some questions here.

21 But primarily what EOP is about, is bringing
22 students from one level to the next.

23 The funding and the support, it's about
24 bringing those students to prominence.

25 The summer program is really the key in

1 helping those students to make the transition. The
2 level of academic support that is provided during
3 that summer experience really catapults the students
4 to make the successful transition into the academic
5 world here at the community college, and, certainly,
6 at the other State-operated programs, and throughout
7 the state.

8 I appreciate the remarks that were forwarded
9 earlier about EOP. I don't want to reiterate those.

10 It is successful in that regard.

11 We certainly are working with my dear
12 colleague here in financial aid, to look at
13 packaging, how students can be supported in that
14 end.

15 And, certainly, for Dr. Williams and his
16 leadership thus far to bring our campus to
17 prominence.

18 So, I'll leave my remarks there.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: And we have
20 Patricia Noren, the director of financial aid here
21 at Nassau Community College.

22 PATRICIA NOREN: Hello, welcome to our
23 campus.

24 Parents and students are well aware that a
25 college education pays off in countless ways, but a

1 concern with how they will pay for college.

2 There are different types and sources of aid.

3 There is grants, scholarship, loans, work
4 study, offered through the federal government, state
5 government, private sources, et cetera.

6 Although the FAFSA is the first step to
7 applying for aid, many New York residents are
8 fortunate to receive assistance from our state to
9 help offset the cost of college tuition.

10 The Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) is a
11 New York State grant that has assisted full-time
12 students for decades. It provides tuition
13 assistance for our lowest-income student.

14 New York State has taken the lead on
15 assisting middle-income families when the
16 Excelsior Scholarship was introduced.

17 Not only does this scholarship allow
18 middle-income families to receive grant funds not
19 previously available to them, but it promotes
20 on-time completion.

21 Another positive feature of the
22 Excelsior Scholarship is its potential to reduce
23 loan dependency.

24 The recipients now have the incentive to
25 attend full-time rather than part-time.

1 However, New York State understands students
2 may need to attend part-time, and have made sure
3 there are resources available to help offset
4 part-time students' tuition expense.

5 There is APPS (the Aid for Part-Time Study),
6 part-time TAP, and part-time scholarship for
7 community colleges.

8 The senator, Jose Peralta, New York State
9 DREAM Act gives undocumented and other students,
10 such as those receiving temporary protective status
11 or designated as victims of criminal activity or
12 trafficking, access to the New York State grants and
13 scholarship effective this academic year.

14 Colleges are aware of the rise in
15 student-loan debt, and have taken action to educate
16 student borrowers.

17 Financial literacy is key, a key component,
18 because it equips one with the knowledge and skills
19 to manage money.

20 Through the efforts of a SUNY-developed
21 contract, we are able to take advantage of the SUNY
22 Smart Track financial literacy tool.

23 It is an interactive online tool that helps
24 students develop a stronger understanding of basic
25 finances.

1 The informative contact can be adapted to
2 high school students as well.

3 We recently introduced this tool to our
4 Campus New York Gear-Up team.

5 They are excited to share this tool in their
6 efforts to graduate high school students and prepare
7 them for college.

8 At NCC, our president recently instituted a
9 cohort default task force to review data, and come
10 up with strategies, to engage and encourage, and
11 determine, what more the college can do to prevent
12 students from defaulting on their student loans.

13 The financial-aid office began hosting
14 loan-debt awareness workshops on campus.

15 Our goal is to make a student aware early on
16 that loans are to be repaid, and arm them with the
17 necessary tools to be a responsible borrower.

18 Nassau has also partnered with SUNY in the
19 Reenroll to Complete Project.

20 This project reaches out to student-loan
21 borrowers that have withdrawn from school and
22 encourages them to resume their studies.

23 Research shows that a student who resumes and
24 completes their education will earn more and are
25 less likely to default on their loans.

1 NCC is always looking for additional ways to
2 help students better understand the resources
3 available to access funding to pay for college.

4 Thank you for taking the time to be here, and
5 for continuously looking to alleviate the pressures
6 the students face in funding their college
7 education.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

9 Now we will have questions from our
10 legislative colleagues.

11 First, let's start at the other end.

12 Senator-- if anybody has -- why don't you
13 just start if you have any questions.

14 SENATOR KAPLAN: Sure.

15 Thank you very much for all those opening
16 remarks.

17 So you talk about, really unbelievable
18 (inaudible) because of students not being able to
19 really maintain and pay for their college tuitions.

20 So -- and I understand that there are these
21 programs that you put forward, to talk with a lot of
22 the students and give them the tools.

23 Would it be also helpful maybe to start that
24 earlier on, and also engage their family, whether
25 it's parents or their guardians, to -- for them to

1 be also part of the conversation, and to know how to
2 navigate?

3 Anyone.

4 PATRICIA NOREN: Absolutely.

5 As I said, we introduced it to our New York
6 Gear-Up team that we have on campus, and they're
7 excited to share this with families.

8 It isn't just for a student. You can go
9 online, and anyone can access it.

10 When we go to -- when we do our FAFSA
11 workshops, when we do our financial-aid information
12 sessions, we introduce this tool -- interactive
13 online tool.

14 SENATOR KAPLAN: And you see that people are
15 actually using this tool, and --

16 PATRICIA NOREN: Yes, yes.

17 Yes, as a matter of fact, in 2018 -- I don't
18 have it here -- but we had over 2,000 individuals
19 that accessed the course modules within this tool.

20 The feedback from the students that have used
21 it, when just in speaking with them, they've
22 engaged, they've done more than one module, they
23 went on to do others.

24 SENATOR KAPLAN: And is there any way we can
25 actually access more students?

1 You say 2,000 of the 16,000, that's a small
2 number.

3 We need to do more of that. (Parties
4 cross-talking) --

5 PATRICIA NOREN: We do need to do more of
6 awareness, I agree with you, yes.

7 SENATOR KAPLAN: Thank you.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Just move along, if
9 anybody has any questions.

10 SENATOR LaVALLE: Dr. Williams, you've been
11 here but a few months.

12 In a few words, what are your challenges?

13 SENATOR KAPLAN: Money.

14 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: Okay. So (parties
15 cross-talking) --

16 SENATOR LaVALLE: A colleague here was trying
17 to help you out by saying "money."

18 [Laughter.]

19 SENATOR KAPLAN: One word.

20 SENATOR LaVALLE: One word, that's all, yeah.

21 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: Yeah, I would say,
22 you know, looking at access, completion of success,
23 through an equity-minded lens, and really seeing
24 what we want the future of our educated society to
25 be.

1 So I would say that's the opportunity, is
2 looking at the -- you know, especially the
3 diversification of Nassau County, and seeing where
4 our gaps are, and where our opportunities are, in
5 regards to who's accessing higher education, you
6 know, who's completing, and then what that
7 completion leads to in regards to post-completion
8 success; you know, i.e., a liveable wage and social
9 mobility.

10 I'd say those are some of the -- the
11 opportunities there is to really dive into that data
12 and address those issues.

13 SENATOR LaVALLE: Do you think our society
14 knows what it wants to be?

15 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: Do I think our --
16 I think a lot of people spend a lot of time thinking
17 about what society ought to be.

18 I think people dedicate, you know, a lot of
19 time and effort to that question.

20 I think it's a consistently evolving and
21 moving target.

22 But I, you know, in good faith, believe that
23 folks out there who we have, who are representing
24 us, and folks just in the general population, have
25 those -- you know, that critical discourse on a

1 day-to-day basis. And they make, you know, policies
2 and laws to help us to get to be to a society where
3 we want to be.

4 Although it's ever-evolving, I do think
5 people will have that discussion.

6 SENATOR LaVALLE: I had the privilege and
7 opportunity of spending two weeks with 63 students
8 from Stony Brook, and I got to chat with them about
9 a whole variety of things.

10 And one of the things I learned is, things
11 are changing very, very rapidly, and we're not
12 always -- you know, one time there was
13 predictability about, today is Friday.

14 You would know by Monday where we would be,
15 you know, in terms of our society.

16 I'm not so sure we have that kind of
17 predictability today.

18 So, do you spend time talking to students?

19 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: Quite a bit, yes.

20 SENATOR LaVALLE: And can you succinctly say
21 what kind of message, what are they saying to you?

22 What is the message?

23 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: So they want to be in
24 an educational environment where faculty and staff
25 care about them, care about their goals.

1 They want to be in a physical place and space
2 where they can see themselves, where there's a sense
3 of belonging.

4 They want to know that the career they pursue
5 is going to be one where they can live based on the
6 salary that they receive.

7 They want to be contributing members to
8 society.

9 SENATOR LaVALLE: So what do you do as
10 president -- because I think you hit it right --
11 that makes students feel that you, faculty, care
12 about them?

13 What (inaudible) --

14 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: Certainly, yes.

15 So, for me, what I do, is I talk with
16 students, I talk with students frequently. I meet
17 them in the places and spaces where they are, not
18 only in student government, but also students who
19 are just walking around.

20 I spend my Saturdays, at times, walking
21 around and talking with our Saturday students, who
22 are working all weeklong, and taking an A&P course
23 or a bio course that's four credits, once a week, on
24 a Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and I ask them:

25 How's it going in class?

1 What are you enjoying?

2 Why are you here?

3 So that's -- as president, that's one of the
4 ways in which I stay grounded and ensure that the
5 decisions that we make, and, you know, the resources
6 that we allocate, are dedicated to what the students
7 need, because I'm hearing directly from the
8 students.

9 SENATOR LaVALLE: Okay.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

11 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you for that.

12 Just for anyone, maybe a couple of quick
13 questions.

14 I think maybe also what we need the students
15 to hear from all of us, is that we're fighting for
16 them, because they're -- we're hearing so much about
17 their struggles, whether it's food insecurity,
18 transportation insecurity, housing insecurity, all
19 those things you've mentioned.

20 I want to focus on the student population,
21 students with disabilities, and the additional
22 struggles that we see with students with
23 disabilities, and what, if anything, that we need to
24 be thinking about to provide additional resources to
25 that population, who -- you know, whether -- there

1 are obviously issues of race and class play out with
2 all of us, but there's an initial burden for those
3 students, and what other help you can -- we can
4 provide?

5 And the second question is around the
6 greening of campuses.

7 You know, we've passed the most progressive
8 climate-change bill in the country this year, and
9 now we need all of us to lead on that.

10 And what support do your campuses need to
11 help get us into that next era, to deal with climate
12 change, you know, and having the campuses and the
13 government be in front of that?

14 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: Renewable energy
15 is a major facet of what we need to be able to
16 employ, not only, one, to improve our campuses, but,
17 two, to save money.

18 We'll save state money, we'll save campus
19 money, because renewable energy, of course,
20 supplies, and, it feeds into the whole notion of
21 keeping the planet green.

22 So for us on Long Island, for example, I'm in
23 Nassau County, our college sits on top of an
24 aquifer, fresh water, and we have to be very careful
25 about that, maintaining open space, while at the

1 same time planning for expansion.

2 So it's essential, in all of this, therefore,
3 Senator Kaplan is right: money.

4 We need to improve our facilities.

5 On many of our campuses, they're antiquated,
6 and so the capital investments are extremely
7 important.

8 And then helping students understand what
9 renewable energy is, helping them to understand how
10 important it is.

11 This is, their professors, they're teaching
12 the philosophy of how important it is to protect not
13 only Long Island, but to protect the whole country,
14 and the world.

15 So I think that-- and for students with
16 disabilities, once again, these are antiquated
17 buildings, many of them.

18 And we have to -- and the advocacy on behalf
19 of men and women with disabilities has been great.

20 So we have to provide the ramps and the
21 elevators, and we have to provide the ability to
22 move around in lab spaces and the restrooms.

23 Moreover, we have to provide safety for all
24 of our students.

25 You know, so we have to look at retrofitting

1 certain areas of our campus that had to do with
2 glass, because it doesn't necessarily stop a shooter
3 with an A-15.

4 This is -- the invest -- Senator Kaplan is
5 right, the investment of dollars is essential.

6 And it will -- will it -- New York State is
7 already great, but it will elevate us far beyond
8 anything you can imagine, and, it will repay, it
9 will repay the State for its investment. The return
10 on investment will be great.

11 So I would -- you're dead on it, but it does
12 cost.

13 ROBERT MEGNA: I would add one piece, which
14 I think is critically important, and one thing that
15 I know the chancellor is committed to, is we have to
16 take advantage of the scale of SUNY too.

17 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: Uh-huh.

18 ROBERT MEGNA: We need to be more aggressive
19 in entering into power-purchase agreements for
20 renewable energy, and we have been working pretty
21 diligently on trying to accomplish that.

22 So I think there's multiple routes, you know,
23 to make significant progress in this area.

24 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you.

25 ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRIFFIN: Hi, good morning,

1 everyone -- or, good afternoon.

2 I represent AD 21, which is very close to
3 here, and I just don't see enough maybe outreach to
4 schools, community centers, of what is available to
5 students: What is available at Nassau Community
6 College, what is available for SUNY, scholarships
7 available, programs.

8 I have had -- just yesterday, I had a
9 constituent call me and say, you know, her
10 daughter's a senior in Freeport High School. And
11 she, like, wants to -- wanted to make the link to
12 the Excelsior Scholarship.

13 She didn't have that accessible, yet her
14 daughter's a senior.

15 I have four kids that graduated from
16 South Side High School in Rockville Center, and
17 I don't remember, like, a real lot of outreach, for
18 people to realize, wow, the savings that you can get
19 by attending Nassau Community College, by attending
20 a SUNY college.

21 I myself graduated from a SUNY college,
22 Oneonta. I'm among 63 SUNY legislators. And at the
23 time when I went to college, it was, like, What SUNY
24 do you want to go to? because that was what -- where
25 I was going.

1 But a lot of times I see, in certain schools,
2 or different school districts, people don't --
3 they're not really excited about SUNY.

4 And I personally would like to see a bigger
5 outreach from SUNY or from CUNY or the community
6 colleges, to show kids, like, wow, this is great
7 that you're going there, this is great that you got
8 accepted there.

9 And I just wondered what your feelings are on
10 that?

11 Like, what your level of outreach is to
12 schools, but not only to high schools, but perhaps
13 even like community centers.

14 You know, we have a Martin Luther King
15 Center, for example, in Rockville Center.

16 To -- you know, to go to different areas, and
17 see where there might be kids that don't know what's
18 available to them, and families and parents who
19 don't know what's available.

20 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: We've experienced
21 almost a -- well, we're getting up to almost a
22 50 percent enrollment growth across, well, it's been
23 20 years, and it's been because of outreach.

24 So I think I'm agreeing with you, and think
25 we ought to do it even more.

1 My -- two stories.

2 One, I'm an HBCU graduate.

3 HBCUs are having a difficult time right
4 now, but their tuition is so much higher than SUNY.

5 So I've been able to convince a lot of
6 parents who are loyal to it, as I am, the HBCU, that
7 they ought to consider SUNY, and they have been.
8 That accounts for enrollment growth.

9 The second story is:

10 Somebody said, Would you like to go recruit
11 on the east end of Long Island?

12 I said, Where? What are you talking about?

13 You know, Sag Harbor, East Hampton.

14 I said, "Of course," because all I knew at
15 that time was what I would experience visiting
16 friends during the summertime. All the great
17 restaurants, and my rich friends' big houses.

18 So I said, This ought to be a piece of cake.
19 You know, I'll go out and enjoy the richness of the
20 east end of Long Island.

21 So I went to the high school, it was
22 East Hampton, and what did I discover that I didn't
23 really think about, and should have?

24 That the people I visited there in the
25 summer, but there are people there who live there

1 all yearlong. They are not wealthy. They run
2 the -- they fix the boats. They do the gardening.
3 They are not wealthy.

4 And I said, My God, we've missed a huge
5 marketing opportunity, at least for our campus.

6 And we discovered that we would attract more
7 students.

8 And so, you're right, I think we should.

9 We did -- you touch SUNY any way, you touch
10 it everywhere; we tried these campaigns.

11 So I think I agree with you, we can do more
12 in terms of marketing the value.

13 And we have great universities.

14 Senator LaValle knows Stony Brook is one of
15 the greatest in the country.

16 So we have to market these in ways that, when
17 our students, you know, say they want to go to these
18 other schools, we say, No. Not even on
19 Long Island -- I know my private friends will get
20 mad at me -- but, you know, SUNY is the best value,
21 particularly for the most people in this country.

22 Nobody likes to use the word, but most of us,
23 if I want to unite this room, are poor.

24 Poor people need SUNY, because they get
25 quality at great value.

1 So I agree.

2 ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRIFFIN: Thank you.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: I believe (inaudible).
4 Please.

5 ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRIFFIN: Yeah, please.

6 ROBERT MEGNA: No, a small anecdote, just
7 because I think we probably could be doing a lot
8 better on the marketing side, but this is just a
9 small example.

10 We really need to do better with our online
11 programs as well. And that gives access to lots of
12 folks, especially non-traditional students.

13 But on the marketing issue, just a very small
14 investment in marketing by us results in over
15 1500 folks a day contacting us about what programs
16 at SUNY might be interesting to them.

17 So, again, it's absolutely the right way for
18 us to be thinking about the future.

19 ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRIFFIN: Thank you.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, incidentally, I was
21 remiss in not introducing and welcoming
22 Assemblymember Judy Griffin.

23 ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRIFFIN: Thank you very much.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Thomas.

25 SENATOR THOMAS: Yes.

1 Thank you all for being here. Thank you for
2 the testimony that you rendered.

3 In my opening remarks I touched upon
4 student-loan debt.

5 What are all of you doing collectively to
6 reduce that burden on your students?

7 And by a show of hands, to all the students
8 here, how many here have student-loan debt?

9 (Perusing the room.)

10 That's the whole room.

11 All right.

12 SENATOR MARTINEZ: (Raises hand.)

13 SENATOR THOMAS: Well, me too, me too.
14 I raised my hand too.

15 [Laughter.]

16 ROBERT MEGNA: Can I raise for my children
17 (raising hand)?

18 [Laughter.]

19 SENATOR THOMAS: So, literally, like,
20 99.9 percent of people in this room have
21 student-loan debt.

22 It's a huge crisis in this country.

23 What are the graduation rates like?

24 What are the default rates?

25 And how many of your graduating students find

1 a job after they graduate with a degree that they
2 received from SUNY?

3 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: We can definitely get
4 back to you with exact numbers.

5 I know that, in regards to student-loan
6 default rate, we actually are doing very well,
7 comparatively.

8 So I don't know if you know the --

9 PATRICIA NOREN: 10.7.

10 SENATOR THOMAS: 10.7?

11 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: -- yeah, which is,
12 comparatively, it's very good.

13 But in regards to the jobs -- the "jobs"
14 question, the exact (indiscernible), we can get back
15 to you on that, absolutely.

16 SENATOR THOMAS: Okay.

17 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: It was mentioned, the
18 default task force that has recently been -- excuse
19 me -- created at Nassau Community College is one of
20 our attempts to really address this issue, and there
21 are several components.

22 We voluntarily had kind of a constituency
23 from the department of education come in, to really
24 pour over a lot of documents.

25 And we opened ourselves up to that

1 experience -- this is prior to my arrival -- we
2 opened ourselves up, because we wanted to address
3 these issues.

4 So we received their recommendations, and
5 we're aggressively acting upon them, like I said --
6 as Patty said, with the formation of the task force.
7 And there's kind of four general items that we're
8 pursuing.

9 I don't know if you want to add anything?

10 PATRICIA NOREN: Right, and we also had
11 started the loan-debt awareness, which we offer that
12 monthly, basically, on campus.

13 Like we (parties cross-talking) --

14 SENATOR THOMAS: So is that like financial
15 education in a way?

16 PATRICIA NOREN: It's -- we reach out to the
17 loan borrowers on campus, and let them know that
18 there's a loan-debt awareness.

19 And what we're trying to teach them is:

20 How to determine the overall amount the loans
21 they have borrowed;

22 Explain the loan-services part, within,
23 sometimes they think it's a collection, rather than
24 "this is your friend, work with your loan servicer";

25 And the ramifications of going into default.

1 We let them know about the different
2 repayment options in this workshop, and also about
3 the On-Your-Feet Loan Forgiveness Program that
4 New York State offers.

5 SENATOR THOMAS: So this is after the fact --
6 right? -- this is after they've taken the loan?

7 PATRICIA NOREN: This is current students
8 (parties cross-talking) --

9 SENATOR THOMAS: Is there anything that you
10 offer for incoming students before they take out a
11 loan, financial literacy in a way?

12 Is there something that you guys --

13 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: We do a lot of
14 that. They have been doing that for several years.

15 To give you some statistics:

16 The national average for debt at graduation
17 is about, 35,000, 10 percent.

18 SENATOR THOMAS: Uh-huh?

19 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: The New York State
20 average is about 30,000.

21 And so for Old Westbury, ours is 17,000.
22 That's 6 percent.

23 That's way below the national and state
24 average, and that is a result of talking to students
25 as they enter, even before they enter, about money

1 management, financial literacy.

2 You're absolutely right, the more that we do,
3 the more successful we will be.

4 And one of the points that I made earlier in
5 my brief presentation was that, we ought to, in the
6 state of New York, offer, somehow figure out, how to
7 get no-interest loans.

8 SENATOR THOMAS: Working on it.

9 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: Yeah.

10 That's -- I mean, that's -- that makes all
11 the sense in the world.

12 Tie, you know, four or five years if you have
13 to work in the state of New York.

14 Who wants to leave New York anyway?

15 [Laughter.]

16 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: But I'm just
17 saying --

18 SENATOR THOMAS: Trump.

19 [Laughter.]

20 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: So -- so
21 I think -- I think that works.

22 You know, that works.

23 So if you keep that in mind, and, you're
24 right, we do more of our financial literacy.

25 Part of community-reinvestment work, on

1 behalf of the banks, are to be a huge commitment by
2 the banks to do financial literacy.

