

Statement by Elsa M. Magee  
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To the  
New York State Senate Finance Committee  
and  
New York State Assembly Ways and Means Committee

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Chairwoman Young, Chairman Farrell, Chairman LaValle, Chairwoman Glick, and members of the Senate and Assembly, thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the Governor's 2016-17 Executive Budget recommendations that impact the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC). I am Elsa Magee, Executive Vice President and Acting President of HESC.

HESC administers the New York State Tuition Assistance Program and more than 20 other student financial aid and college access programs that help students obtain and afford a college education. Collectively, these programs provide over \$1 billion in awards to support the college costs of more than 360,000 students.

Governor Cuomo's 2016-17 Executive Budget continues full support for all existing State grant and scholarship programs and proposes the DREAM Act. In addition the Executive Budget reflects increased efficiencies and reduced administrative costs at HESC. The recommendations also reflect the Governor's ongoing commitment to addressing the financial burden of college faced by today's students when entering and upon graduating from college.

The Executive Budget continues funding for the innovative *Get on Your Feet Loan Forgiveness Program* to assist struggling new college graduates by providing federal student loan relief to cover their monthly student loan debt for up to two years. Launched on December 31, 2015, over 6500 New Yorkers have

submitted applications in the program's first five weeks – making it one of the strongest new program launches. In implementing the program, HESC has partnered with the U.S. Department of Education and the National Student Loan Data System to streamline the application process. It is expected that more than 7,000 students will apply for awards during State Fiscal Year 2015-16, and that nearly 16,000 students will receive awards during SFY 2016-17.

Recognizing that the rising cost of college makes college choice more critical than ever, New York created a standard financial aid award letter for colleges and universities to provide prospective and first-time enrolling students and their families with uniform financial aid award information on the total costs of education, how much aid they will receive, how much aid they must repay, and the success of other students after graduation.

In December 2015, the Department of Financial Services released the New York State Financial Aid Award Information Sheet for schools responding to prospective students looking to enroll in the 2016-17 academic year or thereafter. The New York State Financial Aid Award Information Sheet incorporates the federal model along with some additional information that is unique to the State. To aid in the implementation of the award letter, schools that are unable to make the full Sheet available have been provided with an *Interim Period Financial Aid Award Information Sheet* for responding to prospective applicants.

## **Fulfilling Our Mission**

The 2016-17 Executive Budget enables HESC to continue administering an array of programs and services that support the attainment of a college degree for all New York State students. On behalf of Governor Cuomo, HESC is pleased to play a vital role in providing New York State's students with a gateway to a successful college career.

Thank you and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.