

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 SUNY University at Buffalo
9 The Center for Tomorrow
10 101 Service Center Road
11 Buffalo, New York

12 Date: October 30, 2019
13 Time: 1:20 p.m.

14 PRESIDING:

15 Senator Toby Ann Stavisky
16 Chair

17 PRESENT:

18 Senator Timothy M. Kennedy (Co-Sponsor)
19 Assemblymember Karen McMahon
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21
22
23
24
25

	SPEAKERS:	PAGE	QUESTIONS
1			
2			
3	Dr. Dan Hocoy President SUNY Erie Community College	9	28
4			
5	Dr. Beth Del Genio Chief of Staff to the UB President University of Buffalo	9	28
6			
7	Lee Marvin Vice Provost for Enrollment Management University at Buffalo	9	28
8			
9	Cheryl Taplin Senior Associate Vice Provost for Student Success and Retention University of Buffalo	9	28
10			
11	Blair Horner Executive Director New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)	53	59
12			
13	Gaelle Jean-Baptise President Undergraduate Student Government at Buffalo State	65	77
14			
15	Yousouf Amolegbe President University at Buffalo Student Assoc.	65	77
16			
17	Georgia Hulbert Vice President University at Buffalo Student Assoc.	65	77
18			
19	Andrew Sako President Faculty Federation of Erie Community College	93	98
20			
21	Dr. Frederick E. Kowal President United University Professions (UUP)	107	125
22			
23			
24			
25			

	SPEAKERS (Continued):	PAGE	QUESTIONS
1			
2			
3	Fred Floss	107	125
4	Buffalo State Chapter		
5	United University Professions (UUP)		
6			
7	Jude Jayatilleke	107	125
8	Buffalo State Chapter		
9	United University Professions (UUP)		
10			
11	Dr. Philip Glick	107	125
12	Buffalo Health Science Center Chapter		
13	United University Professions (UUP)		
14			
15	Joe Petrick	133	
16	Alfred State College Chapter		
17	United University Professions (UUP)		
18			
19	Robyn Horn	133	
20	UB Grad Student		
21	United University Professions (UUP)		
22			
23	Sandra Lewis	133	
24	Retired		
25	Robert Rogers		
	Professor of Mathematics		
	SUNY at Fredonia Chapter,		
	United University Professions (UUP)		

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1 SENATOR STAVISKY: If everybody could take
2 their seat.

3 Thank you.

4 Good afternoon, and I'd like to welcome you
5 to the Senate Standing Committee on Higher Education
6 hearing being held on the campus of the State
7 University of New York at Buffalo.

8 For the record, today is October 30, 2019,
9 and the time is 1:20 p.m.

10 First, let me thank Senator Kennedy for
11 co-sponsoring this event, and for the help from his
12 staff, Mike Greco and McKayla Mulhern.

13 Mike Swanson from the Senate Finance
14 Committee is here.

15 And I'd also like to thank Senate
16 media services for their help, and
17 Assemblymember Karen McMahon.

18 Before they speak, let me just add a couple
19 of things.

20 We also want to thank SUNY Buffalo President
21 Satish Tripathi for hosting this hearing, and for
22 the help of his staff.

23 The purpose of the hearing today is to
24 examine the cost of public higher education and its
25 effect on student financial programs, as well as

1 State support, TAP gap, student borrowing, and other
2 challenges to accessibility and affordability.

3 And one aspect of the affordability issue are
4 the opportunity programs.

5 We would not have HEOP or SEEK if it were not
6 for Assemblymember Arthur Eve.

7 And I really want to acknowledge his legacy,
8 and the effect that his opportunity programs/these
9 opportunity programs have on the students of the
10 state of New York.

11 And we certainly have to acknowledge that.

12 I look forward to hearing the testimony from
13 people who are going to speak, but I ask that you
14 adhere to the 5-minute time limit.

15 There's a clock over there to my right.

16 And before we begin with the first panel, let
17 me introduce Senator Kennedy.

18 SENATOR KENNEDY: Thank you very much.

19 First of all, let me start by thanking the
20 great Chair of the Higher Education Committee,
21 Toby Ann Stavisky, who has just been a tremendous
22 champion of higher education in every single way
23 imaginable over the years, before I was in the
24 Senate, and since I've been in the Senate.