3 Now, they're not going to tell the full
4 truth, you know that, because they're trying to make
5 money. But we have to work on them.

6 And encourage more material to be passed out
7 and taught to our students, and their parents,
8 because a lot of it comes from just bad management
9 of dollars.

10 ROBERT MEGNA: Again, I would emphasize
11 something that was mentioned before, and we need to
12 figure out a way to do with at a much larger scale,
13 but, Reenroll to Complete is an incredibly
14 successful program on a very small scale now.

15 Students that graduate with a degree and get
16 a job can pay off their debt.

17 Those that leave, and we never contact them
18 or find them, are in a much more difficult
19 situation.

20 So I think that's also a critical piece with
21 all the other stuff folks have mentioned.

22 SENATOR THOMAS: Thank you.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Gaughran?

24 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: When you said,
25 default rate, 10.7, was that 3-, 5- or 10-year?

1 PATRICIA NOREN: Three.

2 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: 3-year.

3 How about 5- and 10-year default rates?

4 PATRICIA NOREN: (Inaudible.)

5 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: You don't know?

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: The graduation rates are
7 available online on the federal government website.

8 Senator Gaughran.

9 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Thank you.

10 Going back to capital funding for our great
11 state-university system:

12 And, Dr. Butts, you know, one of our great
13 legacies, I believe, in addition to just elevating
14 SUNY Old Westbury to where it is today, to really
15 being a national institution in the forefront, you
16 focused a lot on capital programs and trying to
17 modernize and move forward.

18 And you have left us a wonderful blueprint
19 for the future --

20 We're sorry to see you leave.

21 -- you know, moving into making that building
22 a full STEM center.

23 But I think part of what we're trying to deal
24 is, they're great ideas, SUNY Old Westbury, and we
25 need to do them.

1 Stony Brook has some tremendous
2 opportunities.

3 And you raised the issue, that we got to also
4 continue to keep up with the maintenance so that we
5 keep what we have, but we also have these tremendous
6 opportunities to grow and expand.

7 Stony Brook, with science, with engineering,
8 with a hospital, you know, has some wonderful
9 opportunities that we can really move, you know, our
10 system even to the next level.

11 And I'll defer to Senator Brooks on all the
12 great things and ideas for Farmingdale.

13 And so many of our others -- colleges.

14 I guess the question is:

15 How do we balance between maintaining what we
16 have, to make sure that it doesn't deteriorate?

17 And then how do we get to that next level,
18 and how do we fund it all?

19 And, of course, we have Mr. Megna here too.

20 I'm sure you can give us some great ideas on
21 that as well.

22 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: Senator, you've
23 asked the 64 -- that shows you how old I am --
24 64,000-dollar-question.

25 But my appeal would be, you know, take --

1 take -- of course I would say this -- take the leap
2 of faith.

3 I would say, we must find the money, and
4 I can't tell you from which pot.

5 You know this much better than I do.

6 But there's no better investment, in terms of
7 health care, hospitals, jobs, than the state
8 university, where the -- because -- first of all, we
9 have the greatest nation in the world.

10 The only way we're going to maintain it is by
11 a well-educated population.

12 And so we have to invest in education from
13 that point of view.

14 But the jobs that are available for these
15 young men and women, and some of us who are
16 transitioning out of one profession into another,
17 demand that the level of education that we are
18 arguing for in STEM centers, and other projects
19 across the university system, are essential.

20 I thought the Governor had lost his mind with
21 Excelsior.

22 I said, How's he going to pay for it?

23 But you know what?

24 After a split second of that, I thanked
25 the -- God for the boldness to get out here and say

1 it.

2 And I think that, and I said this earlier, as
3 we go along, we'll figure it out. But there's no
4 more essential investment across everything you can
5 name -- security, energy, climate change,
6 legislation -- than investing in these men and women
7 who are in our university system.

8 And, you know, I dare not suggest which pot
9 to take from, because that's -- it's your
10 prerogative.

11 But I do say that, what we're talking about
12 in terms of increasing salaries to get full-time
13 faculty, you know, I don't think that's going to
14 take a lot.

15 The capital is the big one.

16 And we're creating jobs for young men and
17 women, not just in terms of educating them to take
18 the jobs, but, construction, you know, this is a
19 major engine for us.

20 I must admit, you've asked me a difficult
21 question.

22 I don't know where you can get it.

23 I'm just begging you to find it the best way
24 you can, by any means necessary, because, if we
25 don't have it, I think we are going to hurt our

1 state, and major employers who are looking for these
2 men and women to take the jobs that are available.

3 I've seen it.

4 I don't have the figures, unlike
5 President Williams, I don't have the figures in
6 front of me, but when I first took over as president
7 about 20 years ago, I got calls all the time from
8 alums.

9 I can't find a job.

10 What am I going to do?

11 How am I going to make it?

12 But now, we, through our placements, through
13 teaching a lot -- I don't dis -- totally agree with
14 this -- to the job market, we hear less and less of
15 that.

16 More of our students are finding work,
17 gainful employment.

18 And so, I don't know, but I just -- I'm
19 saying here today, that \$250-million investment
20 across five years will make a huge difference, and
21 I think it will pay off, I think we'll get it back,
22 we'll get a good return.

23 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Thank you, Doctor.

24 [Applause.]

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

1 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: I don't know if

2 Mr. Megna --

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: Oh, I'm sorry.

4 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: Don't let him
5 leave (pointing to Senator LaValle.)

6 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: I don't know if Mr. Megna
7 was going --

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: I'm sorry.

9 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: And I have one quick
10 question for community college.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: That's all right.

12 I'm sorry, I apologize.

13 ROBERT MEGNA: I don't think I could be more
14 eloquent.

15 The State of New York, if I had to sit in my
16 old seat, spends about \$10 billion a year on capital
17 projects.

18 I think it really is a question of how you
19 prioritize that money, moving forward.

20 And, of course --

21 [Applause.]

22 ROBERT MEGNA: -- other folks are going to --
23 as you know, better than I know, because you hear it
24 every day, other folks are going to tell you what
25 those other priorities are, and, again,

1 transportation and the MTA, and all the other issues
2 you have to deal with on a daily basis.

3 But I think it's really trying to seek out,
4 how do you prioritize within that pot, where do
5 SUNY, and CUNY, where do they kind of fit in that?

6 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Just one quick question?

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: Sure. I apologize.

8 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: One quick question.

9 Dr. Williams, you know, talking to a lot of
10 people, because I represent Suffolk County as well,
11 so, in our great Suffolk County Community College
12 system and Nassau County Community College, one of
13 the issues seems to be, because of a large increase
14 in student population: faculty.

15 And I know we have, you know, the greatest of
16 educators that are out -- that are in our community
17 colleges, full-time. But I know there's also been a
18 lot of pressure to increase adjuncts, and to some
19 extent, have adjuncts sort of replace what were
20 once, you know, full-time faculty members.

21 Do you have any comments on that, and how
22 maybe we balance that, and what the future is?

23 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: So I -- what I would
24 say is, I can -- if you're looking for exact
25 numbers, I can get back to you on that.

1 I would say, when we think about -- excuse
2 me -- we think about quality of education --
3 right? -- academic integrity. And those are some of
4 the tenets that, you know, drive our decisions.
5 Right?

6 So when there is the need, and there is an
7 opportunity that arises, we're trying to put the
8 best person in front of our students so they can
9 really receive, you know, the finest education
10 possible.

11 It's something that we pride ourselves on
12 here at Nassau Community College, and I know
13 throughout SUNY.

14 So, that would be my response is, that's
15 always our endeavor.

16 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Okay.

17 Thank you.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

19 Let me just mention one aspect that's been
20 asked up here.

21 We have not had a capital five-year plan
22 since 2008.

23 Instead, we've had critical maintenance in
24 the budget, which really doesn't put a shovel in the
25 ground. It just puts a Band-Aid on a cracked

1 ceiling, to mix metaphors.

2 And the Committee will be holding a hearing
3 on capital projects, and, particularly,
4 environmentally-sustainable capital projects,
5 sometime next month -- in December, most likely,
6 probably in New York City.

7 I had said Albany before, but I think we're
8 going to do it in New York City.

9 And we, obviously, will invite you back.

10 Let me just mention one aspect that was
11 mentioned earlier.

12 Chancellor Johnson did have a program in
13 Albany on sustainability. And she brought in
14 faculty from, I remember Stony Brook, and I remember
15 ESF from Syracuse. And I know she's concerned.

16 She herself -- it's an interesting choice for
17 chancellor, because she's not only a scientist who
18 has many patents, but she's an entrepreneur as well,
19 and I know concerned about the environment.

20 Senator Brooks.

21 SENATOR BROOKS: Thank you.

22 And thank you all for being here again.

23 I think some of the discussion right now has
24 revolved around money.

25 Surprise, surprise.

1 A couple of things we have to recognize:

2 In April we saw the full impact of the
3 President's new tax plan.

4 That cost New York State \$15 billion more in
5 taxes. A tremendous problem. New York State has
6 been hit hard by his tax plan.

7 Apparently, in the last few days, he's
8 realized that, so he too is moving out of New York.

9 But I think -- I bring that up only to
10 recognize we have a revenue shortfall as a result of
11 that.

12 Some of the challenges that we have, and you
13 and I, Dr. Williams, we had a discussion about the
14 college, and things that can be done.

15 And one of the things that we talked about is
16 the use of AP programs, where a student, before he
17 or she graduates high school, has assumed a number
18 of credits that he can work on to college.

19 We talked about the dual-enrollment programs,
20 particularly, where you have a junior college, and
21 then can immediately enroll into a four-year school.

22 I think that is critically important.

23 As you pointed out, many of your students
24 work their way through school, work in a job, and
25 the others.

1 I think we have to look at a better way of
2 providing them assistance, recognizing that they're
3 not full-time students in many cases. They're
4 working hard, and they're dedicated to get to
5 through a degree.

6 And I think we have to evaluate how we give
7 them assistance.

8 One of the frightening things that we spoke
9 about that day -- you didn't talk about it in your
10 remarks -- but the number of students you have here
11 that are homeless.

12 That's a big problem that we have, where they
13 have difficulty applying for that.

14 So I think part of what we have to start to
15 do is figure out how we can reduce the cost of
16 education by accelerating it at the high school
17 level.

18 I think part of that is, is we have to
19 recognize those students that are working a job, and
20 student -- and going to school at the same time, see
21 what assistance we can give to them.

22 And then recognize, you know, we have a money
23 problem.

24 Dr. Butts, you said, we have to "take a leap
25 of faith."

1 The problem we have right now, as a result of
2 these tax reforms, is the people in New York have
3 lead shoes on right now.

4 It's going to be difficult. Setting
5 priorities is going to be very hard.

6 But at the end of the day, I think one of the
7 things we have to do is recognize success.

8 So one of the things we have in the capital
9 investments have been difficult, and not around, we
10 need schools.

11 I look at -- and I've been advocating hard
12 for State University at Farmingdale for a new
13 building that costs \$53 million.

14 Farmingdale has a track record of students
15 graduating with very limited debt, a high placement
16 rate of people.

17 So, to your point, an investment of
18 \$53 million to put in that new building, and they
19 already have the student demand, they're rejecting
20 students right now because they don't have space,
21 that's money very well spent.

22 So I think what we have to do, collectively,
23 and that's the colleges, as well as the State, and
24 everybody else, is look at different ways of
25 costing -- of reducing the cost of education.

1 And that can be the AP classes, that can be
2 some work-study programs, or something to help with
3 those students.

4 And that could be sound capital advancement.

5 But, you know, when we talked that day, the
6 one thing that really struck me more than anything
7 else, is that you have students living in their
8 cars, and the rest.

9 So how -- what -- what are you doing to -- to
10 address those students?

11 And then what are you doing to establish
12 partnerships with local school districts, where we
13 can have kids matriculate, effectively, from
14 high school to your school, and then on to another
15 school from there?

16 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: So right now we do
17 have an emergency fund that we're examining,
18 planning to examine, in regards to the -- you know,
19 how much, you know, the funds are there, how quickly
20 it's depleted, what it's being used for.

21 We also, as I mentioned, have our foundation,
22 which is a separate entity. So the thousands --
23 hundreds of thousands of dollars each year in
24 scholarships that are provided to Nassau Community
25 College students, we're looking to ensure that more

1 scholarships are available to incoming students, so
2 it's helping with the access, and also with
3 retention.

4 In regards to reaching out to the
5 high schools, that's an opportunity for us.

6 And I've been meeting with superintendents
7 across the county, both individually and in their
8 quadrant meetings, to share some of, you know, the
9 new initiatives that are happening at
10 Nassau Community College, but also to hear, you
11 know, what their concerns are, what the challenges
12 are, that they see. And taking that back to kind of
13 the internal constituents that have I here, and
14 seeing what we're doing.

15 You know, the marketing piece, Assemblywoman:

16 So, open house, here, Sunday morning. Tell
17 everybody you know.

18 I know this is -- we're being recorded, live
19 stream.

20 So -- but as an effort, we are out at
21 high schools -- right? -- but it's, how?

22 Right?

23 So the communication is not only getting a
24 word out, so to speak, but it's also, what is --
25 what's the messaging behind it?

1 Is it social media?

2 Is it in print?

3 Is it -- how is it being communicated?

4 To who is it being communicated?

5 Are we really leveraging the impact of
6 influencers, you know, when we think about whether
7 those be family members or significant others,
8 high school counselors, high school principals.

9 You know, being in places and spaces where
10 both secular and (indiscernible), but people come
11 together to be a unit, and are like-minded in that
12 space, and are trusting each other in that space.

13 Are we there?

14 And that's an opportunity for us at
15 Nassau Community College, that we've just started to
16 engage upon.

17 So we have identified, and I'll say, not
18 shared it with our team, several opportunities.

19 I've spoken with more than 300 people since
20 July 1 outside of normal meetings, you know, just
21 kind of your the obligatory day-to-day meetings, and
22 I'm gathering all of this information so that it can
23 shared and we can advance the college.

24 So definitely are opportunities for us, and
25 we're looking to grasp them and pursue them

1 enthusiastically so we can help more students.

2 SENATOR BROOKS: Thank you.

3 ROBERT MEGNA: Can I just raise one point?

4 Someone told me this yesterday, and it
5 horrified me.

6 30 percent of our printers do a billion of
7 pages of paper a year.

8 We can't be doing stuff like that.

9 And that's where system, I think, can help
10 with the local folks, and the actual administrators,
11 to figure out ways to do things cheaper, and that
12 money just gets reinvested in the students.

13 SENATOR BROOKS: I agree with you.

14 I think -- I think we have to rethink how we
15 do certain things, and that may be electronic
16 textbooks, and other things, to reduce -- to reduce
17 the costs.

18 You know, there are -- there are some
19 painless ways to cut expenses, and that's what we
20 have to look at.

21 DR. JERMAINE WILLIAMS: And really quickly,
22 so, thanks to, SUNY has an OER (open educational
23 resource) initiative that Nassau Community College
24 is one institution of higher education that is part
25 of.

1 We've had a team at the college for a few
2 years now.

3 And to your point, Senator Brooks, that
4 has -- initiative has saved students tens of
5 thousands of dollars over the past couple of years.

6 So there definitely are a list of
7 opportunities and initiatives I can gather to share,
8 how we're bringing down the costs for students.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Martinez.

10 SENATOR MARTINEZ: Thank you.

11 I just want to say thank you to all of you.
12 Go Bingo, actually, class of 1999.

13 But I just want to say thank you to every
14 single one of you.

15 Congratulations on your career.

16 Welcome to your new one, wish you much
17 success.

18 And I surely don't miss the financial-aid
19 office.

20 But I also know that many have benefited from
21 the EOP program, so thank you for what you do.

22 But my question really comes down to:

23 We're all talking about financial literacy.

24 And I applaud you for the default task force,
25 the cohort.

1 And coming from the education world that
2 I do, such as my -- some of our colleagues here,
3 I was a former teacher and administrator, and -- in
4 Suffolk.

5 And one of the things that we saw some
6 colleges do out in Suffolk was reach out to our
7 middle schools, our high schools, to see how we can
8 jump-start the financial literacy, or at least try
9 to get them seeking community colleges, SUNY
10 colleges, and so forth.

11 Is Nassau Community College doing an effort
12 in terms of reaching out to high schools, or
13 potential seniors who would like to come into the
14 college, your middle school students?

15 I remember, in eighth grade, I learned how to
16 balance my checkbook, you know.

17 So -- and, obviously, we don't want to put an
18 unfunded mandate on the schools -- on our schools to
19 say, you need to teach financial literacy.

20 But I think, as a community, not just a
21 college, but the parents, the schools, businesses,
22 I think we have to come together as a village and
23 really start honing in on those skills that will
24 help our students then continue into financial
25 prosperity. Right?

1 Is there anything that the college is doing
2 right now to reach those students, and at least help
3 them early on?

4 PATRICIA NOREN: Well, as I had said earlier,
5 recently we had worked with our New York Gear-Up
6 team on campus and they will be reaching out.

7 They work with 9-, 10-, 11th-, and
8 12th-graders.

9 And when I showed them the Smart Track
10 financial literacy tool, they will be sharing it
11 with their school districts that they're working in.

12 SENATOR MARTINEZ: How many school districts
13 do you have on that team, this Gear-Up team?

14 PATRICIA NOREN: The Gear-Up team, I'm not
15 sure of which school -- all the school districts
16 that they're in, but it's quite a few. And I know
17 I've gone with EOP, our staff has gone with EOP to
18 Hempstead --

19 WILLIAM CLYDE, JR.: I know in Hempstead.

20 PATRICIA NOREN: -- yes, Hempstead,
21 Roosevelt, Uniondale.

22 SENATOR MARTINEZ: Are you reaching out to
23 under the ninth -- like, middle school level?

24 PATRICIA NOREN: Not that I'm aware -- you
25 mean about the financial literacy?

1 SENATOR MARTINEZ: Uh-huh.

2 PATRICIA NOREN: No.

3 SENATOR MARTINEZ: Like I said, I was in
4 eighth grade and I learned how to balance my
5 checkbook.

6 Obviously, I don't use -- you know, you
7 forget -- right? -- but you remember where you
8 learned.

9 I may be off by a couple of cents, but, you
10 know, it happens. Right?

11 But I think, starting with our kids at a
12 younger age, I think is very beneficial, to prevent
13 these loans from accruing, or even going in through
14 loans -- right? -- or seeing which would be the best
15 interest rate, or -- you know, since we have that
16 right now. Right?

17 So I think if you -- you know, just for the
18 future, I think getting to our younger population is
19 also very important, to have them start thinking
20 about college, and start thinking about
21 college-readiness.

22 And I know, going through to the century --
23 this Century 21, that's what we're teaching our
24 kids -- right? -- making sure they have financial
25 literacy.

1 But I think, starting even in middle school,
2 would be very beneficial for an older generation.

3 SENATOR MAYER: Thank you very much, and
4 thank you very much for your testimony.

5 Just, Mr. Megna, what is the average amount
6 of debt that a SUNY graduate currently graduates
7 with?

8 ROBERT MEGNA: I'd have to get back to you
9 with the exact number.

10 But as I think Dr. Butts indicated, we are
11 significantly below the national average.

12 But I'll get you the exact number.

13 SENATOR MAYER: No, I recognize you're below
14 the national average.

15 That's the incredible value of SUNY, and,
16 totally, we support it 100 percent.

17 ROBERT MEGNA: It's still a big number.

18 SENATOR MAYER: It's a big number --

19 ROBERT MEGNA: Yep.

20 SENATOR MAYER: -- and we have students who
21 are suffering with it.

22 And I think our job is, in part, to address
23 it.

24 And I appreciate that there's a default task
25 force.

1 But the other is, SUNY-wide, do you know what
2 the rate of default is within the first five years
3 after graduation?

4 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: About 8 percent.

5 ROBERT MEGNA: Yeah, again -- if (indicating
6 to Dr. Butt).

7 DR. CALVIN O. BUTTS, III: About 8 percent.

8 SENATOR MAYER: That was your number.

9 And I just want -- is that SUNY-wide?

10 ROBERT MEGNA: Yes.

11 SENATOR MAYER: Yes. Okay.

12 With respect to default, post graduation,
13 does SUNY have a real strategy of helping students
14 be sure that they are using every opportunity under
15 the existing loan that they took, to avail
16 themselves of any opportunities?

17 For example, if it's a public-sector issue,
18 if it's a recertification issue, I mean, there's a
19 lot of traps in the process.

20 And I just wonder how aggressively SUNY is
21 working to help students on that?

22 ROBERT MEGNA: Again, I'm sure we could be
23 doing better with that.

24 The focus recently has been trying to get
25 kids before they get out, again, with Reenroll to

1 Complete, because what we're finding is, if we get
2 our graduates through with a degree, they're much
3 more likely to be employed and the debt is much less
4 of a problem.

5 So, again, I'm sure we can do a better job of
6 focusing after, but the focus right now has been to
7 try to get folks who are still in the pipeline, and
8 make sure they finish.

9 SENATOR MAYER: No, I appreciate that.

10 I do think, collectively, we have a
11 responsibility to address those who are at the end,
12 and have graduated, and are facing a very long
13 process of paying back.

14 And I think -- you know, I know
15 Senator Stavisky has been, you know, really,
16 a fierce champion on behalf of students who are
17 left with debt.

18 And would I love to see us work collectively
19 with SUNY and the community colleges, because they
20 are the greatest opportunity for these students, and
21 they are less expensive with high quality.

22 And that's exactly what we want to promote.

23 But I don't think we can -- I would hate to
24 think we turn away from the students once they
25 graduate and are in these very significant financial

1 holes.

2 So I appreciate that.

3 And I love the idea of promoting a no-cost
4 loan, or, whatever kind of grant.

5 And I -- we didn't talk about it, but the
6 idea of whether Excelsior needs to be modified to
7 reflect students who attend less school is
8 something, as we continue to see students who are
9 working, I think something that our Conference, the
10 Senate Democratic Majority, is going to be looking
11 at, or I hope we are.

