

Invited Testimony
Higher Education Budget Hearing
February 8, 2016
President Anne M. Kress, Monroe Community College

I'm Anne Kress, President of Monroe Community College, and I'm honored to come before you today as the representative of SUNY's 30 community colleges. Together, we thank you for your past support and we bring you a single request: to increase our base aid funding by \$285 per full-time equivalent. And, we make this request on behalf of our students..

Our students come to SUNY's community colleges because we hold out the promise of opportunity: to prepare them for transfer to outstanding universities and rewarding careers. We promise pathways to prosperity.

But, because our colleges' funding from NYS has not kept pace with our costs, we struggle to fulfill this promise to students' who futures depend on it.

Students like Cory. Cory came to Jefferson Community College after serving in the Army. He struggled with maintaining sobriety, with finding a post-military career, and with caring for his three children. Because of the outstanding faculty and student services at Jefferson, Cory is now on his way to a degree in Human Services, university transfer, and a career in Counseling. But 88% of Jefferson's budget goes to fund personnel costs, so serving motivated but challenged students like Cory is getting harder each day. When NYS stands with SUNY, Jefferson CC can stand with Cory.

Connie started at FIT as a nontraditional student with dreams of a degree in Fashion Business Management. With few resources of her own, she had to use the college's computer labs for her coursework. And it was in an FIT computer lab that the department chair found Connie in tears: the computers and software were so outdated that they barely functioned. Much like the computer lab, her dream was falling apart. Without access to much needed technology, Connie—and thousands like her—are finding their SUNY education will not prepare them for the careers they and NYS need. When NYS stands with SUNY, FIT can stand with Connie.

Patricio never thought he would need a college degree, but with only a high school diploma, when he was downsized, he found nothing. He heard MCC was offering a new accelerated program in Precision Machining. In just 6 months, he could earn a certificate and find a job. Now, Patricio has not just a job but a career—and a mission to ensure that his daughters follow their father to college. MCC knows there are many more Patricios out there: Rochester has one of our state's highest poverty rates and highest unemployment rates for minority males. But, without increased base aid, we cannot expand our workforce programs—even when local employers are clamoring for their graduates. These high tech programs are 40% more

expensive for the College. When NYS stands with SUNY, MCC can stand with Patricio.

Every one of my colleagues could share similar stories.

Our community colleges increasingly lack the resources they need to stand with our students. Connecting underprepared, financially and emotionally challenged students to real opportunity is hard ... and costly. Students in every corner of our state, at Jamestown, North Country, Corning and Rockland, are facing uncertain pathways because our base aid has fallen behind our costs.

So, I ask the Legislature to Stand with SUNY.

We ask that you increase base aid \$285 per FTE. This would keep the community colleges whole and keep pace with the rising cost of benefits. Providing a \$285 base aid increase will help us provide the support our students need and deserve. You will stand with Cory, with Connie, with Patricio—and their success will help NY stand strong.

Thank you so much for this opportunity to speak on behalf of my colleagues, our colleges, and our students.