25 Her leadership is just incredible to watch.

1 And the fact that we are here today is
2 indicative of that leadership.

3 When we first started discussing ways to
4 engage the State on robust, thoughtful, and
5 thorough higher-education conversations, she made
6 a commitment at that point in time not to do
7 these meetings without coming to Buffalo and
8 Western New York.

9 And we love getting the attention out here in
10 Western New York that oftentimes, historically, we
11 haven't gotten in many different ways.

12 And Senator Toby Ann Stavisky has made a
13 commitment, and has made good on that commitment.

14 So we thank you so much.

15 Assemblywoman Karen McMahan, it's always
16 great to be here in her district as well.

17 And, of course, our Majority Leader,
18 Andrea Stewart-Cousins, who has really made these
19 meetings, not just with higher ed, but all of the
20 other various committees that we serve on, and
21 engaging in the public from -- in a public-hearing
22 perspective, and roundtable discussions, a priority
23 of our conference, and we've done so in an
24 unprecedented fashion.

25 So, in many different ways, this meeting here

1 today is just that, unprecedented.

2 So I also want to thank the University of
3 Buffalo for hosting us here at the Center for
4 Tomorrow, Dr. Satish Tripathi, his team, the
5 administrators, the teachers; all of those that work
6 so hard to provide this world-class education here.

7 We look forward to listening and hearing and
8 incorporating all of the stakeholders' information
9 today into the decisions that we are going to be
10 making out of Albany.

11 At the same time, most importantly, we want
12 to hear from the students, and how these decisions
13 are having an impact on their daily lives and on
14 their own respective educations.

15 So, we're looking forward to hearing from
16 each and every one of you, and thank you for your
17 attendance, your attention, and your participation.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

19 And this, incidentally, is the third in a
20 series.

21 We did the first one at Brooklyn College last
22 Thursday.

23 Monday I was at SUNY New Paltz.

24 Today is Buffalo.

25 Tomorrow we're doing one in Syracuse.

1 And Friday at Nassau Community College out on
2 the island.

3 So, statewide.

4 And I think this is the first time we have
5 ever done, in my recollection, a series where it is
6 almost -- it's community-based rather than
7 legislative-based.

8 And I'm delighted to introduce my colleague,
9 your hometown hero, I guess, she's done such an
10 effective job in Albany, Karen McMahon.

11 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Thank you,
12 Senator Stavisky, and thank you Senator Kennedy, for
13 organizing this hearing today.

14 I'm so pleased to be here.

15 I'm an alum of this fine institution, it's
16 near and dear to my heart.

17 And as Senator Stavisky said, this is my
18 district as well.

19 And I happen to be the only
20 Western New Yorker on the Assembly Higher Ed
21 Committee too, so I feel a particular responsibility
22 to be here today.

23 I'm committed to public education, and in
24 particular, higher ed.

25 I look forward to the testimony today.

1 I thank you all for being here, and I look
2 forward to hearing about ways that we can make
3 higher education more accessible to all New Yorkers.

4 So thank you for participating, I look
5 forward to your testimony.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: The first panel will
7 consist of Dr. Beth -- I lost my place --
8 Del Genio, the chief of staff to the president of
9 UB.

10 Then we have, Lee Melvin, vice president for
11 enrollment -- I lost my place -- enrollment
12 management, University at Buffalo -- University at
13 Buffalo;

14 Cheryl Taplin, senior associate vice provost
15 for student success and retention.

16 And first we will have Dr. Dan Hocoy,
17 president, Erie County Community College.

18 DR. DAN HOCOY: Good afternoon.

19 I'm Dan Hocoy, president of SUNY Erie
20 Community College.

21 And I'm honored you're having the most
22 important person in the room start these
23 proceedings.

24 [Laughter.]

25 DR. DAN HOCOY: I'd like to begin by thanking

1 Chairwoman Stavisky, Senator Kennedy, and
2 Assemblywoman McMahon for the opportunity to talk
3 about the issues of college accessibility and
4 affordability, topics of importance to the citizens
5 of New York State, and especially those in our
6 service area of Erie County and Western New York.