12 But thank you for your commitment.

13 And thank you the EOP program.

14 I was just at a rebranding of the Yonkers
15 one, and I'm very optimistic about the future of EOP
16 if we continue to broaden the appeal, because we're
17 competing, in my experience, with the private
18 colleges in their goal to provide very substantial
19 scholarships.

20 And so I think we just have to be
21 forward-thinking about that.

22 So, that's my two cents.

23 And I appreciate all of your work on behalf
24 of these students.

25 Thank you.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

2 And I agree.

3 I appreciate Dr. Butts's suggestions,
4 which, obviously, we will follow up.

5 In terms of the Excelsior Scholarship,
6 Senator Metzger, from the New Paltz area, has
7 legislation, to create a part-time -- in a sense, a
8 part-time.

9 And that is something that came up yesterday
10 in Syracuse, when we had Dr. Guillermo Linares and
11 his staff testify.

12 It's been a theme throughout the -- all of
13 the hearings, and it's certainly something we can
14 look at, and will look at, and have been looking at.

15 So I thank you.

16 If there are no further questions, we thank
17 you very much.

18 (All witnesses say "Thank you.")

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: And as they make their way
20 up here, we have:

21 Austin Ostro, the president of the SUNY
22 Student Assembly, and the student trustee;

23 And, Timothy Hunter, the USS chairperson.

24 And the -- I must say, the hearings that
25 we've held throughout the state have been really

1 interesting and exciting, but the real stars, with
2 all due respect to SUNY and CUNY, have been the
3 students, without question.

4 A reporter asked me that the other day, and
5 I said, I think the students have done a magnificent
6 job, and reflect the diversity of our state, but a
7 common theme.

8 And that is going to be discussed.

9 Timothy -- Austin has been at, this is the
10 third hearing. Timothy was at Brooklyn.

11 And they're going to discuss -- they're going
12 to summarize their testimony.

13 And we have other students coming afterwards.

14 So, thank you.

15 AUSTIN OSTRO: Thank you so much, Chairperson
16 Stavisky, and to the entire legislative delegation
17 here at this hearing.

18 It is a real privilege to be here
19 representing SUNY's 1.4 million students, and they
20 span 64 campuses, community colleges, graduate
21 schools.

22 The diverse scope of higher education is
23 truly reflected in the SUNY system.

24 Very pleased to be joined in this testimony
25 by the new CUNY USS chairperson, Timothy Hunter.

1 I am so excited to begin our collaboration.

2 And I appreciate you, Chairwoman Stavisky,
3 for accommodating our request to offer joint
4 testimony.

5 We have developed, you know, just his short
6 time in office, quite the collaborative set of
7 priorities for New York State public higher
8 education.

9 And we intend to participate in joint
10 advocacy efforts up to and through the legislative
11 session.

12 TIMOTHY HUNTER: You know, just to follow up
13 on everything that Austin had said, you know,
14 there's been countless phone calls, you know,
15 countless collaboration, e-mails being sent.

16 It's really been a pleasure collaborating
17 with Austin, and I think that this is the start of
18 something new for student leadership throughout
19 New York State, because we realize that, you know,
20 at the end of the day, we are all, you know,
21 together.

22 But something that I also want to make sure
23 is being enforced, is that we also represent a group
24 of 2 million students, together, across
25 New York State, you know, so we hear from everyone

1 about their problems.

2 And, you know, we had a group of students
3 that decided that, you know, today we're going to
4 get on a bus and we're come all the way to
5 Nassau Community College, to make sure that they get
6 voices heard.

7 And this is the group of students that are
8 behind us.

9 You know, so, I mean, even though this is
10 like probably a speck of dust compared to the
11 2 million students that we represent, it's
12 super-important that all these students get their
13 voices heard across the board.

14 And sometimes it's hard, when we come here,
15 and then we have to wait, you know, for a lot of
16 things to happen, because people -- it's mid-terms
17 week for us. People have homework, people a lot of
18 things that they have to do.

19 And I think that, uhm, again, like, just
20 echoing what I said at Brooklyn College, it's
21 sometimes disheartening that we have to come here
22 and have this conversation. That we have to scrap
23 together students and, like, get on a bus and come
24 all the way to Long Island, because, you know, this
25 is something that shouldn't be negotiable.

1 This is something that, like, you know, the
2 Senate should be backing, the Assembly should be
3 backing, and we should all be getting behind in
4 terms of an affordable, accessible higher-education
5 for students here in New York State.

6 So we have a couple asks that we're going to
7 talk about today, and I'll just start off with the
8 first point.

9 As of late, we realize that, of course,
10 there's a lot of numbers flying around. Everybody's
11 saying "we need funding."

12 And I think that what Austin and I were able
13 do in our past couple of weeks -- or, in the past
14 week and a half, I guess it has been, of just
15 collaboration, is that we're asking for \$75 million
16 for each CUNY and SUNY schools for operational
17 costs.

18 \$150 million. Right?

19 I'm pretty sure that's a speck of dust
20 compared to the budget that we have in
21 New York State.

22 I think that money, in itself, can fund so
23 many things that we don't think about in our
24 day-to-day.

25 Of course you're going to hear about all the

1 different programs that we have.

2 What you don't hear about is the cutting of
3 library hours.

4 What you don't hear about is the lack of
5 tutoring services.

6 What you don't hear about is the no funding
7 coming from the top for food-insecurity programs.

8 All right?

9 A lot of those things are coming from local
10 auxiliaries.

11 So I think that what we need to do, moving
12 forward, is also think about how that money will not
13 only help out with the operational day-to-days of
14 the college and the administration, but the
15 student-support services that it definitely needs to
16 be going towards.

17 AUSTIN OSTRO: Yeah, absolutely.

18 So I just wanted to address the fact that
19 SUNY and CUNY's success really is New York State's
20 success.

21 There was a report commissioned by the
22 Rockefeller Institute of Government, run through the
23 SUNY system, that showed that, for every \$1 of
24 public spending on the SUNY system, there is an
25 \$8.17 return in economic development for the state.

1 And a similar figure is certainly true for
2 the CUNY system as well.

3 New York State invests in SUNY in a number of
4 key ways.

5 Supporting capital, as you heard before;

6 The fringe costs for our faculty;

7 A very robust financial-aid system;

8 And, of course, direct support.

9 Delving into direct support, which we see as
10 a key area of focus heading into the legislative
11 session:

12 For 10 years, the SUNY system has faced flat
13 State-direct support, and there are key direct
14 consequences from that lack of support.

15 Foremost among those consequences is
16 dramatically increasing tuition, which, this year,
17 for the first time, surpassed \$7,000 annually.

18 And while, of course, SUNY and CUNY offer
19 some of the most competitive tuition rates in the
20 country for public systems, that will increasingly
21 be a challenge to assert as increases in tuition
22 offset the affordability of our respective systems.

23 Contributing to the concern we have about
24 direct support are two key factors.

25 One you heard about already is the TAP gap,

1 and that amounts to, approximately, \$75 million for
2 each system.

3 And the TAP gap is a particular disadvantage
4 to institutions that accept a disproportionate
5 number of TAP-eligible students.

6 And we don't think that institutions in our
7 systems, that go out of their way to bring students
8 from low-income families into their institutions,
9 should suffer the consequences of less State
10 support.

11 They should be incentivized to bring more
12 low-income students.

13 A second major contributing factor to our
14 concern about direct support are the respective
15 collective bargaining agreements reached with SUNY
16 and CUNY faculty.

17 And I know I speak for both of us when we say
18 we want high-quality faculty who are compensated
19 fairly.

20 And we appreciate the collective bargaining
21 agreements on both ends moving closer to that goal.

22 But the increases in retroactive payments to
23 faculty, and moving forward the increases in
24 salaries, should not be balanced on the backs of
25 students.

1 And if there is no increase in direct
2 support, they are going to be balanced on the backs
3 of students through increased tuition and fees.

4 So we strongly urge the Legislature and
5 Governor Cuomo to address both the PSC and the UP
6 contracts through "pay" bills incorporated into the
7 state budget, that would ensure that they're not
8 paid for by students.

9 Other consequences of that increase -- of
10 that flat State support include to student-support
11 services, like some of the services Timothy
12 highlighted, including mental health.

13 The National Association of Mental Health
14 Professionals recommends a counselor-to-student
15 ratio of 1500-to-1.

16 That's a ratio that nearly every SUNY campus
17 fails to meet.

18 And failing to have timely access to
19 mental-health professionals can have tragic
20 consequences for students.

21 It's essential that that direct support be
22 increased so that campuses can bring more
23 mental-health professionals to help offset some of
24 the consequences a lack of that support can lead to.

25 Additionally, advisement is a key sacrifice

1 that campuses need to make in order to make the
2 bottom line work, and this is both on the academic
3 and financial ends.

4 In terms of academic supports, students can
5 struggle to find time to meet with overburdened
6 advisors, and to get the sort of advice they need,
7 not only on their course load for each individual
8 semester, but to make long-term plans for career and
9 internships so they can be set up for success after
10 they graduate.

11 And on the financial side of things,
12 New York State does have one of the most robust
13 financial-aid systems in the country, but it can
14 oftentimes be difficult to navigate.

15 And that's why students and families who have
16 questions for financial-aid offices, that are almost
17 always understaffed, particularly at peak times of
18 the semester, like, when bills go out and when bills
19 are due.

20 There was one day in August where the UAlbany
21 financial-aid office received over 750 calls.
22 None -- the majority of which couldn't be answered,
23 and had to be returned in the following weeks,
24 because the office was overwhelmed by the outpouring
25 of questions.

1 And we don't want students to lose out on
2 support they're entitled to as a consequence of not
3 being able to get their questions addressed.

4 25 percent of all students who are flagged
5 for verification through the FAFSA process will
6 never complete the FAFSA, and leave thousands of
7 dollars, potentially, in Pell, TAP, and Excelsior
8 funds on the table.

9 And we want to make sure that campuses are
10 doing all they can, by being given all the resources
11 they need, in order to ensure students get all of
12 the aid that they're already entitled to.

13 TIMOTHY HUNTER: So looking at things, like
14 what Austin had mentioned, especially with financial
15 aid, again, the TAP gap is crucial, but that's one
16 aspect of operational that we're not really looking
17 at.

18 And I think that if we think that, you know,
19 this is going to be something that, even if we fund
20 it now, it will be the end of it, it's not.

21 All right?

22 This is going to be something that
23 progressively will grow as long as the current
24 situation is the way it is in higher education.

25 So I think that, especially, even if we do go

1 for a tuition freeze, which I am strongly advocating
2 for, we're still going have problems, like the
3 problems that are right above our head (indicating).

4 I'm pretty sure you guys have seen it, like,
5 looking up, it's right here.

6 Right?

7 This, in my opinion, represents the current
8 state of higher education.

9 And I think that if the State doesn't step in
10 and provide that support -- right? -- this year,
11 we'll be in trouble.

12 But the long-term game I think is where the
13 conversation needs to be had as well, because my
14 little brother will be attending CUNY or SUNY
15 schools. And if he doesn't have the opportunities
16 that were afforded to people that went before us --
17 right? -- if he has to worry about whether or not
18 his financial aid, because he's eligible for it, is
19 affecting his library hours, like, that's insane.

20 Like, why is it that, because you're coming
21 from a low socioeconomic background, that you're
22 being penalized for the education that you'd like to
23 pursue?

24 That's just -- that's common sense to me, you
25 know.

1 And I'm pretty sure everyone in front of me
2 believes in a fully-funded higher-education plan.

3 And I'm seeing head nods here.

4 You know, and I think that it's important
5 that we continue to progress as such, but it's so
6 important that you hear from the students as to what
7 that looks like, because what higher ed was 80 years
8 ago is much different than it is now.

9 You know, and I think that what we also need
10 to do is a real look at our approach to everything
11 in New York State.

12 However, especially with higher education, it
13 seems like that's not the nationwide grabbing
14 headline unless it's right before somebody's running
15 for office.

16 And I think that that's something that we
17 need to look at, and stop being such a reactive
18 group of legislators when it comes to higher
19 education, and be much more proactive.

20 So I think that, you know, there's going to
21 be a lot of things that are going to be being rolled
22 out this year.

23 And I encourage all of you, and your peers,
24 to keep an open mind -- right? -- to listen to some
25 students. Right?

1 I feel like -- like, if any of you asked, you
2 know, after this, you want to meet with a group of
3 students from CUNY and SUNY, you have the two
4 representatives of these institutions -- of the
5 student government bodies of these institutions
6 right here.

7 We can hook that up, we can arrange that.

8 Students that live in your district can talk
9 to you about their experiences with higher
10 education.

11 And if that's what you want to see because
12 you think that students aren't showing up, we're
13 here.

14 We took a bus to be here on Friday, after
15 Halloween.

16 [Laughter.]

17 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Like, you know, I really
18 think that this is something that I hope that this
19 resonates.

20 You see the signs, you know, stopping tuition
21 hikes.

22 You see the signs, closing the TAP gap.

23 You see the signs, making sure that community
24 college has base-aid funding.

25 Right?

1 You guys approved it, you guys put it in the
2 budget.

3 Enrollment is going down.

4 At the same time, you want to make sure that,
5 because of that, we're not paying the price. We
6 shouldn't be penalized for those things.

7 I feel like it's like a penalty for going to
8 get an education.

9 My mom benefited from Medgar Evers, she went
10 Medgar Evers College. She went SUNY New Paltz.

11 So she went to CUNY and to SUNY, she
12 benefited from both. Right?

13 And now she teaches special education.

14 And every single time she tells me, Tim, make
15 sure, whenever you go out of the house every single
16 day, you're making the right decisions morally.

17 And I hope that every single time you guys go
18 to Albany, I know it's, like, it's so different from
19 your district offices. It's like high halls, and
20 these big seats, and, you know, it's crazy.

21 I did model Senate, and I remember sitting in
22 those seats. And I can imagine the gravity that's
23 on you as legislators when you're there.

24 However, use the students as your moral
25 compass. Make sure that you're holding that close

1 to your heart.

2 Whenever any bill about higher education for
3 CUNY and for SUNY passes your desk, make sure that
4 the students are your priority, because, if you
5 don't, we will know.

6 Thank you.

7 [Applause.]

8 AUSTIN OSTRO: And I -- I -- you know, SUNY
9 students stand in agreement on the importance of a
10 freeze in tuition increases.

11 And, you know, Timothy and I both serve as
12 trustees on our respective boards.

13 And, cyclically, there -- you know, there's
14 a -- there's an issue of us having to balance our
15 fiduciary interests to the respective systems with
16 what is in students' interests.

17 And it is not an enviable decision to say,
18 should campuses go without resources they need by
19 opposing a tuition increase, or, should we make sure
20 that students are being able to achieve an
21 affordable education?

22 I think the State could remove that
23 impossible question from the respective boards by
24 increasing that direct support, which would mean
25 that the respective systems would no longer have to

1 raise tuition.

2 But moving on to just a few other points
3 relevant to affordability and funding on the SUNY
4 side:

5 Our community colleges were very lucky,
6 thanks to the championship of Chairwoman Stavisky
7 and Chair Glick in the Assembly, to receive a
8 98 percent funding floor in the final enacted
9 budget, which helped offset declining support as a
10 result of cyclical changes in enrollment tied to the
11 economy.

12 Just because enrollment goes down one year
13 doesn't mean that a campus can sacrifice significant
14 amounts of funding, and, in turn, lose the sorts of
15 programs they will need when the economy turns south
16 and more and more students will want to enroll in
17 the community colleges.

18 We are calling, both on the SUNY and CUNY
19 side, for the enshrinement of that funding floor in
20 state law so it's not susceptible to the budget
21 process each year.

22 We are also calling for increased support for
23 the Educational Opportunity Program, which, as you
24 heard in the previous panel, is key to the academic
25 success and career success of thousands of

1 New York State students.

2 SUNY students do support the
3 Excelsior Scholarship, and we appreciate the added
4 measure of affordability it allows thousands of
5 New York State students.

6 We believe that New York State can build on
7 the success of Excelsior by opening the program to a
8 greater number of students through a part-time
9 Excelsior program, and, also, by allowing greater
10 allowance for flexibility for transfer students,
11 particularly community college, the
12 State-operated-campus transfer students, so they do
13 not lose out on eligibility for the program as a
14 consequence of losing credits in the process of
15 transferring, which is totally out of their control.

16 And, lastly, you will hear from a number of
17 SUNY and CUNY students, including two of our student
18 government presidents, Bryce Mack and Shaheer Khan,
19 who represent Nassau Community College and
20 Stony Brook University.

21 They are incredible student leaders who
22 represent their students well.

23 And I look forward to you having the
24 opportunity to (indiscernible) them, and hear their
25 stories, and the impact of declining State support

1 and increasing tuition on their students as well.

2 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Just piggybacking off of
3 what Austin said, there's a lot of things that are
4 happening, and you are going to hear from both of
5 our groups throughout the rest of this hearing.

6 And I really encourage the Senators and the
7 Assemblymember -- two Assemblymembers, to stay with
8 us, because if -- I just really think that it's only
9 right.

10 You know, we spent two hours listening to
11 administration, and we understand you have to hear
12 both sides.

13 But it was the same thing at
14 Brooklyn College. You know, like, we had a whole
15 rally, we had a big, like, you know, like, I could,
16 easily, like, a good 80 students filled that room.

17 But then, like, an hour in, people have work,
18 people have kids, people have class.

19 So, like, you know, trying to -- trying to
20 garner that support, you know, it makes them think,
21 like, you know, they start to lose hope.

22 You know, they start to think that, oh, all
23 this is just another, like, you know, walk in the
24 park.

25 But these hearings are so crucial.

1 And I want to thank, you know,
2 Senator Stavisky for having them.

3 And I think that it's important that we have
4 a platform to voice all of these concerns, because,
5 sometimes, again, like, you get to college and it's
6 just, like, all right, now you're here.

7 You leave your high school.

8 You used to get, like, feminine hygiene
9 products, you used to get sexual-protection
10 products, for free.

11 And now you're coming to a college where
12 those things are coming out of your student activity
13 fee on some (indiscernible) CUNY schools.

14 Then, on top of that, it's, like, you -- it's
15 just there's lack of support, as Austin alluded to,
16 the financial-aid office. I allude mental-health
17 awareness.

18 There's just so many things where it's just,
19 like, you're just thrown in the dark.

20 And I agree with Senator Martinez and
21 Senator Mayer, that there needs to be much more of,
22 like, you know, something done in between to help
23 with that transition process, because it's like a
24 pipeline, but it's a leaky pipeline.

25 There's, like, so many people are at risk,

1 you know, and it's, like, where they're being
2 penalized for it.

3 And when you have programs that work, such as
4 ASAP, that's what we should be investing in. Right?
5 We see that that's stopping that. We see that
6 that's creating the opportunity for students to
7 succeed.

8 When you have, like, 63 percent of students
9 that, like, go through ASAP, going on to get a
10 degree, that's retention. Right?

11 It's, like, everybody's, like, oh, my God,
12 like, how are we going to get (indiscernible) -- we
13 got the students. How do we retain them?

14 The answer is here.

15 It's being implemented here.

16 There needs to be more investment into these
17 programs.

18 And if you do that, I guarantee you, that
19 you're not only just helping us out for a year,
20 you're not just helping us out for two years; you're
21 investing in your future.

22 I said this again, last week: The people
23 that sit in these seats when they go to Albany have
24 benefited from this education.

25 This education is so much more expensive now

1 than when everyone that's in office experienced it.

2 So maybe for them, they're seeing it through
3 their lens, but that's a problem.

4 And that's why we need to have more
5 opportunities to speak to you all about these
6 things.

7 We need to be able to let you know that
8 tuition has gone up more than 31 percent.

9 You need to know that, in the past four
10 years, tuition at CUNY has gone up \$800.

11 Right?

12 That's insane.

13 I had one of the -- I work in a school, and a
14 teacher told me that he got his master's degree from
15 Brooklyn College for \$1,000.

16 So why am I paying \$3,500 out of my pocket to
17 pay tuition for an undergraduate degree?

18 [Applause.]

19 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Like, you know, so I think
20 that, like -- like, seeing that disparity --
21 right? -- seeing that change, and it's not like, you
22 know -- it's -- it's -- to my opinion, it's just a
23 no-brainer.

24 You know, I really don't know how to explain
25 it and articulate it in any other words.

1 You know, and I think that the data is there.
2 You guys all see it in all your reports when you get
3 to Albany. You all see it in your district offices.

4 We have an extremely progressive Senate this
5 year.

6 The Assembly, in my opinion, has always been,
7 like, you know, a little bit on the friendly side.

8 But I think that this year is an opportunity
9 for us to do something new.

10 Rent-stabilization laws, great.

11 Dream Act, great.

12 Everything that you did with early-voter reg,
13 great.

14 Now higher education is up next.

15 [Applause.]

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Questions?

17 SENATOR BROOKS: I don't have a question so
18 much as a statement, and some clarity here.

19 I got my college through the state
20 educational system. I worked at night and went to
21 class at day, and I scratched pennies together.

22 And, yeah, it was less expensive than what
23 you see today.

24 I represent some very poor districts.

25 I represent a district, that, when I first

1 got into office, I was asked to go to a scholarship
2 award program, giving scholarships to six students
3 who were graduating and going on to college.

4 The scholarships that they got was a
5 comforter and a set of sheets, and every one of
6 those kids appreciated that.

7 We recognize that many of the students in
8 this state have it tough.

9 And we recognize that state university system
10 is the doorway to their future.

11 When we talk, or when I talked, about what
12 happened with the federal taxes, that's not to shut
13 the door in your face.

