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THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



ROBERT G. ORTT
SENATOR, 62ND DISTRICT

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December 12th 2016

H. Carl McCall, Chairman
SUNY Board of Trustees
SUNY System Administration
State University Plaza
Albany, NY 12246

Dear Chairman McCall,

I write to you today to express my concern with news reports and public statements related to potential State University of New York (SUNY) education policies. As an elected representative and member of the New York State Senate Committee on Higher Education, the SUNY system is of utmost importance to me.

Following the presidential election, there has been a movement at private and public institutions to establish "sanctuary campuses." The crux of the argument calls for campuses to continue components of President Obama's unilateral 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) ahead of – and in spite of – the new President and Congress in 2017. I urge the SUNY Board of Trustees to reject such a reckless policy and consider the potentially devastating long-term ramifications for our colleges and our students.

Such a blatant disregard of federal law could jeopardize billions in federal education aid. An overwhelming majority of New Yorkers rely on federal aid in order to afford college. I would find it extremely difficult to tell a hard-working student, or a working class family, that they will not realize their dream of attending college because the state wanted to make a political statement.

Additionally, I worry about the message this would send to college students. This policy would tell students, in their formative years, that their college and their state condones violating the law. I believe that such a message would run contrary to our mission of developing the next generation of citizens.

A disturbing trend has seen colleges prioritize concepts such as safe spaces, trigger warnings, and microaggressions. Meanwhile, the traditional purpose of higher education – academic and vocational development – is often ignored or patently contradicted. Many campuses are already free from opposing viewpoints; they should not also be free of the rule of law.

I hope that the SUNY Board of Trustees focuses on its mission of educating the next generation of students instead of engaging in unnecessary partisan posturing. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob-G. Ort". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "R" and "O".

Robert G. Ort
State Senator, 62nd District

CC:
SUNY Board of Trustees