7 As the first in my family to go beyond
8 high school, I understand the struggles that many
9 students face in the pursuit of a college education.

10 At SUNY Erie, I believe we not only deliver a
11 comprehensive, affordable, and accessible education,
12 but we also provide the support necessary for our
13 students to succeed.

14 Small class sizes, structured advisement,
15 tutoring, opportunity programs aimed at underserved
16 populations, and other support mechanisms ensure our
17 students receive the personalized attention and
18 assistance they need to complete their education as
19 efficiently and affordably as possible.

20 SUNY Erie is truly the community's college,
21 offering three conveniently-located campuses
22 throughout the county:

23 Our North Campus in Williamsville serves the
24 northern and eastern suburbs of Buffalo;

25 City Campus is downtown Buffalo, is easily

1 accessible to our city residents;

2 And South Campus in Orchard Park and Hamburg
3 serves southern Erie County and beyond.

4 In addition, we have a new satellite campus
5 on the east side of Buffalo, a community that has
6 experienced intergenerational poverty.

7 SUNY Erie offers more than 100 associate
8 degrees, certificate, and online programs, with
9 flexible educational options, including full- and
10 part-time instruction; day, evening, and weekend
11 classes; as well as distance-learning opportunities,
12 to enable students to successfully achieve their
13 goals.

14 We continue to be a great value to students,
15 in large part, because of funding from Pell, TAP,
16 the Excelsior Scholarship, Say Yes Buffalo, and the
17 hundreds of thousands of dollars in scholarships we
18 distribute through the SUNY Erie Foundation each
19 year.

20 Collectively, these programs, along with our
21 state and county funding, contribute to an
22 affordable public education at SUNY Erie.

23 And with life-changing programs like EOP, we
24 are able to provide the support and services that
25 students need while they are with us, to help them

1 succeed academically and personally.

2 SUNY Erie has been helping students earn an
3 education for more than 70 years, but there's a new
4 purpose, role, and identity for us today.

5 Our nationally-recognized college is serving
6 as a major social and economic engine for the
7 region's renaissance.

8 Programs like nanotechnology and mechatronics
9 train students for immediate careers in cutting-edge
10 fields, hands-on education in green-building
11 technology, helps lead our region into an
12 environmentally-sustainable future.

13 And our award winning culinary arts and
14 nursing programs prepare our students to have an
15 immediate impact in their respective fields.

16 Our students benefit from the instruction of
17 renowned faculty in dental-hygiene and vision-care
18 technology, but the impact of these programs extends
19 beyond traditional classroom instruction.

20 Our regional community benefits from the
21 experiential learning practices of these two
22 programs through free dental and vision-care
23 services in our community clinics.

24 And I'm proud to say that, under my
25 direction, through better forecasting and planning,

1 SUNY Erie has been able to hold the line on tuition
2 and fees, and operate within its approved budget
3 during my first two years as president.

4 Entering my third year, however, that is
5 becoming more and more difficult as we, as community
6 colleges, face a perfect storm that directly impacts
7 how we do business.

8 Low unemployment rates, the declining number
9 of students of college age, and the growing gig
10 economy have a direct impact on enrollment trends at
11 community colleges.

12 When the economy is strong, people can easily
13 find jobs and don't have a compelling need to seek
14 additional skills or credentials to find work.

15 One area in which we at SUNY Erie will
16 continue to excel as a college is in our
17 understanding of and interaction with our students.

18 We often get lost in reciting facts and
19 figures to you when we're talking about funding, but
20 I want to leave you with a story that shows the
21 impact we have and why that funding is important.

22 So, like myself, Yusef [ph.] is a
23 first-generation college student who made the
24 decision to come to SUNY Erie to earn a degree in
25 dental-lab technology.

1 When we asked him why he chose that major, he
2 told us about his mother.

3 When he was growing up, his mother rarely
4 smiled because of her crooked teeth, and she lacked
5 self-esteem because of that.