14 It's to recognize the difficulties we have.

15 But every single one of us know how critical
16 a college education is.

17 We recognize that people are struggling, and
18 we're trying to find the money.

19 We're not saying no to you.

20 What we're telling you, it's difficult.

21 We're saying, you guys too, can think about
22 ways to reduce the cost of education like we
23 discussed.

24 Making it a little less expensive because we
25 use an electronic book, or you took four classes

1 when you were in high school, that's productive.

2 That takes some of the cost out of education.
3 It lets you get it to where you want to faster than
4 you might otherwise.

5 But make no mistake about it, the people that
6 are sitting up here want you to have the opportunity
7 to get that education. That's why we're here.

8 When we bring up issues that are problems,
9 it's not a no. It's too explain the circumstances
10 we're dealing, and we're looking for alternatives.

11 But without question, the key to the door of
12 your future is in the classrooms and the schools you
13 all represent.

14 When I talked about Farmingdale for the
15 college, Farmingdale, right outside of the college
16 is one of the poorest communities in Suffolk County.

17 Farmingdale College has expanded some
18 programs.

19 When I went there, there were cows walking
20 around the campus.

21 You know, that -- now it's a four-year
22 school.

23 And when I first got in, I sent a letter to
24 the president of the college, you know, for the
25 money, I was able to get a milking machine and a

1 couple of things, just kidding.

2 But it is the future.

3 It does create jobs when we do capital
4 improvements for the people in the area. It creates
5 opportunities for students to go to that.

6 So we recognize that.

7 We're here to support you, but we also have
8 to be honest and let you know some of the challenges
9 that are there.

10 Nobody is trying to take anything away from
11 you.

12 Every one of us is trying to make sure you
13 have the opportunities.

14 And even more importantly, as we start to
15 look toward a cleaner environment, and those
16 industries that are -- can come out of it, the
17 creation of the windmills and rest, for the wind
18 power, and solar energy, those technologies, we want
19 to open those doors to you.

20 The technologies that are going to be needed
21 to clean up the pollutants in our water and other
22 areas, those are opportunities, we need smart people
23 that can move into those roles.

24 So, look, we're not trying to take anything
25 away from you, and we certainly want to listen to

1 your comments.

2 But when we bring up some issues in funding,
3 it's so you understand where we are. We've got to
4 compromise our way through some of these things.

5 But in no way, shape, or form do we want to
6 close opportunities to you for education. We want
7 to open those doors.

8 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Senator, and, firstly, let
9 me just thank you for everything that you've done in
10 your history for education.

11 And I think that, you know, you bring up a
12 very good point.

13 And I think that, you know, our job as
14 student leaders is to put students' voices on the
15 table.

16 And I think that, especially, as, like -- as
17 elected officials, you know, like, you do that for
18 your own constituents as well. And, you know, we
19 put you there to make those decisions.

20 And the reason why we're here isn't to
21 chastise you, because I know you are all great,
22 you're probably great human beings.

23 But -- I mean, you dedicate your life to
24 service. You do what you can for your communities.
25 You have them at heart whenever you go up there to

1 wherever you go in Albany.

2 It's hard -- I mean, a lot of people that go
3 up there, and they come back different people.

4 Right?

5 But I want you all to know that we're here to
6 put those voices on the table. It's not personal,
7 it's not anything against your -- your own
8 integrity.

9 It's just about, like, making you aware of
10 the situation, because if you have this hearing and
11 you only hear from two administrators, and no
12 students show up, then you're just, like, oh,
13 everything's, like, fine.

14 You know, so that's why it's important for us
15 to be here.

16 And I know sometimes, and, honestly, you're
17 going to be hearing some things from some other
18 students as well, that, you know, it's going to
19 be -- it's gonna be a lot.

20 And I think that that's the student voices
21 that are speaking, you know, and it's not -- again,
22 nothing personal.

23 We just really care about our universities.

24 Again, like, I'm second generation at CUNY.

25 And I've seen what my mom has had to go through.

1 She slept on floors, she's had to go through a lot,
2 to get the education that she had.

3 So I understand what you mean when you say
4 you represent a district, one of the poorest
5 districts.

6 I'm from Brownsville.

7 You know, so, you know, Zellnor Myrie, when
8 he was crying when he kind of got that. You know,
9 and it was a lot for me when he came, and I know
10 I didn't say this, but, like, that means a lot for
11 us.

12 Just affordable housing, the fact that that
13 was one of our big wins, that kind of says a lot,
14 the fact that, like, what have we done in the past
15 for affordable housing is a big win now. You know?

16 So I think that, like, just looking at those
17 things.

18 And, also, I'm not sure if Senator Stavisky
19 remembers this, or Shell -- Senator Mayer remembers
20 this, but I had my first interaction with
21 higher-education senators at the education summit,
22 when there was a panel, just like this -- right? --
23 some higher-education people. Senator Stavisky was
24 there in her nice --

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: I remember.

1 TIMOTHY HUNTER: -- always dressed as usual.

2 And I asked a couple of questions via writing
3 because they don't accept any, like -- they
4 didn't -- they weren't doing any questions.

5 So I, like, wrote a question about the TAP
6 gap, like, because I'm still relatively new to
7 student leadership. This was before I was the
8 chairperson of USS.

9 I'm like, what is it that the state Senate is
10 doing to close the TAP gap?

11 And before Senator Stavisky even had a chance
12 to address the question, some, like, associate
13 provost somewhere, from like another university,
14 said, If I were that student leader, then I would be
15 taking a bus and going to Albany and advocating.

16 And everybody is there, like, clapping.

17 But then I look around the room, and there
18 are zero students in the room.

19 This is the education summit at a CUNY school
20 in Baruch, and there are zero students in the room?

21 So I stood up, and Senator Stavisky could
22 attest to that, and I asked that question. I was,
23 like, "Can all the students in the room stand up?"

24 And I kid you not, in a roomful of
25 200 people, one student stood up.

1 And I was, like, If you receive financial
2 aid, can you please sit down?

3 And that one student sat down.

4 So what does that say about us having to show
5 up?

6 You know, and I think that that's just, like,
7 you know, what we need to continue to do, moving
8 forward.

9 And you're going to be seeing a lot of us
10 this year.

11 So, you know, I'm just looking forward to
12 working with you all in the future.

13 [Applause.]

14 SENATOR BROOKS: We should see you, and we
15 should also have an honest discussion with you.

16 And that's what I'm trying to do, not -- not
17 dissuading.

18 Look, I know how important that is. I know
19 what I had to go through.

20 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Understand.

21 SENATOR BROOKS: And I want to make sure you
22 have the opportunity to get that education.

23 TIMOTHY HUNTER: And thank you, Senator.

24 Because we'll move forward, and we'll have
25 these -- you have a lot more conversations to have.

1 There's more students --

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Good.

3 TIMOTHY HUNTER: -- that are here.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: I remember that very well.

5 And if you remember at that so-called
6 "summit," I asked. Where are the folks from public
7 higher education?

8 And they weren't there.

9 TIMOTHY HUNTER: All private.

10 The lady with the -- the lady that said that
11 was (parties cross-talking) --

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: I remember it very well.

13 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Yeah. And thank -- you
14 know, again this is -- this is more important than
15 you -- just you all being here is important.

16 Of course you're going to hear a lot, I mean,
17 but you're elected officials. You probably, like --
18 probably get that every day.

19 So I think that it's important that we kind
20 of, like, make sure this is a conversation that
21 continues to happen.

22 I know Austin is here. I'm here.

23 The students of CUNY and SUNY are behind us.

24 And, you know, we're going to just make sure
25 that, like, you know, we get our voices heard,

1 because, for rent stabilization, those people went
2 up there. They -- they -- you saw all of them, you
3 know.

4 So we have to make sure that that continues
5 to happen frequently, and that our agendas get
6 pushed.

7 And just praying that we're not reactive.

8 Let's not wait for everything to hit the fan
9 for us to start cleaning it up.

10 Let's try to stop it from hitting the fan in
11 the first place.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: And, incidentally, I was
13 not the chair of that panel. I would not have
14 conducted it.

15 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Yeah, I know. Don't worry.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: But I thank you, Timothy,
17 particularly for taking over, unexpectedly, I guess.
18 But you've done a terrific job, and we certainly
19 appreciate it.

20 And, Austin, we've worked together in the
21 past, so I do thank you.

22 And as I said earlier, before you even spoke,
23 I think the students have been the true stars of
24 these hearings.

25 If you notice, in, I think, each case, we had

1 the administrator, and then we -- second, we had the
2 students.

3 And I've always said at the budget hearings,
4 maybe we ought to think about having the students
5 speak first because they're the clients.

6 [Applause.]

7 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Uh-huh.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: And the request was put in
9 by the Senate Conference.

10 We hope to do better -- we're getting better
11 at this, I got to tell you.

12 We're going to be even better next year.

13 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Just one more quick
14 shout-out.

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah.

16 TIMOTHY HUNTER: I mean, again, and I think
17 that --

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Because I want to --

19 TIMOTHY HUNTER: -- yeah, I got you.
20 I apologize.

21 I think that the biggest thing is, it's a
22 team effort. It's always a "we" thing.

23 And I think that the group that's behind me,
24 they woke up early and they came here.

25 So I'd appreciate, like, you know, if you

1 can, and it's not time-sensitive, that you just hear
2 them out, because it means a lot to them that they
3 get to voice their opinions to elected officials.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: And the other point, real
5 quick, is that I think it's crucial that SUNY and
6 CUNY work together, because the mission is very
7 similar. The geography may be different, but it's
8 the mission that counts, and I think you have a
9 common goal here.

10 So we thank you.

11 Senator Gaughran.

12 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: You know, both of you,
13 I just want to compliment you, and thank you for
14 your advocacy, and your brilliance, really, in
15 presenting these issues.

16 And I do have a bunch of questions, but, you
17 know, I think some of them may be answered by some
18 of the other students who are here. And I really
19 want to, you know, get to the other voices, and, you
20 know, some of them talking about, in more detail,
21 some of the struggles that you face, you know,
22 particularly commuting.

23 I know a lot of students, you know, commute,
24 out -- some out of necessity, some because, you
25 know, that's what they want to do.

1 That's a struggle.

2 Mental-health access -- access to mental
3 health I know is a big issue.

4 But I really want to thank you for, you know,
5 speaking up.

6 And I -- in the nine months I've been a
7 senator, I've actually spent a lot of time talking
8 to some students, and, you know, including on the
9 campuses, and I have learned a lot.

10 So, thank you both so much.

11 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Thank you.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Any other?

13 ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRIFFIN: Yes.

14 Yeah, I want to thank you both for being
15 here, Timothy and Austin.

16 I had the pleasure of meeting Austin just a
17 few weeks ago in my office.

18 So thank you for being here, and speaking so
19 eloquently on these many serious issues.

20 Thank you to all the students for being here
21 as well.

22 And I just want to also thank again
23 Senator Stavisky for organizing this hearing.

24 I really -- really agree with, you know,
25 everything you have said, but I just had a couple

1 quick questions.

2 On the mental-health issue, I think that's
3 really, really important and critical.

4 Sadly, and tragically, last year, my -- one
5 of my sons really -- one of his best friends
6 committed suicide as a freshman in college.

7 And, you know, when you said something about
8 the counselors are 1500-to-1 at SUNY, is that what
9 it is now?

10 TIMOTHY HUNTER: No, no. That's a national
11 average.

12 ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRIFFIN: That's the national
13 average?

14 AUSTIN OSTRO: It's a recommendation.

15 ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRIFFIN: Recommendation.

16 So that's -- which is -- that is a -- that's
17 not like many counselors, but that's the
18 recommendation.

19 TIMOTHY HUNTER: And SUNY falls far below
20 that.

21 ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRIFFIN: Right.

22 And -- so SUNY's far -- and CUNY, far below
23 that amount?

24 AUSTIN OSTRO: Yeah.

25 And so SUNY faces unique struggles in this

1 respect. Part of our -- part it is geography.
2 There aren't as many mental-health professionals in
3 certain parts of the state. And it's harder to
4 refer students to off-campus professionals to meet
5 their needs.

6 So I think it's an issue in both.

7 But in SUNY there's that added consequence in
8 some of the rural communities.

9 But, absolutely.

10 So, some of our campuses will have one or two
11 mental-health professionals to serve thousands and
12 thousands of students.

13 And sometimes -- and I've heard, you know,
14 horror stories -- I would call them horror stories,
15 because of the tragic consequences of students who
16 will come to campus with pre-existing mental-health
17 needs. Will request recurring appointments with a
18 mental-health professional. And we said, Great,
19 we'll see you in January.

20 And that's August.

21 That is unacceptable.

22 And, you know, beyond even the most horrible
23 consequences, unaddressed mental-health needs is one
24 of the leading reasons students don't complete on
25 time. Why students need to take time off. Why

1 students go part-time.

2 And given the stringent requirements of
3 Excelsior, and the four-year completion requirement
4 for Pell and TAP, that's not something that most
5 students can do, and then not take on debt.

6 So, we really need to invest in mental health
7 so it can pay off in on-time completion, and not
8 overutilizing other financial-aid programs.

9 TIMOTHY HUNTER: You know, I just want to,
10 like, piggyback off of that.

11 And I think that everyone is always worried
12 about increasing the graduation rate, and I think
13 that only starts by decreasing the dropout rate.

14 And I think that having that conversation
15 around mental health, around, like, you know, again,
16 food insecurities, which can lead to that;

17 Around, you know, adjuncts not paid enough as
18 well, because we believe in fair pay for adjuncts,
19 and I know I speak for all students when I say that,
20 because, if somebody isn't getting paid, you know,
21 reasonably, how do you expect them to come in and
22 educate the next generation of leaders?

23 You know, it's like asking for a lot.

24 You know, it's like giving someone a
25 toothpick and telling them to build a house.

1 You know, it's important that we try to,
2 like, take a look at that as well.

3 But especially around the mental-health
4 aspect, a lot of our students -- and I know in
5 Brooklyn College we heard from Anthony, who's a
6 student that's very involved, but also suffers from
7 a lot of, like, you know, mental health.

8 And I think that they took -- mental
9 problems, and I think that they took his
10 information.

11 But, again, that's being reactive.

12 We are constantly being reactive.

13 This needs to be a proactive conversation.

14 It shouldn't take a crazy "New York Times"
15 article or op-ed to make people invest in mental
16 health in public education.

17 You know, we have guidance counselors in
18 New York City public schools, and that's -- it's a
19 much bigger problem because even the ratio there is
20 crazy, in terms of, like, the ratio of, like,
21 guidance counselors-to-students.

22 And I'm pretty sure a lot of us experience
23 that.

24 So, I mean, that's a nationwide conversation,
25 you know, and I think that that's something that,

1 hopefully, we can try to tie in.

2 And, again, New York needs to be a beacon of
3 progressivism for this whole nation, especially in
4 the times that we're living in now.

5 And I think that it's important that we look
6 at all these things as not, like, crazy or
7 outlandish or radical, but as, like, yes, we can do
8 it. Let's figure out how we can do it. And work
9 with the students to figure out how we can make this
10 benefit them.

11 ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRIFFIN: Right, agreed.

12 And I think we have to look at other ways,
13 not just counselors, but other ways we can support
14 mental health at schools.

15 But one more thing.

16 With the tuition, I do agree, you know, it
17 shouldn't -- obviously, shouldn't keep increasing
18 from when I paid my tuition, till -- to now. It's
19 quite a lot -- quite a lot more expensive.

20 And I also have noticed a lot of the other
21 states have, like -- when my daughter -- when my
22 daughters went to school in Virginia, and their
23 state system is cheaper.

24 And so, you know, in New York, our state
25 system, you know, isn't much more -- isn't so much

1 more to go to another state for school.

2 So I do agree that that should be -- should
3 really be looked at.

4 And one other quick question on the career
5 development.

6 I found that, many years ago, to be lacking
7 in the SUNY system.

8 I found they didn't have enough career
9 development, internships, placement, enough
10 companies that would come to our school for
11 interviews, and all that.

12 A lot more private schools were higher up on
13 that.

14 And I wondered how that is now?

15 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Well, I know Austin can
16 speak for SUNY, but I can definitely talk on behalf
17 for CUNY.

18 I attend a technical college. I go to
19 New York City College of Technology, where we have
20 so many different, like, degree programs that cater
21 to, like, you know, the workforce of tomorrow.

22 We're talking about: Architectural
23 technology. Engineering; civil engineering and
24 mechanical engineering and electrical engineering.
25 Biomedical informatics. Nursing.

1 And I think that even schools like
2 Hostos Community College has now taken a step.

3 And you've seen a lot of different schools
4 now converting into technology-based schools,
5 teaching computer engineering, like, requiring these
6 classes.

7 And I think, again, that's a conversation
8 that New York needs to have, because we need to be
9 churning out the workforce of tomorrow, and the
10 workforce is changing.

11 So we need to be very receptive of that.

12 And in terms of career development, I think
13 it's sad that, for us to develop our careers, we
14 have to all have to, like, be an SGA, or be a
15 president of a club, to gain certain skills that you
16 would think you would want to kind of, like, gain
17 early on.

18 You know, and I think that's a
19 comprehensive-- again, that's another nationwide
20 conversation that needs to happen, as to how we're
21 preparing our students for the workforce, because we
22 cannot expect, you know, like, everyone to get their
23 scholarship, and then you get this, like, bachelor's
24 in, like, let's say, I don't know, psychology. And,
25 like, how can you kind of -- like, no offense to any

1 psychology majors, but how can you get a really,
2 like, high-paying job, and live in New York City, or
3 live in New York State, after that, if you weren't,
4 like, you know, geared towards a career development
5 that could put you on a track to be successful?

6 You know, especially if they're not
7 connecting you to post-secondary education, or if
8 they're having excellence fees and, like, penalizing
9 you for, like, achieving post-secondary education.

10 That's insane.

11 You know, again, like Austin said, we cannot
12 balance the books of public education on the backs
13 of students.

14 That's just, no, we can't do that.

15 AUSTIN OSTRO: So I've been thinking a lot,
16 particularly over the last few months, about
17 Senator Brooks' question of how we make it work,
18 financially.

19 And I think a key part of the answer is
20 tapping into other elements of the budget that tie
21 into SUNY's mission.

22 And a key area is economic development, which
23 there's hundreds of millions of dollars appropriated
24 for.

25 And a lot of our campus presidents, and the

1 chairs of the community college boards of trustees,
2 or chairs of the university councils, serve as the
3 chairs or co-chairs of the regional economic
4 development zones.

5 I'm thinking, on Long Island, of Kevin Law as
6 an example of that.

7 And I think developing those public-private
8 partnerships with universities and colleges in each
9 area, to create applied-learning opportunities, and
10 opportunities to tie into existing sources of
11 revenue to support those applied-learning
12 opportunities, I think is something that SUNY should
13 continue to explore, but I also know that it is
14 already a priority for our chancellor, and it's
15 something that she speaks about pretty extensively,
16 and she's working to foster those partnerships.

17 ASSEMBLYMEMBER GRIFFIN: Okay.

18 Well, thank you very much.

19 I think they're excellent ideas.

20 And thank you both for being here.

21 And, my door is always open for SUNY or CUNY
22 students to visit me at the district office, or also
23 in Albany.

24 Thank you.

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: And let me add that the

1 reason the Governor was in Oswego yesterday, was to,
2 I think it was a 47-million-dollar appropriation for
3 economic development at -- at -- I wish it were
4 capital money or operating aid.

5 But he, and many governors, have felt that,
6 It's really going back to, really, Governor Paterson
7 commissioned a study by the president --
8 then-president of Cornell. And they realized that
9 there's a very important opportunity for this
10 public-private partnership.

11 And that's the future, because the -- in many
12 parts of the state, the community colleges are the
13 largest employer, and they want to incubate and have
14 a place where industry can grow.

15 And, secondly, in terms of the mental-health
16 issue, the Legislature added to the budget a small
17 appropriation for a -- to me it's a lot of money,
18 but in the scope of the budget, it's -- it was
19 \$600,000 for a pilot project, based at Upstate
20 Medical school in Syracuse, for telecommunicating,
21 helping students at CUNY and SUNY -- I guess just
22 SUNY, for dealing with mental-health issues.

23 Assemblymember Epstein.

24 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: I just -- I also
25 want to thank you all for being here.

1 I think this is a story that, it's,
2 unfortunately, for every generation.

3 You know, my dad, single -- he was raised by
4 a single mom; two brothers; only went to college
5 because Brooklyn College was free at the time;
6 worked in the post office; got through college, a
7 CUNY alum.

8 My wife is SUNY and CUNY alum.

9 I think this story is all of our stories.

10 So I think you should know that, and everyone
11 should know that, we are -- we view this as a
12 partnership.

13 We do have a struggle, and I think you both
14 know this, and I hope for all of us know this, is
15 that the way the budget is written is written by the
16 governor. Right?

17 And because of a case, Silver v. Pataki, the
18 governor has exclusive power over the budget to put
19 things in or to take things out.

20 So we are stuck with this situation, where we
21 have what's called -- we end up getting to what's
22 called "table targets," and we're deciding how much
23 money we're allocating per area, and we're kind of
24 hemmed in.

25 So we all need to figure out a pathway for

1 new funding for SUNY and CUNY, and using this
2 partnership as a way forward.

3 Like this year we did for congestion pricing
4 in the MTA, we just mirrored a funding source with
5 the problem that needed to be solved.

6 And I think we really need to be thinking
7 creatively about funding sources for CUNY and SUNY
8 to fill the TAP gap, to talk about capital needs.

9 So I think this is a collaboration we want to
10 be thinking through with you all, and thinking about
11 how we can support you, because, at the end of the
12 day, if we don't do this, it's going to be
13 generations and generations of problems.

14 So just -- just in that frame, knowing that
15 we all have these struggles, what do you think we
16 need to be doing better to communicate with you and
17 to the students about what our struggles are in the
18 Legislature, and how we can then kind of get out of
19 this small-pie mentality?

