

JOSÉ M. SERRANO

Senator, 29th District

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**CHAIR**, Senate Democratic Conference**RANKING MINORITY MEMBER**Cultural Affairs, Tourism,
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Agriculture
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The New York State Black, Puerto Rican,
Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus
Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs

February 19, 2016

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Democratic Conference Leader
188 State Street Room 907, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Stewart-Cousins:

I write you today regarding the budget of the City University of New York (CUNY). **CUNY works!** CUNY works better than ever and today has the largest enrollment in history: 275,000 degree seeking students and an equal number of adult and continuation students.

CUNY was established by the Legislature as “an independent system of higher education,” that must be “responsive to the needs of its urban setting” and operate as “an integrated system,” with close collaboration between the community colleges and senior colleges. The Legislature also declared that: “The City University is of vital importance as a vehicle for the upward mobility of the disadvantaged in the City of New York.”

CUNY's budget must be stable, secure and adequate to serve the students who study there every day, who stay in New York after graduation and are vital to the future of our state. As such, I believe, its budget should be increased to expand their programs. CUNY deserves our support and continued and strengthened investment.

Here are some facts no other university system can claim:

- CUNY has a history of exceptional academic quality but has one of the lowest tuition levels in country;
- CUNY's graduates' debt is a fraction of national average;
- Access is unparalleled: 75% of NYC high school grads who go to college go to CUNY;
- Affordability is unparalleled: 75% of NYC students who receive Pell Grants go to CUNY and 8 of 10 CUNY graduates leave with no federal debt;
- Innovation is unparalleled -- one example: our ASAP program moves community college graduation rates from 20% to 55%;
- Diversity is unparalleled: CUNY reflects the diversity of NYC, and almost 80% of its students are black, Latino or Asian American;

- Over 90% of CUNY graduates work in New York State after graduation.

CUNY has 45,000 employees who have been without a contract for 5 or 6 years. CUNY's budget must be supported so these hardworking New Yorkers can receive the pay they deserve. We need to invest in the talent that teaches and supports an institution that serves so many New Yorkers well.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to preserve CUNY, an integral part of the fabric and history of New York City. If you have any questions or if I can be of any help on this important issue, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jose M. Serrano", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jose M. Serrano