6 Yusef consciously chose his vocation because
7 he wanted the opportunity to make his mother, and
8 others like her, smile and feel better about
9 themselves.

10 So we are asking for your support to ensure
11 that students like Yusef [ph.] can pursue their
12 dreams and have a lasting impact on the lives of
13 those they will touch once they graduate.

14 Once again, I want to thank you for this
15 opportunity to address you this afternoon, and I'm
16 happy to answer any questions you may have.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: We'll have questions after
18 everybody.

19 DR. DAN HOCOY: That's fine.

20 Thank you.

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: Dr. Del Genio.

22 Thank you.

23 DR. BETH DEL GENIO: Thank you.

24 Good afternoon.

25 I'm Beth Del Genio, chief of staff to the

1 president at the University at Buffalo.

2 On behalf of UB President Satish Tripathi,
3 I would like to thank Chairperson Stavisky,
4 Senator Tim Kennedy, Assemblymember McMahon, for
5 this opportunity to give you a glimpse of UB, and
6 some of the work that we are doing to ensure access
7 to an excellent education for all New Yorkers, and
8 to ensure we're having a positive impact here in our
9 region and across New York State.

10 UB is the largest, most comprehensive public
11 research university in the SUNY system.

12 In nineteen nine -- 1998 -- or, 1989 UB was
13 admitted into the Association of American
14 Universities, joining North America's other leading
15 research universities.

16 At UB, we enroll over 31,500 students and
17 offer nearly 400 degree programs.

18 Our schools of dental medicine, pharmacy,
19 social work, and public health are all ranked top 35
20 in the nation.

21 Today, UB is ranked 31st among public
22 research universities, according to "U.S. News and
23 World Report."

24 Over the last 10 years at UB, we have seen an
25 increase in retention and in our graduation rates,

1 and in a number of our students receiving national
2 awards and honors.

3 We believe we have more work to do in this
4 arena, including providing our students with more
5 robust technological interventions, enhanced student
6 advisement, modern student living and learning
7 environments, and, of course, additional
8 student-engagement opportunities.

9 To give you a glimpse of what we have been
10 doing in terms of our innovative research, this
11 past year the University at Buffalo established the
12 UB Artificial Intelligence Institute.

13 At the institute, we, our researchers, are
14 working to customize treatments to improve patient
15 care, and to develop next generation of autonomous,
16 intelligent transportation systems.

17 I know you may have seen Olli on our
18 North Campus.

19 In fact, Chancellor Johnson recently
20 nominated the director of our Artificial
21 Institute -- Artificial Intelligence Institute,
22 Dr. David Dorman, to the newly-established state
23 commission to study artificial intelligence and
24 robotics.

25 I want to give you a glimpse of some of the

1 work that we're doing at the intersection of our
2 research and clinical care.

3 This past year, UB's clinical research on
4 addictions launched Buffalo Matters.

5 This is a program developed by our
6 UB emergency-medicine physicians to expedite patient
7 access to comprehensive opioid use disorder
8 treatment.

9 This program, Buffalo Matters, is believed to
10 be contributing to the decline in opioid-related
11 deaths here in Erie County.

12 With the support with the New York State
13 Department of Health, the program is expanding
14 across New York State.

15 And with additional support from the State,
16 we believe we can combat this crisis that has
17 destroyed lives, families, and communities across
18 our state.

19 At UB, our Jacob School of Medicine and
20 Biomedical Sciences is the backbone of clinical care
21 and health delivery in Western New York.

22 And the Jacob School is training many of the
23 future doctors for Western New York, and, for
24 hospitals and practices across New York State.

25 UB physicians are also working to reduce

1 health-care disparities.

2 And with additional support from the State
3 for the Jacob School, we would hire necessary
4 clinicians in critical medical areas, which, in
5 turn, would improve health-care outcomes for the
6 members of our Buffalo and our regional communities.

7 Over the past seven years, the UB School of
8 Engineering has experienced a 62 percent increase in
9 undergraduate students and a 55 percent increase in
10 graduate students.

11 As you already know, careers in the STEM
12 fields are growing 2 1/2 times faster than any other
13 field in the state.