20 How do we -- you know, because we're all
21 fighting over dollars:

22 How do we expand the pie?

23 How do we talk to people about it?

24 And how do we create a situation where
25 everyone understands, or as many people as who can

1 understand, that we need to really expand
2 opportunities on the capital side and the operations
3 side for CUNY and SUNY, to really invest in higher
4 education?

5 As you both said, if we don't invest, we're
6 done, as a society.

7 TIMOTHY HUNTER: Well, I'm pretty sure that,
8 like, New York State, that's a much bigger
9 conversation for SUNY.

10 But I think that, for both of us, every
11 elected official, if you have a college or any type
12 of post-secondary institution in your district, you
13 should be familiar with the student leadership that
14 is there. Right?

15 Like, student governments all across -- like,
16 there's no institution that changes their leadership
17 every single year, and remains consistent.

18 However, if you can establish a strong
19 relationship with that group of students, you can
20 better articulate to them why things are the way
21 that they are.

22 I mean, we -- we under -- we understand it as
23 well.

24 Like, I imagine, like, I go to my campus, and
25 every single student is asking me about the

1 basketball courts.

2 Even though I know that they're under
3 construction, and I know the constraints that I'm
4 under, they come to me because they think that I'm
5 the answer to everything.

6 And it's like that in every single, like, you
7 know, when you're elected to any position. But you
8 also have to know how to articulate that.

9 And I think that also starts with having
10 conversation with your peers so that we're all on
11 the same page here, because I shouldn't be going to,
12 you know, Assemblymember Epstein and he's telling
13 me, Yeah, don't worry. Like, higher education is my
14 priority, and I'm going to go do this and this and
15 this.

16 And I go to someone else, and they're, like,
17 Meh, I'm not too sure, I'm a little bit shaky.

18 And I think that, again, this is why we elect
19 you in office, this is why we put you in these
20 places, to have these conversations.

21 You know, we run to put our ideas on the
22 table and to bring the student voices to the table.

23 And it's important that we just continue to
24 get that heard.

25 AUSTIN OSTRO: The only thing I want to add

1 to that is, I think explaining that SUNY and CUNY
2 institutions mean more to more people than just the
3 students on those campuses.

4 It's particularly speaking from the SUNY
5 perspective, our campuses are oftentimes the
6 employment and economic hub of their regions,
7 particularly our community colleges that employ
8 hundreds of thousands of people, are educating and
9 training a tremendous percentage of the workforce,
10 and serve as just a community hub for events,
11 concerts, high school graduations, proms sometimes.

12 And they matter to the larger community, so
13 the larger community should be educated on what the
14 asks are for higher ed so they can join us in
15 advocacy.

16 I think part of the reason why K-12 advocacy
17 is so successful is because everyone feels a stake
18 it in, because it's everyone's kids.

19 Higher ed is also everyone's community.

20 Even if you don't have a kid at a SUNY or
21 CUNY right now, or even if you went to a private,
22 it's your community hub. It's the school that's
23 training your employees or your employer. It's the
24 community hub where you'll send your kid for child
25 care or after-school programs.

1 And we need to engaging our alumni and
2 extending community partners, I think, in that
3 advocacy. It's something I know both of us are very
4 committed to doing.

5 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank you.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

7 Thank you for coming.

8 AUSTIN OSTRO: Thank you so much.

9 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Nice job.

10 [Applause.]

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: Great job.

12 We have Frank Frisenda -- if I mispronounce
13 your name, I apologize -- president of the
14 Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers, and
15 Cassandra Murray, adjunct professor at
16 Hunter College.

17 FRANK FRISENDA: Good afternoon,
18 Chairperson Stavisky, honorable members of the
19 Senate, and distinguished staff.

20 My name is Frank Frisenda. I'm a professor
21 in the engineering, physics, technology department,
22 and I am president of the Nassau Community College
23 Federation of Teachers.

24 I have already provided extensive testimony
25 to your office on behalf of SUNY community colleges,

1 and I know that you have heard testimony from other
2 community college leaders.

3 Today I am testifying on behalf of the
4 Nassau Community College Federation of Teachers.

5 Of the 80,000 higher-ed members in NYSUT, the
6 NCCFT has 556 members.

7 I thank you for the opportunity to provide a
8 brief summary today on the cost of public higher
9 education, student accessibility, and student
10 borrowing.

11 Community colleges are open access and
12 educate all types of students. We help to advance
13 social mobility and are located where students live
14 and work.

15 We often collaborate with regional businesses
16 and employers to develop and provide training to
17 address local workforce needs.

18 Nonetheless, a student's ability to attend
19 the public institution of higher education and
20 complete their degree on time depends on a number of
21 factors, many of which involve personal financial
22 resources, coupled with public financial resources,
23 in order to provide academic instruction, student
24 services, and academic support systems.

25 State education law stipulates that the State

1 shall pay 40 percent of the operating costs of our
2 open-access campuses; however, to date, the State
3 has not met this obligation.

4 I blame it on one word, "notwithstanding."

5 In order for our campuses to maintain and
6 enhance academic programming and support systems,
7 State funding needs to be increased, and just as
8 importantly, it must be stabilized.

9 Even though enrollment on some campuses has
10 decreased, operational costs have risen. Reductions
11 in community college enrollments are partly due to a
12 decrease in the high school graduating classes, and
13 to an economy that is doing well.

14 While population projections indicate a
15 continuing decline, we cannot predict economic
16 fortunes within our communities.

17 However, we can predict the importance of
18 higher education and the economic burden that is
19 placed upon our students.

20 This austerity funding model in public higher
21 education has placed mounting student debt upon our
22 most vulnerable students, and placed the colleges in
23 a position whereby we have to rely ever increasingly
24 on adjunct faculty.

25 While there is no question as to the

1 competence of adjunct faculty to deliver quality
2 instruction, there is a marked difference in the
3 value added of full-time faculty before and after
4 class, where our role is critical to student
5 success.

6 This includes office hours, knowledge and
7 participation in campus support services, both to
8 the internal and external college community.

9 Our campuses rely on State funding to offer
10 programs and student services that respond to
11 current and anticipated business and social needs,
12 while also attracting potential students who will be
13 first-generation college students and those that
14 never dreamed that they would be college-bound.

15 In the absence of predictable funding,
16 campuses are forced to raise tuition and/or limit
17 courses and programs which diminish our appeal to
18 future students and local industry.

19 The 2019-20 New York State-enacted budget
20 provided the community college with the greater of
21 100-dollar FTE increase or an established floor of
22 98 percent of the '18-'19 funding level.

23 We appreciate the Legislature's work and
24 continued support in including this language, which
25 is a step to help address issues related to

1 declining enrollment at community colleges.

2 While this year's enacted budget established
3 a funding floor, and, unfortunately, it did not
4 insulate all SUNY community college campuses from
5 enrollment declines.

6 As a result of the current funding model,
7 Nassau Community College will still receive almost
8 \$1 million less in State operating money for the
9 State fiscal year '19-'20.

10 NYSUT continues to advocate for the adoption
11 of a hybrid FTE funding methodology as proposed by
12 SUNY, endorsed by the community college presidents,
13 and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges.

14 During budget negotiations earlier this year,
15 SUNY and NYSUT reached an agreement on statutory
16 language to codify the hybrid methodology.

17 This language in the proposed hybrid
18 methodology would provide SUNY community colleges
19 with a greater level of support, using a three-year
20 average of the FTE dollar amount rather than the
21 current one-year model, to help stabilize the impact
22 of annual enrollment fluctuations and allow us to
23 strategically plan for our future.

24 As a result of the funding deficit, Nassau
25 has increased its annual tuition, which is now

1 \$5600. This is \$435 above the maximum TAP limit of
2 \$5165.

3 We raised this issue, as we expect additional
4 campuses to also start exceeding the TAP limit in
5 the near future.

6 While the law regarding the tuition credit
7 only applies to four-year colleges, it is unclear
8 who will be responsible for covering this difference
9 at the community college level.

10 So as you discuss the TAP gap and how do
11 address this issue, please keep the community
12 colleges in mind.

13 Without funding to address these operational
14 costs, including the TAP gap, EOP, and ASAP, we are
15 endangering student affordability, success, and
16 access to public education, as well as the quality
17 of education they receive.

18 Therefore, a significant State investment is
19 needed to reverse this trend, and to preserve and
20 enhance the quality of education our students
21 receive and need in order to be the educated
22 citizens we need for the future.

23 And, remember, they will be tasked to taking
24 care of all of us in the future.

25 Thank you.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

2 And thank you for adhering to the five-minute
3 clock that's in front of us.

4 CASSANDRA MURRAY: Hi.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: Hi. Thank you.

6 Thank you, Senator Stavisky, for having me,
7 and for all of this, Standing Committee on Higher
8 Education.

9 I was not sure how long I was going to have.

10 CASSANDRA MURRAY: I think I have about
11 five minutes, so, hopefully, that's the case.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: (Inaudible.)

13 CASSANDRA MURRAY: All right.

14 So my name is Cassandra Murray, and I am here
15 to speak about my experience as part-time faculty at
16 CUNY.

17 But I wanted to begin very briefly with a
18 summary of my background as a lifelong New Yorker.

19 I was born and raised in Albany, New York.

20 I attended high school in Upstate New York,
21 and I graduated from SUNY Albany.

22 I then earned an MA in English literature
23 from Hunter College. And I'm now pursuing a
24 doctoral degree in English literature at the CUNY
25 Graduate Center.

1 It is safe to say that I am a staunch
2 supporter of public education and its sociocultural
3 and socioeconomic principles.

4 I am the first in my family to attend
5 college, and I owe my intellectual curiosity and
6 passion to the public-school education I have
7 received, from elementary to graduate school.

8 I am sure you are aware that CUNY, in
9 particular, has a long history of providing for
10 social mobility for students from oppressed
11 populations and the working class.

12 For the past six years I have been dedicated
13 to CUNY's mission, working as an adjunct lecturer at
14 Hunter College where I teach English courses that
15 range from expository writing to human rights and
16 literature.

17 I have also been a doctoral student for the
18 past three years, and I now have a role as both a
19 student and a teacher in CUNY.

20 I am testifying here, along with awesome
21 students that have and will come before you.

22 And I want to thank the CUNY USS for inviting
23 me to share my personal experience.

24 And I'm here to talk about my thoughts on the
25 status of State funding of CUNY, and the dispersal

1 of this budget by administrators.

2 I cannot overstate how the pattern of
3 underfunding by the government, combined with
4 administrative bloat, fails our state's public
5 college students and the teachers who train
6 intensively and work tirelessly to educate them.

7 But before I go on to detail my concerns,
8 I do want to emphasize the countless positive
9 experiences I have had with faculty and students at
10 CUNY. I have learned an immense amount from my
11 professors, and I learn from my own students every
12 time I enter the classroom.

13 But this productivity often seems to occur
14 despite the hardships of teaching and learning at
15 CUNY.

16 There are various issues I could address,
17 including consistently broken, and even dangerous,
18 facilities; insufficient offices, underfunded and
19 completely unfunded learning centers and labs,
20 overcrowded classes, lack of books and supplies,
21 class cancelations, and technological shortfalls,
22 all of which occur as CUNY tuition continues to rise
23 and State funding flatlines, putting costs on the
24 backs of students.

25 But today I am here primarily to discuss how

1 the financial and ethical pitfalls associated with
2 underfunding impact adjunct faculty at CUNY, those
3 of us who work tenaciously day in and day out in the
4 classroom on each campus.

5 I have been committed to teaching in
6 higher ed at CUNY for a long time now, and students
7 tell me on multiple occasions that my work as their
8 instructor has impacted their lives in learning for
9 the better.

10 Sorry.

11 Yet, as I submit this testimony to you, I am
12 on the verge of quitting my job.

13 The State, the City, and the CUNY
14 administration, together, have made it nearly
15 impossible for me to continue on in a meaningful
16 career that I love, because I, literally, cannot
17 afford to survive in the city in which I work, and
18 there appears to be little hope of obtaining a
19 living wage in the future.

20 I currently reside in an apartment with poor
21 living conditions, but I cannot afford to move,
22 given the high rents in New York City.

23 The cost of living, combined with the student
24 loans I have accumulated from attending SUNY and
25 CUNY schools, keeps me up at night and on edge

1 throughout the day; thus, working for CUNY also
2 takes a toll on my physical and mental health.

3 I would like to start a family, but if
4 I can't take care of my own basic needs, how could
5 I responsibly care for a child?

6 This is my personal story, but my colleagues
7 tell me they face the same hardships.

8 Our working conditions prevent us from
9 affording decent housing and child care, cause us
10 exhaustion and health issues, and put our lives on
11 perpetual hold. They also impact our abilities to
12 teach with our full energy and attention.

13 All of this is our reality, even though we
14 work very hard for CUNY and, thus, for New York City
15 and the State.

16 In fact, we the part-time faculty are the
17 majority of the teaching staff at CUNY, and we teach
18 60 percent of the courses throughout the campuses.

19 The adjunct faculty has doubled at CUNY since
20 2000.

21 I spend more than the typical 40-hour
22 full-time job when I combine the time I teach,
23 grade, prep, study, and pursue professional
24 development, all of which is necessary to meet the
25 intellectual demands of working in higher-education

1 instruction, yet I am compensated at a mere rate of
2 \$3500 per semester for a typical three-hour course.

3 To make anything near this amount is, in
4 plain terms, absurd.

5 I should add, that my rate is slightly higher
6 than the starting adjunct rate of 3200 because
7 I have taught at CUNY for six years.

8 Now there is a new tentative CUNY contract,
9 negotiated by-- sorry -- by the PSC, which has been
10 held as historic and as a breakthrough in adjunct
11 pay.

12 I can tell you, after reading over the
13 details, it is clear that adjunct pay remains
14 meager, and that most teaching at CUNY has simply
15 become dead-end jobs.

16 This contract provides no path for eventual
17 full-time employment, and it even takes away the
18 salary steps that have long been in place for
19 adjuncts that have committed years and years to
20 CUNY.

21 Furthermore, it simply just keeps adjuncts in
22 poverty.

23 I cannot help to wonder if those who stand
24 behind this contract do not realize that adjuncts
25 will still not be making a living wage for

1 New York City, even in nearly three years from now
2 when the negotiated \$5500 per course kicks in.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: Can you (inaudible)?

4 CASSANDRA MURRAY: Is my time. Okay.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: (Inaudible) a while ago.

6 (Inaudible.)

7 CASSANDRA MURRAY: Oh, I'm sorry.

8 Okay.

9 So, basically, I will just end with my
10 request, which is:

11 That I call on New York State government and
12 Governor Cuomo, as many people have today, to find
13 the money to do the right thing to pay the teachers
14 who do important work with students at CUNY, the
15 wage that is appropriate to them, which is,
16 according to other wages in the area, somewhere
17 between 7,000 and 11,000 per course.

18 And we are being offered far less than that
19 in three years from now.

20 Thank you.

21 [Applause.]

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

23 Sorry to --

24 CASSANDRA MURRAY: No, I'm sorry.

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- okay.

1 CASSANDRA MURRAY: I write, and I tend to
2 write too much.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: Obviously, in English
4 (inaudible).

5 CASSANDRA MURRAY: Yes, I'm sorry.
6 Thank you for your time.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: Does anybody have any
8 questions?

9 Then we thank you.

10 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Thank you very much.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you very much for
12 coming.

13 And we have Dr. Frederick Kowal, the
14 president of UUP, and we thank you for coming to all
15 of the previous hearings.

16 He is being joined by Carolyn Kube, the
17 Stony Brook Health Center -- Health Science Center
18 UUP;

19 Vicki Janik, chapter president at Farmingdale
20 UUP;

21 And, Edward Quinn, chapter president,
22 Stony Brook West Campus UUP.

23 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Thank you,
24 Senator Stavisky --

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you (inaudible) all

1 of us here.

2 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yes.

3 -- Senator Brooks; Senator --

4 Assemblyman Epstein, I just gave you a promotion.

5 And, also, I think it was very, very
6 productive for me to have traveled to all of the
7 hearings thus far.

8 And, also, that legislators were able to hear
9 from a wide spectrum of voices from individuals
10 within our teaching and professional ranks at SUNY.

11 My name is Dr. Fred Kowal. I'm the
12 president of UUP, with 37,000 members, the largest
13 higher-education unit in the country.

14 I would like to -- as a matter of fact, you
15 have my written testimony. And I have tried to mix
16 it up as I've gone along, to focus on different
17 issues.

18 And I would like to do the same thing today,
19 and actually reflect a bit on what I have heard
20 today, but also over the previous four hearings.

21 First and foremost, I think, once again,
22 I guess I would echo what I have heard stated about
23 the students.

24 The success rates that we heard from the SUNY
25 administrators owe so much to the work that students

1 put in.

2 In my 28 years of teaching in SUNY, I have
3 seen the incredible dedication of students to their
4 own education.

5 But I think we also need to recognize the
6 incredible work of our faculty and staff, who, with
7 fewer and fewer resources, put in more and more
8 work, and, are able to get students to succeed in
9 somewhat more trying circumstances, financially,
10 than in the past.

11 I would, second, also like to acknowledge the
12 words of Dr. Butts, and in at previous hearings,
13 Dr. Stanley, the president of Oswego, and
14 Dr. Christianson [sic], the president at
15 New Paltz, who pointed out the deep need for funding
16 at the campuses.

17 I am hopeful we will hear strong words like
18 that spoken by the chancellor and the leadership of
19 SUNY because that's really where it needs to come
20 from as well.

21 Third: There was mention made about the
22 Educational Opportunity Program, which I think is
23 necessary and relevant, because EOP succeeds unlike
24 any other program of its kind in the nation.

25 We have proposed, along the lines of where

1 Speaker Heastie has been since he became speaker,
2 and that is, that the Educational Opportunity
3 Program should be doubled in funding and in
4 staffing.

5 Because of the staff of EOP, you get those
6 tremendous graduation rates that they have among
7 students who otherwise would not be able to attend
8 SUNY.

9 Fourth: As you will hear from Carolyn Kube
10 about the situation at Stony Brook Hospital, the
11 hospitals, again today, except for a question from a
12 senator, were unmentioned.

13 And this is a serious problem.

14 There needs to be advocacy by SUNY for these
15 hospitals.

16 They are the "people's hospitals," as we are
17 beginning to refer to them, and they are unique
18 teaching institutions and health-care institutions
19 where amazing research takes place.

20 And so you will hear from Carolyn about the
21 situation at Stony Brook, and how vital the
22 institution is, but, also, about the funding
23 shortfalls, and how the hospital and its services
24 have been harmed.

25 Finally, we did have some questions about the

1 greening of SUNY, which I believe is a relevant
2 topic for discussion.

3 We intend to propose a whole battery of steps
4 that we believe SUNY needs to take in order to be
5 the institution that leads New York towards real
6 solutions to the climate crisis, including expanding
7 degree programs, including putting guideposts on
8 capital investment, so that the most stringent of
9 energy-use standards are put in place, anticipating
10 what will be required by the new legislation in, you
11 know, 2040.

12 Also, I think it's imperative that the SUNY
13 campuses be carbon neutral, not by 2040, by 2025,
14 whether it be through extensive investment, which it
15 may take, but also, perhaps, with some innovative
16 ideas, like, a carbon trading system among the
17 campuses.

18 And I think what is needed, again, is
19 thinking outside the box.

20 And we did hear a little of that when the
21 issue of financing came up, and I think that's what
22 we need to do, collectively.

23 We look forward, again, as we have for years
24 now, to working with our friends in the Legislature,
25 with the student groups, working with them as well,

1 to get the best possible educational environment.

2 But again, more than that, SUNY is the
3 guidepost, and can be the institution, that leads
4 the way to making New York State, once again, the
5 most progressive, the most advanced, and the --
6 really, the bellwether for the rest of the country.

7 Once again, thank you all for the hearings.

8 And thank you, Senator Stavisky, for your
9 traveling as, well for all these hearings.

10 CAROLYN KUBE: I'm Carolyn Kube. I'm from
11 Stony Brook HSE. I'm the UUP chapter president.

12 I've worked at Stony Brook for 30 years.

13 When I'm not chapter president, I'm the --
14 I work in the tissue-typing laboratory that supports
15 both the kidney and bone marrow transplants programs
16 at the hospital.

17 I also have two daughters that attend SUNY;
18 one Brockport, one Old Westbury.

19 So -- and I am a SUNY graduate.

20 So, SUNY is near and dear to my heart.

21 I thank you for your support, and continued
22 support.

23 And I thank you, Senator Stavisky, for having
24 these hearings so that we can all tell our stories,
25 and educate you to our particular institutions, and

1 what we need from you to be sustainable and go
2 forward.

3 Stony Brook Medicine is -- my chapter
4 I represent, the employees at Stony Brook Medicine.
5 And I represent, not just the hospital, Stony Brook
6 University Hospital, but the Renaissance School of
7 Medicine, the schools of nursing, health technology
8 and management, school of welfare, school of dental
9 medicine, and the Long Island vets home. And that
10 comprises approximately 5,000 members.

11 I'm the biggest chapter in the SUNY system in
12 UUP.

13 My members are physicians, dentists,
14 professors, researchers, nurses, technologists of
15 all sorts of specialties, managers, and professional
16 staff.

17 Stony Brook Medicine is comprised of: The
18 university hospital. Long Island State Vet Home,
19 which I already mentioned. South Hampton Hospital
20 now. We have affiliated with Long Island Eastern
21 Hospital. And we're working on an affiliation with
22 now-Long Island Community Hospital, Phase 2, which
23 is aka Brookhaven Memorial.

24 We have a co-med specialty center.

25 We just had a ribbon-cutting on our

1 children's hospital, and opening our cancer center
2 in the MART building on November 7th.

3 We have the Carol Baldwin Breast Cancer
4 Center, and the ambulatory care center.

5 So, it is easy to see how Stony Brook
6 Medicine is a major economic engine in
7 Suffolk County, it's a major employer in
8 Suffolk County.