14 New York ranks 36th in the nation in the
15 5-year growth rate of engineering degrees.

16 In conclusion:

17 We ask that you continue the current 5-year
18 capital plan to support critical maintenance for our
19 aging physical infrastructure, and that adding
20 capital funding for new academic buildings in
21 high-demand areas.

22 And as I close, again, I just wanted to
23 remind you that UB and our affiliated entities
24 generate an estimated economic impact of
25 \$2.18 billion, with a "b," annually in

1 New York State.

2 Our university's total workforce makes UB one
3 of the region's largest employers.

4 And with your support, we can continue to be
5 a local, regional, and statewide force for knowledge
6 generation, sustainable economic impact, and
7 transformative clinical care for the citizens of
8 New York State.

9 I want to thank you.

10 It's been a privilege to come before you on
11 behalf of the University at Buffalo, and we look
12 forward to working with you during the legislative
13 session.

14 Thank you.

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

16 Next we have Lee Melvin, vice provost,
17 enrollment management, at the University at Buffalo.

18 LEE MARVIN: Okay, thank you.

19 Good afternoon.

20 My name again is Lee Melvin. I'm the
21 vice provost for enrollment management for the
22 University at Buffalo.

23 I'm in my seventh year at UB in this role,
24 and I have over 28 years of experience in higher
25 education at public flagship institutions.

1 As the institution's chief enrollment
2 officer, I am responsible for designing,
3 articulating, and implementing strategic enrollment
4 initiatives to maximize UB's enrollment.

5 I focus on undergraduate-, graduate-, and
6 professional-student enrollment, and work closely
7 with deans, vice presidents, and other vice provosts
8 to recruit, enroll, retain, and graduate a diverse
9 community of student scholars from the University at
10 Buffalo.

11 Today, pursuing higher education at public
12 universities in New York requires financial
13 investments by the student, the family, the
14 institution, and the State.

15 Based on my experience in higher education,
16 tuition and fees at New York public institutions is
17 affordable for families ranging from low-income
18 professions to those making \$125,000 per year.

19 Over 68 percent of registered undergraduate
20 UB students receive some type of financial
21 assistance.

22 The State of New York has created and
23 designed financial-aid programs to assist students
24 with the cost of tuition from a range of
25 socioeconomic incomes.

1 UB is able to tell a great story about the
2 affordability of tuition for our neediest students,
3 families, and state residents, and the deep
4 financial commitment New York State has made to
5 reduce the cost of attending our public
6 institutions.

7 At UB, 7,616 students are eligible for
8 federal Pell grants to help assist with, but not
9 fully cover, the cost associated with tuition and
10 fees.

11 We hope that, as the White House and Congress
12 negotiate reauthorization of the Higher Education
13 Act, the new support for Pell will be made
14 available.

15 Students eligible for the Pell grants usually
16 have incomes from families that make \$40,000 or
17 below.

18 New York State's Tuition Assistance Program,
19 also known as "TAP," was enacted to help account for
20 the difference between federal aid and the cost of
21 tuition, and assist families earning up to \$80,000 a
22 year.

23 At UB, 8,277 students are currently receiving
24 TAP funding.

25 We thank Governor Cuomo and the legislators

1 who, over the years, have made this possible.

2 With the creation of the Excelsior
3 Scholarship this year, students from families
4 earning up to \$125,000 can now attend New York
5 public institution tuition-free.

6 There are 1,868 UB students currently
7 receiving funding.

8 Were it not for the Excelsior scholarships,
9 these students would have more financial challenges.

10 Again, we thank the Governor and the
11 legislators for making this possible.

12 In total, UB current students receive over
13 \$28,881,965 a year to reduce the cost of tuition.

14 That is \$28 million less debt to amass for
15 students and families pursuing higher education at
16 UB.

17 You multiply that number by four and we end
18 have over a billion dollars saved for those
19 families.

20 Another positive financial-aid program
21 supported by the State is the Foster Youth College
22 and Success Initiatives.

23 This award will help fill the gap for
24 students who were in the foster-care system.

25 UB remains affordable, accessible, and

1 provides a quality education to students.