9 The hospital itself, Stony Brook Hospital, is
10 a tertiary-care hospital, which means it has -- it
11 does things that the community hospitals can't do or
12 don't do. We're a Level I trauma center.

13 We house the burn unit.

14 The next closest burn unit is in New York
15 Hospital Presbyterian in the city.

16 And we have a comprehensive psychiatric ER,
17 called CPAP, that's in joint with the County.

18 We also have a comprehensive stroke unit,
19 and, now, two mobile stroke units that can -- that
20 are actually housed on Long Island Expressway, and
21 can treat stroke patients at the point that they
22 pick them up.

23 So they're a specialized ambulance that --
24 and this treatment is invaluable to the quality of
25 life after a stroke. Sometimes they prevent any

1 damage from the stroke at all.

2 So this just highlights some of the
3 extraordinary medicine that happens at Stony Brook
4 Medicine.

5 We also are a training facility.

6 We have -- we train 500 medical students,
7 700 residents and fellows, 250 dentists, 3,000 other
8 health-care providers.

9 And I have to do a shout-out, even though
10 Senator LaValle is not here, athletic trainers.

11 He was instrumental in saving that program
12 that was deactivated. So I really am thankful to
13 that.

14 And as you have heard from others, all of
15 those students stay in New York.

16 A lot of them stay on Long Island and live
17 here, and continue to work here, and work even for
18 Stony Brook. And we're very proud of that.

19 So not only do we train the next generation
20 of health-care providers, but we also are mitigating
21 the health-care profession shortage in
22 New York State.

23 And as Fred Kowal, the president, said, that
24 we are a "people hospital," a safety-net hospital, a
25 public hospital.

1 Our mission is to treat the uninsured and
2 underinsured of our county.

3 And I was very happy to hear that
4 President Butts pointed out that there is a lot of
5 poverty out in the Hamptons. It's not as affluent
6 as a lot of people think Long Island is, especially
7 Suffolk County.

8 So when we care for those individuals, we put
9 out services that are not reimbursed for, so we have
10 to incur and carry that debt.

11 And that's why it's critical that we get the
12 operational funds or the hospital subsidy for those
13 services. It's not sustainable for us to carry all
14 that debt and continue to provide these services.

15 And, also, I wanted to point out that the
16 state academic medical centers, not just
17 Stony Brook, but upstate and downstate, all have to
18 cover the contractual increases and the benefits'
19 cost of our employees at the hospital out of their
20 revenues.

21 And that is not how it happens at the
22 State-operated campuses. They get a subsidy, they
23 get operating funds, that we do not get.

24 So it is necessary to restore that
25 \$87 million to the budget that was zeroed out last

1 year, so that they can close the gap between the
2 rising health-care costs and the rising costs of
3 employee benefits.

4 For that, Stony Brook's is 35 million.

5 They also must carry their own debt service,
6 which is about 15 million.

7 So even with the 35 million, they're a good
8 10 million in the red.

9 They don't op -- State-operated hospitals
10 don't not run on large margins, their margins are
11 very small. So whenever any kind of funding is
12 withdrawn, they can go into a deficit.

13 For example, with the DSH money, when it was
14 paid late, Stony Brook immediately went into a
15 30-million-dollar deficit.

16 And our DSH funding is about 150 million.

17 And we would also urge you to continue, make
18 sure, that the funding continues at the rate that
19 it's at, and it's paid on time, because it's vital
20 to the hospital.

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: It's time.

22 CAROLYN KUBE: (Nods head.) Okay.

23 We heard this yesterday from upstate too.

24 Yes.

25 VICKI JANIK: Thank you for giving us the

1 opportunity to speak about our outstanding
2 university system.

3 My name is Vicki Janik, and I'm a teacher at
4 Farmingdale State College, with the rank of
5 distinguished teaching professor. And I also serve
6 as the chapter president for United University
7 Professions.

8 I'm a SUNY grad, just like Carolyn, and so
9 are my four children. So we have great stake in the
10 university.

11 I have found great satisfaction in my
12 32 years being affiliated with the university and
13 with Farmingdale State College.

14 Farmingdale enjoys an excellent location, as
15 you know, sitting almost directly on the border of
16 the Nassau, Suffolk, counties. It also enjoys an
17 ever-increasing enrollment, having almost doubled in
18 the past two decades, thanks to its outstanding
19 staff and to its valuable academic programs.

20 However, Farmingdale State College has
21 three growing challenges as we see it.

22 First: The college is increasingly staffed
23 by part-time faculty and staff.

24 You heard about this before, of course.

25 But at Farmingdale, of the 827 academic

1 faculty members, part-time academics comprise almost
2 exactly twice the number of full-time staff; that
3 means 67 percent of the staff.

4 That's the highest percentage in all of SUNY,
5 except Empire State, 24 percent, I believe, above
6 the average.

7 It's growing, but that's why it's growing,
8 because we have such staff.

9 Second: Farmingdale needs greater financial
10 support for many areas of technology, including:

11 Solar and wind-power initiatives, of which we
12 have many;

13 For its unique aviation program, which is
14 unique in SUNY, and, also, it's the largest aviation
15 program in the northeast;

16 And its highly successful nursing program,
17 which often has 100 percent credentialing pass rate
18 when the students graduate. So that's very
19 impressive.

20 Finally: The overall pay at Farmingdale lags
21 far behind what it should, far beyond regional
22 medians.

23 For example, last year, we calculated that
24 there were only 48 employees among the total number
25 of employees on the campus, over 1200, that includes

1 administration, only 48 employees earned the stated
2 median family income of Nassau County.

3 So, unless Farmingdale staff members enjoy a
4 second job, or, unless there's another wage-earner
5 in the house, or, unless they have a wonderful
6 inheritance, it means almost all 1200-plus employees
7 who work there have a standard of living that is
8 below the county family minimum. That's full-time
9 too.

10 Part-time academics, however, a great and
11 talented group of people, the majority of our
12 teaching staff, are in a far worse position.

13 So since 2014, or even before, lecturers have
14 continued to be hired at the standard stagnant rate
15 of \$2754.45, and that's for four months of work for
16 a three-credit course that often has 40-plus
17 students.

18 After 12 years, if they're very lucky and
19 they get three promotions, they will earn a top pay
20 of \$3532.05.

21 We've calculated how much they would -- how
22 many of our staff would be able to qualify for SNAP
23 support/food stamp.

24 So we're looking at adjunct professors, too,
25 in the equally opportunity center, who teach

1 adjunct, they teach non-credit courses. And their
2 hourly wage currently is only three-fifths -- that's
3 three-fifths -- of what the other adjuncts earn on
4 campus.

5 And among our part-time professionals, those
6 people who have professional responsibilities
7 outside of teaching, many of them earn an hourly
8 wage of about \$20 an hour, which, by the way, is
9 comparable to what I read about in "News Day."

10 That's \$19.15, which, according to
11 "News Day," is the average hourly wage of a
12 Long Island babysitter.

13 So we have people earning around 20.

14 That, by the way, would be a babysitter with
15 two children.

16 Now, Farmingdale college, as you know, serves
17 a densely-populated, economically-vibrant, and
18 highly-educated region of New York State.

19 We surely think that the college mission,
20 which is unique, implemented by an outstanding
21 staff, must be sufficiently funded in order to grow
22 the campus, the region, and, particularly, our
23 students' success.

24 So thank you.

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

1 And now we have...

2 I lost the list.

3 EDWARD QUINN: Hi. My name is Ed Quinn. I'm
4 the --

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: Look, I was looking at
6 your testimony.

7 We have, Edward Quinn, chapter president,
8 Stony Brook West Campus of UUP.

9 EDWARD QUINN: -- yes.

10 UUP chapter president of the West Campus
11 would also include South Hampton campus, and it's
12 the west campus because it's on the west side of
13 Nichols Road.

14 And I want to thank you also for being here
15 and setting up these hearings.

16 I think it's really important to hear from
17 constituents of the campuses, especially the
18 students, the faculty, and the staff.

19 I represent about 2500 faculty and staff on
20 the campus.

21 And my day job is, I work in the theater arts
22 department, as well as the art department.

23 So, I've been there for 37 years.

24 And I'm also a graduate of SUNY, both earned
25 my bachelor's and master's degree.

1 So I have a lot invested in SUNY.

2 But, the flat budgets over the years have
3 really taken a toll on our campus in a couple
4 different areas.

5 One is about the infrastructure.

6 Our buildings are aging, and the maintenance
7 has been deferred, and so we have, constantly,
8 either floods or roofs that leak.

9 It's not uncommon to see a blue tarp catching
10 water so it doesn't go down on the floor, to
11 redirect it.

12 So that's one thing that really has had a
13 really negative effect, because we have less rooms
14 to schedule classes because they're not usable.

15 The other thing that I wanted to just let you
16 know is the cost increase to students.

17 For our students, the tuition, since 2008,
18 has gone up 63 percent. But, also, it's the fees
19 that really, you know, add to the cost, which went
20 up 113 percent.

21 And there's similar percentages for the
22 graduate students. Actually, the fees are a little
23 bit higher.

24 So those numbers make -- don't really make it
25 affordable for students because the financial

1 packages haven't been keeping up pace with that
2 increase. So they have to go out and get loans,
3 which makes it really hard for them to go and be
4 affordable to go to school, as well as to live in
5 the area, which is not cheap.

6 The other thing that this budget, over the
7 last 10 years, has had an effect on is the academic
8 programs.

9 There's been closing of programs, as well as
10 consolidation of programs.

11 There is, also, they have a hiring freeze
12 over the last couple of years, so positions go
13 unfilled. And they also have let go adjuncts across
14 the campus, but more in humanities and arts.

15 So what happens is, the full-time people have
16 to take up what the part-time people were doing, and
17 so they get added duties.

18 The staff people have to pick up what
19 positions stay vacant, so they get more duties.

20 And, eventually, this affects the students
21 because you're not able to provide the services they
22 need.

23 So that's an increased workload, and I see
24 them come through our union office all the time with
25 that happening to them.

1 So what we need is, really, adequate funding
2 for SUNY.

3 We need to make it so we can fix the
4 buildings, so that it's a safe environment for the
5 students to learn and for our faculty staff to work.

6 We need money to offer courses that are
7 taught by qualified faculty, and also so students
8 can get the courses they need to graduate, because,
9 right now, they're not able to do that.

10 And we need to invest in SUNY because it will
11 invest in the local economy.

12 The impact of Stony Brook was just looked at
13 and reported by "News Day," that the local impact
14 was \$7.23 billion, and it supported 54,637 jobs.

15 So that's a big impact for our local economy.

16 So, I want to thank the Committee, actually,
17 because I know they've been supporters for higher --
18 public higher education all these years, and we
19 really appreciate your advocacy for us, and I know
20 you will continue to do that.

21 But, we really need to put "public" back in
22 public higher education.

23 Thank you.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

25 And for the record, I have met extensively

1 with the folks at Stony Brook, the administration.

2 I was out there about three weeks ago.

3 I've been there before.

4 But I've met in my district office, and in
5 Albany, on -- and they're really saying the same
6 thing, perhaps from a different perspective, but
7 I think you have a commonality of interest, and
8 particularly in terms of the SUNY, the health-care
9 systems, because this affects downstate,
10 Stony Brook, and upstate.

11 And Buffalo has an academic center without
12 the hospitals.

13 But I know that all of the hospitals are in
14 the red, the debt service.

15 These are all issues that we're very aware
16 of, and...

17 Senator Gaughran.

18 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Yes.

19 Mr. Quinn, could you elaborate on the
20 programs you say that, over the last 10 years, have
21 been, I guess, eliminated?

22 EDWARD QUINN: Well, the program that I work
23 in, the theater arts program, has been downgraded to
24 a minor, so we no longer accept people as majors.
25 We graduated our last major in the spring.

1 There was -- comparative literature was also.

2 And the Hispanic languages were, you know, on
3 the -- on -- combined -- foreign languages were
4 combined.

5 So it was mostly the writing program. The --
6 writing and (indiscernible) program was downsized.

7 So there's been, also, different graduate
8 degrees that have been eliminated in different
9 areas.

10 So we used to have two graduate degrees in
11 theater arts. Now we have a minor.

12 CAROLYN KUBE: And the -- the program on --
13 graduate program for rehabilitation science was
14 deactivated on my side.

15 I was able to save the athletic training
16 program.

17 But also the health administration program
18 was cut, but it was moved.

19 And what is happening, is that they are
20 telling the departments they have to be sustainable
21 within themselves.

22 So, especially the school of health
23 technology and management had a huge deficit of
24 \$6 million. They are now telling that -- that
25 school that they have to maintain.

1 So, basically, they have to bring in the
2 number of students and generate the tuition enough
3 to pay for the program. And if they don't continue
4 to do that, programs will be deactivated or
5 downsized.

6 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Thank you very much.

7 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Can I ask --

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Sure.

9 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: -- can I ask,
10 just -- with this downsizing, what impact that is
11 having on students, and students won't being able to
12 get classes so they can graduate on time?

13 And wondering what impact it has on the staff
14 to -- you know, programs that they've been working
15 in?

16 So we would love hear more about that and the
17 implications.

18 EDWARD QUINN: So what they wanted us to do
19 is offer more sections of a course to fill
20 university requirements, but not hire people to
21 teach those.

22 So the effect has basically been, we no
23 longer do theater productions for the students to
24 learn about theater productions.

25 We went from four and a half staff, down to

1 two.

2 What happens with that is, also, that we're
3 not able to offer the different lab sections for
4 courses.

5 And, also, in the administration of different
6 departments, it's been constantly adding
7 responsibilities onto staff that they don't really
8 have the background for.

9 So, for instance, in the library, somebody
10 was hired as a cataloger. And they've taken that
11 person off of cataloging, and doing purchasing. And
12 so the person that is no longer doing the
13 cataloging, the other people have to pick up that
14 work.

15 So there's -- it's been a couple of years
16 where people have been picking up extra duties and
17 not getting compensated for it.

18 And it shows, when the students need help,
19 either getting a course or registering for courses,
20 or, for working with the graduate school so that get
21 what they need, you know, from the graduate school.

22 It kind of the puts the students out on their
23 own, rather than the staff and the faculty to be
24 able to help them.

25 It's led to less advising to students.

1 So it's really having a compound effect, and
2 it doesn't look like it's going to stop anytime
3 soon.

4 CAROLYN KUBE: And it's very devastating when
5 their program gets deactivated and they're told
6 they're going to teach out the program.

7 They feel let down by the university.

8 They feel like they pay their tuition, and
9 they come to class, and then, all of a sudden, they
10 don't have a program to go to.

11 And the athletic trainers, they were
12 fantastic. They wrote letters in support of the
13 program, and really rallied, and got alum back to
14 keep that program up and running.

15 But they lost faculty in the interim.

16 They non-renewed two of the faculty, that
17 they didn't rescind the renewals until like the last
18 moment.

19 Kept people on edge. They didn't know if
20 they should go interview for jobs or if they should
21 stay.

22 So -- and all during that they had to do a
23 whole accreditation package to get the master's
24 program up and running.

25 It's extremely stressful.

1 They're putting in tremendous hours, 60-plus
2 hours a week, to save their programs and keep their
3 programs running.

4 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: And, you know, I just
5 want to remind people, that this is at Stony Brook,
6 one of our other priorities is transparency in terms
7 of the spending by the campus foundations.

8 Stony Brook University has the second-largest
9 foundation -- campus foundation. Somewhere around
10 four hundred, five hundred million dollars in that
11 foundation, which was created to serve the academic
12 mission of the university.

13 I would hope that, should legislation that
14 brings about transparency pass, we would know that,
15 in fact, these campus foundations are being used to
16 support the academic missions at a time when the
17 State money is not there and we have programs being
18 canceled or curtailed.

19 It is particularly frustrating for us in UUP
20 to see what we consider to be one of the wealthiest
21 campuses, when you include the foundation, you know,
22 retrenching our people, non-renewing our people,
23 curtailing programs.

24 It does beg the question, where is the money
25 going?

1 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Just to be clear, so
2 you've had students who wanted -- needed classes to
3 graduate, but couldn't get those classes because
4 they weren't being offered anymore.

5 And have you heard from students about what
6 that impact is having on them, to be able to
7 graduate on time, to be able to pay ongoing costs,
8 all those issues that --

9 CAROLYN KUBE: Well, students will actually
10 transfer.

11 Some of the students transferred out of the
12 program because they weren't sure that they were
13 going to be able to graduate on time.

14 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yeah, and it is a -- and
15 it's a systemic case.

16 It started to hit my home campus at
17 Cobleskill, you know, seven, eight years ago. And
18 at that point, what would happen is, students would
19 see that courses weren't offered as many times, and
20 so it didn't match up with their schedule.

21 And so, you know, you get to your senior
22 year, second semester, you need a course, it's not
23 being offered, you have to extend your time out.

24 That leads to higher costs, and then,
25 potentially, more debt for the students.

1 EDWARD QUINN: One other program that did get
2 totally cut was the sustainability program, and that
3 just went away. And they kind of dispersed the
4 students to other departments. They didn't even
5 teach it out.

6 And so, you know, with all the environmental
7 type of things, that you would think that that would
8 be a program that they would want to continue, and,
9 you know, to train new people to go into that field,
10 and to, you know, be innovative about how we can do,
11 you know, more green things, more sustainable
12 things, more energy-efficient things.

13 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: And just -- I have
14 just one request.

15 That, you know, we've heard these, you know,
16 really, you know, dedicated students.

17 And love to see a lot of coordination between
18 UUP and the students to, as you come to Albany,
19 because you're basically asking for exactly the same
20 thing from different perspectives.

21 And it would be great to see that
22 coordination, like we've seen today with CUNY and
23 SUNY, so we're all, hopefully, marching together.

24 CAROLYN KUBE: Absolutely, yep.

25 VICKI JANIK: I might mention, too, you were

1 talking about graduation rates, and people not
2 getting sufficient time -- having sufficient time.

3 We have had a problem, because of so many
4 adjuncts, we don't have enough people to do the
5 advisement for students.

6 And sometimes someone will try to help them,
7 a secretary, perhaps, and they end up taking the
8 wrong courses, and that then extends their stay at
9 the college.

10 So the idea of having so many part-time
11 people, even though you're not cutting programs,
12 means that the students are simply not going to get
13 the services that they need to graduate on time.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you very much for
15 coming.

16 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Thank you.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: We have next:

18 Bryce Mack, the president of Nassau Community
19 College Student Government;

20 Shaheer Khan, president, Stony Brook Student
21 Government;

22 Enrique Peña, USS delegate from
23 Queens College, which is in my district;

24 Sakia Fletcher from student government,
25 president, at Medgar Evers;

1 Ethan Milich, USS delegate from
2 Brooklyn College;

3 And, Andres Aguirre -- I mispronounced --
4 I apologize for mispronouncing -- from -- a
5 Baruch College student;

6 And, Corrinne Greene, a Brooklyn college
7 student.

8 Thank you all.

9 And since we're at the home of
10 Nassau Community College, Bruce [sic].

11 BRYCE MACK: Good afternoon.

12 My name is Bryce Avery Mack.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Bruce [sic], I'm sorry.

14 BRYCE MACK: That's okay.

15 Good afternoon.

16 My name is Bryce Avery Mack, and I am the
17 president of the Student Government Association here
18 at Nassau Community College.

19 I am also the vice chair of community
20 colleges for the SUNY Student Assembly.

21 SUNY assay is the collective
22 student-government organization that represents
23 1.4 million students across the state university
24 system.

25 I'd like the thank Chair Stavisky and the

1 rest of the high-ranking officials here for allowing
2 me to speak.

3 This not only allows me to share my story,
4 but many others as well.

5 The lack of funding for higher education is
6 atrocious.

7 It not only affects me, but the people
8 sitting at this table, the people in the crowd,
9 faculty members, and the students all across
10 New York State.

11 Now, the State has a lot of reasons on why
12 they don't have higher education on the top of their
13 priority list, but no matter what the reason is, we
14 get the short end of the stick and we all suffer the
15 consequences.

16 Now, I would talk about the TAP gap, and all
17 the issues it causes, but we all know that.

18 So I'm going swing the pendulum to the
19 community college funding model.

20 For those who do not know, the community
21 college funding model is, one-third is funded by the
22 State, one-third is funded by the county, and
23 one-third is funded by the students.

24 Unfortunately, the students are paying the
25 highest percentage while the county and State are

1 paying the bare minimum.

2 What this means is that, community colleges
3 can't afford for any decrease in enrollment.

4 For those who do not know, community college
5 enrollment has dropped more than 5 percent.

6 Now, there are a lot of reasons for, like,
7 the economy is doing extremely well, so high school
8 students are going straight into the workforce.

9 But, an important reason, is that there's a
10 decrease in quality of life, and that isn't just for
11 community colleges. For four-year institutions for
12 both SUNY and CUNY as well.

13 When I first enrolled here in
14 Nassau Community College, I saw a sign on campus
15 that said, "Nassau Community College, where success
16 begins."

17 And that isn't just for my institution, but
18 all community colleges across the state.

19 But these schools can't uphold this message
20 if the State doesn't intervene and help.

21 There are buildings now falling apart, as you
22 see above us, classrooms with mold, elevators that
23 constantly get stuck.

24 There are students who don't get the proper
25 exposure to essential resources, like Title IX

1 offices, counseling centers, food pantries,
2 children's day-care centers.

3 I could go on and on.

4 This is so unfortunate, and our students
5 don't deserve this.

6 Tuition has risen almost every year, and our
7 families and students can't handle it.

8 We are currently on Long Island, one of the
9 most expensive places to live in the entire country.

10 We are in an area where a lot of families
11 have to decide whether they want to pay for
12 lighting, or food; if they want to pay for their gas
13 bill or their water bill.

14 We are in an area where a lot of families
15 have to decide if they have enough money to pay for
16 their classes or not.

17 Now, I'm not bashing Long Island, I love
18 living here, but, we must be realistic.

19 Students and families shouldn't face the hard
20 decision on whether college is worth it or not due
21 to the cost.

22 I've had friends who dropped out of college
23 because financial aid said they have a good enough
24 income.

25 So they didn't get a lot of assistance.

1 My friends could barely buy food, but they
2 said they had a good enough income.

3 Mothers and fathers shouldn't have to tell
4 their children they aren't eating tonight because
5 they just paid their child's tuition bill.

6 Our youth and our families are struggling,
7 and they do not deserve this.

8 I'm going to end my testimony on this
9 statement:

10 I am supported by my mother and my
11 grandmother -- they're in the crowd behind me --
12 and, I love them to death.

13 They are the ones who told me to enroll into
14 community college.

15 They are the ones who always have my back
16 24/7.

17 They are the ones who make sure I continue to
18 pursue my dream of being in public office like
19 yourselves.

20 But instead of them sitting back and watching
21 me graduate this semester, they had to face one of
22 the hardest situations in New York State:
23 Homelessness.

24 My family and I were homeless for two months,
25 and we had to live in a hotel.

1 All the money we had went into that hotel.

2 Everything my mother earned went into the
3 hotel.

4 Everything I earned went into the hotel.

5 My grandma is a stroke victim.

6 I am a Type-1 diabetic.

7 So making sure we weren't outside was a top
8 priority.

9 I had to make a GoFundMe page because we used
10 all of our money. We had nothing left.

11 There were times we had to make the same hard
12 decisions I spoke about earlier.

13 Pay for my college tech books, or go by
14 groceries.

15 Pay for my college textbooks, or buy medical
16 supplies so I won't go into diabetic coma.

17 There were times when we couldn't pay for
18 food or those textbooks because all the money went
19 into that hotel.

20 If it wasn't for my school food pantry,
21 I wouldn't be sitting here. I would be passed out
22 somewhere, or maybe dead.

23 I would never wish homelessness on anyone.

24 I am one of the lucky ones, I survived.

25 But the reality is, I am not the only student

1 who has, is, or will be homeless.

2 If you do not properly fund higher education,
3 that same food pantry that helped feed my family
4 won't adequately feed another student.

5 If you do not properly fund higher education,
6 CUNY and SUNY institutions won't be able to shape
7 the future leaders of tomorrow.

8 If you do not properly fund higher education,
9 dreams will die.

10 Education is a right, not a privilege, so
11 please start treating it that way.

12 Thank you.

13 [Applause.]

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

15 Next on my list is Shaheer Khan from
16 Stony Brook.

17 SHAHEER KHAN: Thank you, Senator Stavisky.

18 Before I start, I'd just like to thank Bryce
19 again for, you know, sharing your story.

20 And what you've -- what you've, you know,
21 brought to this table today is a reality for
22 thousands, hundreds of thousands, of students all
23 across New York State.

24 So, again, thank you so much for being able
25 to talk to us about this.

1 Thank you, Senator Stavisky, and thank you to
2 the Committee, for allowing to us the opportunity to
3 testify today.

4 My name is Shaheer Khan. I'm a political
5 science major at Stony Brook University.

6 One day, as many of us here today, probably,
7 would like to be on the other side of the panel.

8 But I come to you today as the president of
9 Stony Brook University's Undergraduate Student
10 Government, and an affiliate of the SUNY Student
11 Assembly.

12 Day to day at Stony Brook I represent over
13 17,000 undergraduate students.

14 Like you all, I'm in a position where my
15 constituents elected me.

16 And like your constituents do, students come
17 and express their concerns about their student
18 experiences and their academic experiences.

19 Now, it's undisputed that New York State
20 tuition -- that tuition for SUNY, and more
21 specifically, Stony Brook University, is among the
22 lowest in the nation; however, it does not negate
23 the fact that students are still paying thousands of
24 dollars at a highly-competitive research
25 institution.

1 So when my fellow students/my constituents
2 come and tell me that their -- tell me their
3 concerns, that they feel like they're not receiving
4 the full worth of their money, you know, I think,
5 like, how is this happening?

6 Why are we not meeting the demands of our
7 students?

8 And it perturbs me that students feel like
9 they're paying more for less services.

10 It's an inarguable fact that SUNY has -- that
11 the State has to make sure that SUNY tuition rates
12 remain low, you know, with tens of billions of
13 dollars being pumped into New York State's economy
14 through, you know, SUNY systems and CUNY systems.

15 It -- it -- it is a necessity, to make sure
16 that we still have students comfortable enough, you
17 know, with -- with -- with the right amount of
18 financial support, to be able to go attend, you
19 know, higher-education institutions.

20 That affordable tuition is as an incentive,
21 but it can't happen without the State stepping into
22 its role and providing more aid.

23 You know, one of the largest issues, as we've
24 been talking about today, is the TAP gap, and, you
25 know, it's costing SUNY and CUNY hundreds of

1 millions of dollars, and we feel the impact.

2 Students deal and suffer the direct
3 consequences of that TAP gap.

4 For example, we'll look at the difference
5 between support services that we have, you know,
6 specifically in Stony Brook University.

7 Counseling and psychological services is,
8 undoubtedly, a life-saving resource on campus.

9 With many of our students being
10 first-generation students and international students
11 coming into a higher-education field like
12 Stony Brook University is one that is very intense.

13 And being able to adjust to a climate like
14 that can bring about, you know, emotional distress
15 to a lot of students.

16 I was one of those students.

17 It is not acceptable for a student to have to
18 wait three weeks to be able to make an appointment, and
19 once that appointment is made, there's no guarantee
20 how long it will take for the student to actually
21 receive, you know, mental-health counseling.

22 For a lot of people, three weeks is too long.

23 And that is an issue.

24 That is a life-saving service that could be
25 receiving funding, that we could have more

1 mental-health professionals, but we don't.

2 You know, similarly, we look at the aging
3 infrastructure at Stony Brook University, you know,
4 where -- where -- where (indiscernible) holes,
5 dorms, and study spaces, these are all spaces on a
6 campus that should be up to date.

7 How are students expected to stay up to date
8 in a fast-changing world, filled with new
9 technologies, updated classrooms, and laboratories,
10 when our own infrastructure is outdated?

11 How will we compete in the current market?

12 How will we able to distinguish ourselves
13 from the other universities across the state, and
14 internationally?

15 These are the facts that need to be
16 considered.

17 So, you know, I'd like to urge you, please,
18 when it -- when it -- when it comes to funding, you
19 know, and expanding aid programs across New York
20 State, you know, it really have does make sure that
21 students like us, we are better equipped with, you
22 know, the quality of education and student services
23 that address the backgrounds and needs of all
24 students.

25 Thank you for taking the time to listen to us

1 testify today.

2 And thank you for traveling around New York
3 State, and, you know, having to deal with this
4 every -- you know, every couple weeks.

5 We appreciate it, and we do hope that the
6 stories we shared today leave an impact on you all.

7 Thank you.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Hi. Enrique Peña from
9 Queens College.

10 ENRIQUE PEÑA: Is that okay? Or -- no?

11 Okay.

12 All right, much better.

13 Okay.

14 So, good afternoon, Senators.

15 My name is Enrique Peña. I'm a student from
16 Queens College, and I'm a USS delegate.

17 I'm a Dreamer, and a proud New Yorker, as
18 anyone else in this room.

19 I came from Peru in 2016.

20 I have been active in my community since the
21 day I enrolled in high school in Queens in February
22 of 2016. And I did not stop even after I graduated
23 in June 2017.

24 I understand the importance of education, and
25 even more among my fellow Dreamers that came to this

1 country facing the biggest hardships just to get an
2 opportunity.

3 That's why I'm studying political science,
4 and plan to go to law school afterwards, just
5 because I understand the struggles we're facing.
6 And I want to be that support I wished as a student.

7 And, well, because of that, I also keep going
8 to my old high school to help those students.

9 It's an international school, so most of the
10 students are immigrants. A part of them are
11 Dreamers.

12 And I just know, that if they came all the
13 way here for an education, they should have it.

14 To reply to Senator Kaplan that already left,
15 I am heartbroken to say that we are letting down the
16 promise of the American Dream that we pursued when
17 coming here.

18 I was in Albany when the DREAM Act was
19 passed, and I felt that would make a difference;
20 however, in order to qualify, students should have
21 attended high school for a minimum of two years.

22 And as I mentioned earlier, I was in school
23 for a year and a half, so, I did not qualify.

24 This unnecessary, ridged requirement has
25 created a barrier for me to attend CUNY, which has

1 been, time after time, touted as the most affordable
2 college/university in the nation.

3 But if you're a Dreamer who, for some reason,
4 does not qualify for the DREAM Act, like myself,
5 then CUNY is not affordable by any means.

6 While I did not qualify for the DREAM Act,
7 most of my friends did, so I tried to remain
8 positive about it.

9 I called them that same day that I was in
10 Albany, and I just told them, please apply to this.
11 Like, there is a chance.

12 And I went to that school, I sat down with
13 them, I helped them with their applications.

14 And today, November 1st, most of them are
15 still waiting for an answer.

16 They couldn't enroll this semester because
17 they don't have the money.

18 So I will like to echo the ideas I haven't
19 mentioned before:

20 To command that legislators to be bold in our
21 fight to fund higher education because the current
22 system does not work for us.

23 Our students demand that we seek a path for
24 free CUNY.

25 With that said, I would like to thank

1 Senator Gounardes, that I thought he will be here,
2 but, hopefully, he sees this, for introducing the
3 bill, S5255, which would codify free public school
4 from K-to-12, in addition to CUNY and SUNY. And
5 he's on the right side of history.

6 It will require a lot of hard work, but
7 I want to let you all know that thousands of
8 students, organizers like myself, throughout CUNY
9 will fight for this bill.

10 Senator Stavisky, we hope that you will
11 co-sponsor that bill.

12 We are grateful that you're championing that
13 TAP gap.

14 The TAP gap is a State-created issue.

15 We're just paying for the -- for the price of
16 years of inaction.

17 I'm sorry, enough is enough.

18 We want a free, fully-funded CUNY.

19 To quote the Peruvian (indiscernible):

20 (Speaking in Spanish.)

21 To know more is to be more free.

22 The freedom is an inherent right of ours as
23 human beings.

24 So is education.

25 CUNY was free for most of its history when it

1 was a White minority institution, and only began
2 charging tuition when people like me entered.

3 If it was possible for an institution to
4 remain free and functional during the
5 Great Depression, we can afford to bring it back in
6 our current situation.

7 But we need to fund higher education.

8 We need to beg the Committee to start
9 prioritizing this strategy, not just by asking for
10 scraps, like, fill in the TAP gap, not just by
11 providing a tuition freeze, because that does not
12 solve the problem of students that cannot afford
13 that price in the first place.

14 We want to eliminate tuitions,
15 Senator Stavisky.

16 And please be that bold, progressive leader
17 CUNY students need.

18 Thank you.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: I have not seen the bill,
20 that's why (inaudible).

21 ENRIQUE PEÑA: Thank you.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: We will take a look.

23 And, tuition was free until 1974.

24 ENRIQUE PEÑA: (Inaudible.)

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: But I -- okay, next --

1 Thank you.

2 [Applause.]

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: Next we have
4 Sakia Fletcher, the student government president at
5 Medgar Evers.

6 SAKIA FLETCHER: Hello.

7 Thank you, Senator.

8 You said my name perfect.

9 Usually -- yes, she said it perfect. I was
10 laughing.

11 First and foremost, I just want to thank all
12 the Senators and elected officials just for staying,
13 and for being here and really hearing out the
14 students.

15 I'm on a mission today.

16 I have -- I'm chair head -- I'm spearheading
17 a campaign, and that campaign is "Save Medgar Evers
18 College."

19 I know everyone is looking around, looking
20 puzzled, like, what is, who is, Medgar Evers
21 College? We have never heard of it.

22 So just to get you guys up to speed:

23 Medgar Evers College is a college located --
24 a senior four-year college located in
25 Central Brooklyn. It is part of CUNY.

1 It is unique in its -- it is unique because
2 it's one of -- it's maybe the only HBCUs.

3 It's not officially an HBCU, but we call it a
4 "PBI," which is a predominantly Black institution.

5 It was an institution that was founded by the
6 community within Central Brooklyn, because,
7 minority, people of color, at the time, did not have
8 a place, or, was refused by other colleges that they
9 weren't accepted to.

10 So this college is very unique in its
11 construct. It's very unique in the population.

12 So just to give you some background
13 information:

14 So, Medgar Evers College is 6,701 students.

15 Out of that population you have 65 percent
16 that is full-time.

17 98 percent of the student body is Black or
18 identify as African-American.

19 88 percent of those students receive
20 financial aid.

21 72 percent are female.

22 28 percent are male.

23 And 51 percent are full-time working
24 individuals.

25 Also, it's very interesting in its construct

1 because, there's 18.3 percent are over the age of
2 30, and between the ages of 30 to 34 years old.

3 So we have a large population of full-time
4 working females that are championing and running
5 their households, single-parent/single-mother
6 households.

7 And so, in this campaign, and I would love
8 you -- I urge you guys to get along, and to come
9 along in this campaign of "Save Medgar Evers
10 College."

11 So, right now, the current conditions at
12 Medgar Evers College are threatening to undermine
13 the mission of the college.

14 It is for that reason that I, Sakia Fletcher,
15 the current Medgar Evers College Student Government
16 Association President, urge this New York State
17 Higher Education Committee to help save Medgar Evers
18 College.

19 You must help to save this college right now.

20 This institution is vital to higher
21 education.

22 It is a pillar of educational, economic,
23 cultural, and social empowerment for the
24 Central Brooklyn community and the higher -- and
25 the -- New York State and New York City at large.

1 This college is a PBI, which is a
2 predominantly Black institution, and serves the
3 mostly female, poverty-stricken, disenfranchised
4 student body.

5 The students at my college are in need of the
6 most resources, but actually receive the least.

7 So I have six things -- I wanted to highlight
8 six real key pieces and key components that will
9 save my college.

10 So one is: A resignation of the current
11 Medgar Evers College president, Rudolph Crew, and
12 the provost, and their executive staff.

13 Two: New academic infrastructure buildings.

14 So right now, we're the only higher-education
15 college that occupy portable dormitories for
16 classrooms.

17 So what is "portable dormitories"?

18 They're trailers.

19 So these trailers were built 20 years ago as
20 a temporary fix to not having space.

21 We actually share those portables with the
22 high school next door, the Medgar Evers College
23 Preparatory High School.

24 So you have probably from our school,
25 6,000-and-something students, plus the population of

1 high school students, that share these portables
2 each and every day.

3 Also, so we want -- we're advocating, and we
4 would love to you to get onboard to advocate, for
5 removal of these portables.

6 Also, capital funding for new infrastructure.

7 Senator, you highlighted, and I think the
8 previous panels highlighted, the need of new
9 infrastructure.

10 My college suffers from a lack of space.

11 We don't have the space to accommodate the
12 current population of students.

13 So what happens is, that students either
14 transfer out, or are not able to continue their
15 education, or, we have a situation where we're
16 looking for empty classrooms.

17 So we -- so they don't get an opportunity to
18 offer as much classes as they would like to at
19 certain amount of times, because they don't have the
20 space for this.

21 So that's -- it's a -- it's a real problem,
22 that we don't have the academic -- the
23 infrastructure to support a growing population of
24 students who want to receive a higher education, and
25 who are in the need of this education, because it's

1 to improve their socioeconomic status.

2 And, also, so, the importance of this --
3 I can read this from this all I want.

4 I know it, because I go to college every day.

5 I know it, because I experience this every
6 day.

7 So the importance of saving Medgar Evers
8 College is something that myself, a single mother,
9 I'm a food-stamp recipient, I receive also public
10 assistance. I'm a Bronx-born resident. I come from
11 a background, where -- from a single-mother
12 background.

13 But every day, I go to school, and I go to
14 school in a college, that I love Medgar Evers
15 College.

16 Why do I love it?

17 I love it because it's the institution
18 where I get to really see professors, as
19 Assemblyman Epstein, one of the --
20 Greg Mayers [ph.], who is very instrumental, he
21 is a graduate of Medgar Evers College.

22 And it's instrumental to me because I get to
23 see male and females from my background that
24 actually made it, that are working.

25 You have, Diana Richardson, who is an

1 assemblywoman, she's a graduate of Medgar Evers
2 College also, that have come up through Medgar Evers
3 College, and have worked hard, who are prominent
4 figures in the state of New York, who also donate
5 their time to society, making society a greater
6 place.

7 So my college is great, but, we need the
8 resources.

9 And the issue is, is that we have -- we have
10 the issue that is happening at my college is unequal
11 distribution of resources, especially for a
12 community and a college that needs them the most.

13 City Tech just received a new building.

14 York College just received a new building.

15 We haven't received a building since almost
16 2008.

17 So it's very important when it comes to equal
18 distribution of resources across the board.

19 Thank you very much.

20 [Applause.]

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

22 Next we have Ethan --

23 ETHAN MILICH: Hello.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- Milich? Close?

25 ETHAN MILICH: Yes.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay.

2 ETHAN MILICH: (Indiscernible) actually.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: From USS Brooklyn College.

4 ETHAN MILICH: Yes.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: United Student Center.

6 ETHAN MILICH: Yes.

7 Okay, so, hello, members of the Senate Higher
8 Education Committee, and Assemblyman.

9 My name is Ethan Milich. I'm a
10 Brooklyn College student, a delegate to the
11 university student senate, and I'm also a
12 United States military veteran.

13 Thank you for hearing our concerns today and
14 giving us this opportunity to speak.

15 So today I'm not here to talk about the lack
16 of affordability, the closing of the TAP gap, or
17 even the maintenance of effort bill.

18 Instead, as a representative of CUNY
19 students, I'm here to talk about what a majority of
20 our student constituents have expressed is the most
21 important -- is their most important demand, which
22 is free CUNY.

23 So I'd like to first -- well, sorry. One
24 second.

25 Sorry, one moment.

1 I'd like to talk -- like, echo what Enrique
2 said about, and, basically, ask that legislators,
3 particularly Senator Stavisky, be bold, creative,
4 and open to new ideas when thinking about how to
5 fully fund and support higher education.

6 So one bold idea that has been proposed is
7 Senate Bill S5255, like Enrique was talking about,
8 sponsored by Senator Andrew Gounardes, calling for
9 an amendment to our New York State Constitution,
10 making quality public education, from pre-K through
11 college, considered a right for all and not a
12 privilege for a few.

13 So the New York State Constitution is one of
14 the most powerful and significant constitutions in
15 the nation.

16 It codifies the creation of SUNY.

17 It includes an environmental protection for
18 our state parks.

19 We have a safety net for the
20 economically-disadvantaged, including access to
21 housing.

22 And we even have an equal-protection clause
23 prohibiting discrimination.

24 These are all rights that we as New Yorkers
25 have agreed on.

1 I am here today to let the Senate Higher
2 Education Committee know that millions of
3 New Yorkers believe that quality higher education is
4 also a right.

5 So I'd also -- I'd also like to ask for the
6 Senate Higher Education Committee to support
7 Senator Salazar and Senator Gounardes in their
8 attempt to create legislation that would provide
9 a dramatic increase in funding to (1) hire an
10 increased number of full-time faculty, advisors,
11 and counselors, (2) fill the TAP gap that will
12 eat up \$80 million of CUNY's budget this year,
13 (3) significantly increase the capital budget of
14 CUNY to address its soaring number of students over
15 the past decade, and the decade -- and the decay of
16 facilities, and (4) offer every student who attends
17 CUNY a tuition-free, quality higher education.

18 We are now calling on the Senate Higher
19 Education Committee to push for the State of
20 New York to lead the nation toward a constitutional
21 amendment, guaranteeing pre-K through college public
22 education for all.

23 And we now call on this Committee to take the
24 lead on pushing for full funding for quality higher
25 education, both for SUNY and CUNY.

1 These are two long-term solutions for
2 enhancing and preserving higher education
3 New York -- in New York.

4 So please champion these bold, progressive
5 efforts, and continue New York's reputation of
6 leading the nation in a bold and progressive way.

7 Thank you.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: For the record, that is a
9 constitutional amendment, not a bill.

10 And, secondly, it is not in my committee.

11 ETHAN MILICH: Hmm. Okay.

12 There is a bill introduced by Senator Andrew
13 Gounardes? (Parties cross-talking) --

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes, it was introduced.

15 And a number of us have been discussing this
16 issue.

17 I don't want to be any more specific.

18 We understand, and we've been discussing how
19 best to accomplish that.

20 But the bill is in the Judiciary Committee,
21 which I do not chair.

22 And constitutional amendments take a long
23 time.

24 [Laughter.]

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: I'm more -- I do want

1 short-term, but I want long-term. But we also need
2 a short-term resolution as well.

3 You know, with all due respect, some things
4 can be deferred.

5 This is not one of them.

6 Education, students are here for a brief
7 period, and we have to resolve that issue now,
8 I think.

9 We have Andres Aguirre --

10 Help me.

11 ANDRES AGUIRRE: (Inaudible.)

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay. I apologize.

13 -- from Baruch College.

14 ANDRES AGUIRRE: Thank you, Senator.

15 I come to you from an institution ranked
16 number one in social mobility over universities,
17 including Howard, UConn, and UNC.

18 I come to you from an institution that is one
19 of the most diverse, not only in socioeconomics, but
20 in culture, not only in the nation, but in the
21 world.

22 That being said, I also come to you from an
23 institution which is continually overlooked within
24 our state's budget.

25 The city and state universities of New York

1 are a haven for cultivating change for hundreds of
2 thousands of students worldwide.

3 A CUNY or SUNY education propels an
4 economically-disadvantaged person, or even family,
5 up to economic levels they had before believed
6 impossible to attain.

7 That was the case for me.

8 I was raised by a single mother in a small
9 town in Queens.

10 She came to the United States from Ecuador in
11 1989, and benefited from the CUNY system, studying
12 at Queens College while pursuing her master's in
13 education.

14 She raised me on a teacher's salary, a
15 gargantuan feat by itself.

16 Once it was time for me to go to college,
17 I knew that even just a CUNY tuition would put a
18 heavy strain on us financially.

19 If it weren't for a scholarship, my loans
20 would now be creeping around \$10,000 in my third
21 semester.

22 My college experience has been a wonderful
23 and rewarding one.

24 I wouldn't -- I would even wish this
25 experience on my greatest enemy.

1 And Baruch is great, but it's not perfect.

2 Students in the so-called "greatest public
3 university system in the world" should not have to
4 deal with hour-long lines just to get into class,
5 because the elevators are partially or fully shut
6 down day after day.

7 Additionally, when students and faculty like
8 make running jokes about the asbestos in one of our
9 buildings, it should ring at least some alarms.

10 Funding our public higher-education systems
11 is an invaluable resource that serves to exactly do
12 what I believe you have been aiming to do since your
13 election: Improve your communities and better the
14 lives of the constituents that you represent.

15 Many will tout, the progress made by programs
16 like TAP and the Excelsior Scholarship is a sign
17 that what we are being given is good enough.

18 If progress is being made, then this must
19 serve as motivation to continue until everyone
20 facing financial barriers who wants to go to college
21 can.

22 Making college truly free for many more of
23 our students by closing our TAP gap is a step in the
24 right direction.

25 I would prefer to say this in the presence of

1 Senator Brooks or Senator LaValle, but if New York
2 can afford to pump \$7 billion more in their budget
3 than they did last year, I'm sure we can find a way
4 to afford the TAP gap.

5 Let's make the challenge and privilege of a
6 college education a right.

7 Thank you.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

9 [Applause.]

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: And we have
11 Corrinne Greene, a Brooklyn College student.

12 CORRINNE GREENE: Thank you very much.

13 I'd like to articulate the broader issues
14 through some personal narrative, through my own case
15 study, as a Brooklyn College student and a student
16 activist, which has come at a great cost to my own
17 financial situation, and my mental health, as it has
18 for others sitting at this table, that I have
19 personally witnessed.

20 You know, we got up this morning at 10 a.m.
21 and got on a bus. And we've been sitting here now,
22 it's 4:30 in the afternoon.

23 And, personally, I will graduate
24 Brooklyn College with over \$60,000 in student debt,
25 most of that private.

1 I'm a fourth-generation public
2 higher-education student.

3 My parents are educators.

4 My dad is a faculty member at SUNY Buffalo
5 State, and some of his testimony is included if you
6 have a moment to look over it.

7 And I have been privy through that
8 experience, as well as my own, to witnessing the
9 disinvestment that has been going on, particularly
10 in the last 10 years.

11 The CUNY and SUNY system that exists now is
12 not the CUNY and SUNY system that existed 10 years
13 ago, or when any of you were in college, or even
14 5 years ago, and that needs to be very, very
15 explicitly acknowledged.

16 This is not the same CUNY and SUNY.

17 This is not the same institution that has
18 served millions upon millions.

19 The statistic was floated earlier: One-third
20 of all college-educated residents of New York went
21 to SUNY or CUNY.

22 That is staggering.

23 According to CUNY's own financial-aid
24 formula, which is recognized by the federal
25 government and used on the FAFSA, the expected

1 yearly cost of attendance at my campus,
2 Brooklyn College, for someone living off-campus, is
3 just shy of \$30,000.

4 I am not aware of any program, or combination
5 of programs, in New York State that covers that,
6 acknowledged by the university system, cost of
7 attendance.

8 It simply does not exist.

9 Though the Governor apparently acknowledges
10 that, based on my family's income, I need, you know,
11 money from the Excelsior program, because
12 I transferred from a private institution I could not
13 afford and took a semester off, I get nothing from
14 the Excelsior program.

15 Furthermore, even if I was eligible, I suffer
16 with ADHD and anxiety, and there are not a lot of
17 resources on my own campus. And that's forced me to
18 take part-time credit loads certain semesters.

19 So the only financial-aid assistance I get is
20 loans that I have to repay.

21 Again, most of my loans are to cover housing
22 costs in New York City.

23 Further, as one of the two female students
24 that you have heard from today, I just want to also
25 identify that Title IX is woefully underfunded, and

1 that there is not a single student residence hall in
2 the entire borough of Brooklyn.

3 And that when our schools are forced to rely
4 on private partnerships, students are being taking
5 advantage of.

6 And that's happened at the Brooklyn College
7 Residence Hall, where their contract is being
8 prematurely ended because students have been
9 sexually assaulted there, with no Title IX coverage.

10 And I'd be happy to discuss that more at some
11 point.

12 If you call the Brooklyn College
13 financial-aid office right now, you will hear a
14 message that -- a pre-recorded message that says,
15 "We do not have information about the Excelsior
16 scholarship. Please refer to the HESC website."

17 That's, you know, very indicative of the lack
18 of resources.

19 According to the provost of Brooklyn College,
20 33 faculty -- new faculty full-time lines were
21 requested for this year.

22 11 were granted.

23 And the 33 requested, that was a very
24 conservative ask.

25 These are very needed positions.

1 I've had multiple semesters, actually two,
2 where every single faculty member that I was
3 enrolled in their course, was an adjunct faculty
4 member.

5 That quality of the education is great, and
6 I love CUNY, but it makes mentorship and sustained
7 relationships and letters of reference very, very
8 difficult, as well as office hours.

9 Just, it's -- it's -- it's not fair to either
10 the faculty members or the students in their
11 classes.

12 Infrastructure:

13 Brooklyn College is known as
14 "Brokelynn College."

15 If you Google us, that comes right up on the
16 "New York Post."

17 I encourage to you follow Brooklyn College
18 Instagram, and then companion Twitter accounts,
19 "Shitty College of New York" and "Toilets of
20 Hunter College," where you can see documentation of
21 what is far past the point of a maintenance of
22 effort.

23 And in considering the rise in enrollment,
24 after all of these years of deferred maintenance, a
25 rise in enrollment with flat funding is,

1 effectively, a very, very severe cut.

2 Simply put, in the last 10 years, tuition
3 fees have risen approximately 80 percent, when State
4 funding used to cover the majority of the operating
5 costs.

6 I'd like to echo the sentiments that were
7 said at the Brooklyn hearing, which is that we are
8 no longer in a public institution.

9 We are, essentially, in a private institution
10 that is receiving some public funding.

11 70 percent of the operating costs are on the
12 backs of student tuition, and only 30 percent is
13 provided by the State.

14 That's absolutely unacceptable.

15 In a nutshell, those are the figures that you
16 need to resolve.

17 Historically, that has not been the case.

18 A public institution does not rely 70 percent
19 on student tuition money.

20 Finally, just to wrap up:

21 You know, our student activity fees, our
22 student governments, have routinely had to, or
23 elected to, pay for things that should be covered
24 by, you know, State funding, in terms of new
25 equipment for our gym, new water fountains, new, you

1 know, classroom chairs, white boards.

2 That is absolutely unacceptable.

3 That is absolutely unacceptable.

4 And even as a student who comes from a
5 middle-class family, my dad is paying off his own
6 student loans as a SUNY faculty member.

7 So not funding a faculty contract, it is all
8 intersectional, it all comes back.

9 As a child of a faculty member, my student
10 debt is directly correlated to the working
11 conditions of my parents, to the working conditions
12 of my educators.

13 This is a truly intersectional issue.

14 And, finally, I just want to leave you with:

15 This is a racial justice issue, as you heard
16 specifically with the TAP gap, just (indiscernible)
17 student populations.

18 The Title IX issues, and not having safe,
19 affordable student housing, and student debt,
20 generally, disproportionately affect female
21 students.

22 And, this is a labor issue.

23 For any representative who claims to be a
24 progressive, or not, I argue you this is not a
25 partisan issue.

1 New York State has reliably funded higher
2 education. Through The Depression, it was,
3 literally, free.

4 New York State should not be a state, when
5 Tennessee is providing free community college, when
6 Tennessee is providing free community college,
7 New York State has, literally, no excuse.

8 One of the only things my Reagan-supporting
9 grandparents and I can agree upon, is that our
10 taxpayer money should be going to fully fund
11 affordable, quality, equitable, higher education in
12 New York State.

13 We need advocacy.

14 If you claim that you cannot, or if some
15 claim, that there is not enough money, we need to be
16 creative with our revenue resources.

17 We need to look at why we are comfortable
18 offering Amazon billions of dollars, but we are not
19 comfortable returning to free public higher
20 education in New York.

21 This is about moral courage, but it's also
22 about priorities.

23 This is one of the most intersectional issues
24 that there can possibly be.

25 And the time for very vocal advocacy, the

1 time for making this a talking point, the time for
2 making this on the forefront of New York values,
3 because it has been for so long, it is not partisan.

4 It is now, and we need your advocacy, we need
5 your voice.

6 Thank you.

7 [Applause.]

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

9 That -- anybody have any questions?

10 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Yes.

11 I just want to really honor all your stories
12 today because I think it was so impactful to hear
13 you all.

14 And to know that, I know, with my colleagues
15 that were here, that we're with you, doesn't mean
16 we're going to get it done. But we're going to be
17 up there fighting. And we're excited to be in this
18 fight with you.

19 We can't guarantee our success, but I can
20 guarantee our interest.

21 And, for Andres, since Baruch is in my
22 district, thank you for making the effort, and all
23 of you to make the effort, to come out here, and to
24 tell your stories.

25 And we need to continue to do this together,

1 because that's the only way we're going to get it
2 done.

3 So, thank you.

4 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: And I just want to echo
5 that.

6 You know, thank you.

7 Your stories are important, they're
8 meaningful.

9 We will take them back.

10 This is being live-streamed.

11 And, you know, we -- I'm sure we're going do
12 not to hear from you, because I think each and every
13 one of you will probably be coming up to Albany, or
14 coming to our offices.

15 And, Shaheer, I was a political science
16 student at Stony Brook too.

17 So, it's a great place.

18 And I'm, you know, so happy all of you came
19 here to speak up today.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

21 And we -- we will -- we have been your
22 voices, your leadership has indicated. And we're
23 going to continue.

24 At the Brooklyn College hearing, we tried to
25 explain some of the constraints, and one is a court

1 decision, about 10 years ago, where the Legislature
2 cannot add to the Governor's expenses in the
3 Governor's preliminary budget request.

4 We are restricted.

5 We tried to override vetoes, and we were --
6 it was declared unconstitutional.

7 That was the Silver v. Pataki case, that was
8 discussed, I think by Senator Jackson. I mentioned
9 it at the Brooklyn College hearing.

10 So we're going to do the best, we have been
11 doing the best, we can.

12 And this has to be a joint effort with the
13 entire higher-education community, to highlight the
14 need.

15 And I think the stories I've heard today, and
16 on other campuses, have really been very compelling.

17 And, with all due respect to the
18 administrators and the faculty, and I said it
19 earlier, you're our clients.

20 Okay?

21 Well, we thank you.

22 [Applause.]

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: We have Vincent Gatto,
24 NYPIRG, Nassau Community College.

25 VINCENT GATTO: Hello.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: We have one more speaker
2 after Vincent, but, if you can give us a few more
3 minutes?

4 Thank you.

5 VINCENT GATTO: Yes, yes.

6 Hello.

7 Thank you very much, Senator Stavisky, for
8 holding this hearing.

9 Good afternoon.

10 My name is Vincent Gatto. I'm a member the
11 New York Public Interest Research Group, and a
12 student here at Nassau Community College.

13 Like many other students here on campus,
14 I came to Nassau because of financial troubles at
15 home, and looking out for myself down the road.

16 I feel blessed that I have such a wonderful
17 community here today, and I'll be speaking on behalf
18 NYPIRG.

19 We thank you for holding this hearing.

20 So, let's jump in.

21 NYPIRG urges the Legislature to enhance
22 funding to CUNY and SUNY because of including
23 mandatory costs for its base funding equations, to
24 help students get the classes they need to graduate,
25 reduce class size, and bolster student advisement.

1 This current erosion of State support and
2 growing funding gap has turned into an erosion of
3 student services and quality education.

4 Close friends, and myself included, have
5 experienced firsthand:

6 Difficulty of getting into classes we need to
7 graduate;

8 Limited services, such as the library hours
9 and advisement gaps, that have been talked about
10 greatly at lengths at today's hearings, across the
11 CUNY and SUNY system.

12 SUNY system have already made students late
13 in transferring.

14 Several friends of mine had issues enrolling
15 in classes they needed to finish a degree because of
16 the lack of funds to even hold these classes.

17 To think that our state is one of the largest
18 public-university budgets in the country, and
19 students cannot graduate because classes were
20 canceled because of funding issues, is quite
21 astonishing.

22 My friend Louisa [ph.] Garcia told me, quote,
23 Due to the budget issues, this school does not have
24 all the classes I will need to graduate, and I will
25 be behind in transferring schools.

1 Not only will she be behind in transferring,
2 but she will be late in starting her life, and,
3 subsequently, her career as well, a sad reality for
4 a state which prides itself in the amazing resources
5 for education.

6 Personally, I've had classes I needed for my
7 degree outright canceled, because the only professor
8 teaching it was already teaching six that one
9 semester.

10 This had made me waste valuable money in
11 other classes, just to be considered a full-time
12 student.

13 And, you know, college kids are already
14 stingy enough. You throw in extra classes, it
15 doesn't lead to a good day.

16 For a majority of last semester I worked two
17 jobs, both 10 hours each (indiscernible), plus a
18 14-hour course load, you can already assume how much
19 sleep I got, and what that does to the body.

20 And one hospital trip later, you start to
21 question it all.

22 And these are questions no student should
23 ever have to ask themselves.

24 NYPIRG urges the Legislature to freeze all
25 tuition rates at SUNY and CUNY colleges to protect

1 college affordability.

2 Currently, financial programs are falling
3 short and students are falling through the cracks.

4 Now, yes, financial-aid programs do exist,
5 helping lower- and middle-income students, but
6 restricted eligibility requirements, highly
7 inflexible award schedules, and small budgets are
8 hamstringing the support these programs are able to
9 provide, and students are paying the price.

10 Sounds like an easy fix, because it is.

11 As you've been talking about all through this
12 hearing, reforming the TAP gap is such an easy
13 solution.

14 It has funded over a billion dollars for
15 2019-2020 school years, but it must be reformed for
16 the twenty-first-century student.

17 In order to ensure on-time graduation a
18 student must take 30 credits per year.

19 Because of the limited financial options for
20 summer and winter courses, this puts on-time
21 graduation in jeopardy, again, putting fellow
22 citizens behind in their respective careers and
23 beginning their adult lives, a reality no student
24 should to have confront.

25 NYPIRG urges the Legislature to support an

1 increase in State aid to offset the cost of
2 attending community colleges.

3 Community colleges (indiscernible) do a great
4 job of serving the community's needs.

5 As you've heard from my president, Bryce, our
6 work of the NEST on campus, our veterans services on
7 campus, and our mental-health (indiscernible) on
8 campus, are amazing for students.

9 And might I offer, are pretty unique in a
10 plethora of nighttime classes we offer.

11 I have a great number of friends who take the
12 online classes, and it's such a help for them in
13 their life and what they need.

14 We boast a large population of part-time
15 students as well, as Dr. Williams mentioned earlier,
16 42 percent of our population.

17 And as many of these part-timers are either
18 here not by choice or work full-time, they are
19 trying to make their life better through higher
20 education.

21 A fellow peer of my mine,
22 John (indiscernible), said that he's a part-timer
23 "because my life right now has no room for school,
24 but I am determined to receive a degree."

25 Let's expand the New York State part-time

1 scholarship.

2 Last year the State established a New York
3 State Part-Time Scholarship Award Program to provide
4 scholarships for part-time students.

5 These awards would cover the cost of up to
6 six credit hours, up to \$1500.

7 Currently, awards are distributed by a
8 lottery system in the event there are more
9 applicants than the award can give out.

10 Priorities for these awards should be based
11 on financial needs, and be given to students who
12 receive awards previously or are in good academic
13 standing.

14 Aid for part-time students is limited, and
15 this award is -- but awards for this program is a
16 step in the right direction.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: (Inaudible.)

18 VINCENT GATTO: Yeah.

19 So, to end:

20 The decision is yours.

21 We bring you our experiences, and ask you to
22 be our voice.

23 Be our heros, and communicate with the
24 Governor before the executive budget is released.

25 Thank you very much, all of you.

1 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Thank you.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

3 NYPIRG has been at all of the hearings.

4 We appreciate that.

5 Including Blair Horner, Buffalo, I think it
6 was.

7 We thank you for your patience, and we call
8 on Courtney Davis from the Community Service
9 Society.

10 COURTNEY DAVIS: Thank you for being patient,
11 and allowing me to share.

12 Yeah, so, good afternoon, Chairwoman Stavisky
13 and members of the Committee.

14 So today we've heard from the students, from
15 the administrators.

16 And I'm here today to speak on behalf of
17 New York borrowers.

18 My name is Courtney Davis.

19 I work for the Community Service Society, for
20 a program called the Education Debt Consumer
21 Assistance Project.

22 This program provides over-the-phone and
23 in-person assistance to student-loan borrowers who
24 may need counseling on basic matters, like loan
25 repayment, all the way up to complex issues, like

1 preventing wage garnishment.

2 Our student-loan clients are diverse in age,
3 gender, and ethnicity, but what unites them is
4 student-loan distress.

5 We get to see the consequences of college
6 unaffordability in real time.

7 And so, to this end, I just want to focus
8 your attention here at the end of the session on
9 just a few stories of CUNY and SUNY students who are
10 most likely to end up in student-loan default, which
11 are our community college students.

12 While community college students are less
13 likely to borrow on -- on average, borrow less, they
14 tend to have the greatest likelihood of student-loan
15 default.

16 Community college students have a default
17 rate of over 19 percent, which is much higher than
18 the average overall student-loan default rate of
19 about 11 percent.

20 So those who default will see their financial
21 health immediately impacted.

22 They will have a lower credit score, higher
23 insurance premiums.

24 They will have less access to affordable
25 housing, an increased costs of borrowing, an

1 inability to save for retirement, and lifelong
2 reduction in asset accumulation.

3 This is a lifelong problem.

4 The senior citizen student-loan crisis is
5 coming.

6 Actually, many of the clients I see today are
7 senior citizens who left or graduated from CUNY or
8 SUNY decades ago, and are now having their
9 Social Security benefits garnished by the government
10 to pay student loans that are never going to get
11 smaller.

12 So, women, African-Americans, and Latinos are
13 suffering the most from relatively low levels of
14 student debt, in both our experience and our
15 research.

16 The problem is not just tuition and fees.

17 The fact that tuition and fees constitute a
18 relatively small portion of the total costs of
19 attendance, they're only about 20 percent.

20 As we've heard from others, it's really the
21 cost of living that poses the biggest hurdle,
22 particularly for those attending community colleges,
23 but also low-income students.

24 In considering that, any discussion about
25 college affordability should definitely include a

1 discussion about these small associated and life
2 costs that our citizens face.

3 To illustrate, I'm just going to share, very
4 briefly, some very quick stories.

5 The first is, Client J.

6 He is a first-generation college student in
7 his 20s.

8 So he contacted our office.

9 He, being low-income, and a lifetime resident
10 of New York City, should have qualified for
11 Excelsior to attend an upstate SUNY College --
12 community college, tuition-free.

13 But, he missed his FAFSA filing.

14 So the bursar's office told him that he would
15 be unable to access financial aid to remedy that
16 situation. He was not allowed to create a payment
17 plan.

18 And he was told, that until his unpaid
19 tuition of \$5,000 was below \$500, he would be shut
20 out of college education, unable to return to
21 classes, couldn't get transcripts, couldn't
22 transfer.

23 So he dropped out, and he sought low-paying
24 work to pay off the debt.

25 This scenario is not rare among the borrowers

1 we see. And we know that those who fall through the
2 cracks are likely to end up defaulting and staying
3 in debt permanently.

4 There are students across the CUNY and SUNY
5 system whose education and upward mobility is being
6 held hostage because they owe their colleges actual
7 debt, not just student loans.

8 So, the CUNY and SUNY school system seem to
9 implement different billing and billing-deferral
10 policies that can really dramatically impact
11 students.

12 We recommend that CUNY and SUNY work together
13 to create better statewide billing policies that
14 would provide support and solutions for students who
15 are behind in their payments, and would relieve some
16 of the burden of the complex and confusing
17 financial-aid applications and billing policies.

18 This should be central to the discussion
19 around college costs, precisely because these small
20 impacts can really lead to ongoing disastrous
21 results.

22 We also believe that, by providing more
23 comprehensive support, we'll see fewer students
24 exposed to predatory for-profit schools that come in
25 after situations like this, and pitch, and say, Come

1 to our school. We're not going to lock out.

2 And then students end up in an even worse
3 situation.

4 You've also heard that homelessness is a
5 crisis.

6 And we recommend making hardship waivers for
7 on-campus housing available for more students.

8 There are a lot of these small fixes that we
9 believe exist, and could help prevent some of these
10 lifelong consequences for New Yorkers.

11 We believe that the issue of cost of higher
12 education in New York is one that should be viewed
13 with nuance, and bringing tuition costs down is the
14 most commendable achievement, but, let's remain
15 vigilant about small barriers for the most
16 vulnerable.

17 More can be done to connect them with the
18 services that already exist to help them.

19 I thank you for the opportunity to testify,
20 and happy to respond to any questions.

21 And, thank you for being so patient all day
22 long.

23 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Thank you.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you very much.

25 SENATOR GAUGHRAN: It was very important

1 stories.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: And we thank everybody for
3 staying.

4 It is now 4:45, and the hearing is adjourned.

5 Thank you.

6 [Applause.]

7

8 (Whereupon, the public hearing held before
9 the New York State Senate Standing Committee on
10 Higher Education concluded at 4:45 p.m., and
11 adjourned.)

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