2 The average undergraduate loan debt at
3 graduation for a UB student is \$4,600 less than the
4 national average, and \$2,885 less than New York
5 schools.

6 One way we measure the health of a UB degree
7 is by loan-default rates, and the loan-default rate
8 for former UB students are lower than the national
9 average, at 3.3 percent, versus 10.8 percent on the
10 national average.

11 Clearly, these numbers indicate that UB
12 graduates are securing employment with salaries to
13 help cover the cost of college loans.

14 In closing, I want to share a conversation
15 I had with a butcher at one of my local grocery
16 stores that I frequent.

17 We usually make small talk before I order my
18 meats.

19 He knows my profession, and was excited to
20 share that his son was admitted to UB and several
21 other SUNY colleges.

22 He was more excited about discussing news
23 regarding the passage and implementation of the new
24 Excelsior Scholarship Program.

25 He said that the Excelsior Scholarship will

1 provide a lot of financial relief for him and his
2 wife.

3 It will allow their son to attend any SUNY
4 institution, and they were confident they could now
5 afford his college education.

6 I was proud of his son, proud of the father,
7 and very proud that the State of New York could make
8 college more affordable for this family.

9 As a professional in higher education,
10 I strongly believe the University at Buffalo, the
11 State University of New York, and New York State
12 remain committed to keeping the cost of higher
13 education affordable to our students and families.

14 I too look forward to answering any questions
15 you have regarding the cost of higher education.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

17 We have Dr. Cheryl Taplin, senior associate
18 vice provost for student success and retention.

19 CHERYL TAPLIN: Good afternoon.

20 My name is Cheryl Taplin, and I'm -- I serve
21 as senior associate vice provost for student success
22 and retention at the University of [sic] Buffalo.

23 And I'm happy to say, I've been at the
24 University of Buffalo for more than 30 years.

25 Thank you, Chairwoman Stavisky,

1 Senator Kennedy, Assemblymember McMahon, members
2 of the Senate and legislative staff, on affording me
3 this opportunity to speak at this important public
4 hearing.

5 The University of [sic] Buffalo has many
6 assets that support student success and degree
7 completion.

8 The two that I will primarily focus on today
9 is our Finish in Four initiative, and the
10 State-funded Arthur O. Eve Educational Opportunity
11 Program.

12 UB has made significant improvements in
13 graduation rates through our Finish in Four
14 initiative.

15 Finish in Four is a partnership between
16 students and UB, that provide students who take the
17 pledge to graduate in four years, both the academic
18 support and course availability to achieve this
19 goal.

20 In its first year of implementation,
21 43 percent of entering freshmen class signed the
22 pledge.

23 Now in its seventh year, 92 percent of
24 entering freshmen took the pledge.

25 And data shows that students who participate

1 in this initiative graduate at a higher rate than
2 the university average.

3 Giving some comparative data:

4 Over fall 2008 entering freshman cohort, they
5 had a 4-year graduation rate of 52.6 percent.

6 The first fall class entering for the
7 Finish in Four initiative in fall 2012 had a 4-year
8 graduation rate of 60.4 percent.

9 But the students who signed the pledge that
10 year had a 63 percent graduation rate.

11 So this shows that this initiative that we
12 promote has worked for our students.

13 Paula, who took the pledge in fall 2012, and
14 graduated in four years, graduated with a triple
15 major from the University of Buffalo in four years,
16 and she stated, "Finish in Four strengthened my
17 focus on my goals for my academic career and
18 provided the resources to guarantee my success."

19 This clearly shows the power of students and
20 the university working together to meet a goal that
21 would reduce student debt and allow our students to
22 go out into the world as productive citizens.

23 The next I'll talk about is the Arthur O. Eve
24 Educational Opportunity Program which has afforded
25 access to those historically disadvantaged students

1 who have demonstrated the potential to succeed
2 academically and personally, but needed a chance.

3 At UB we take pride in our EOP program.

4 Our nearly 800 EOP students thrive at our
5 institution and provide living testimony of their
6 struggles to succeed.

7 For example, Aleah [ph.] was one of the
8 student recipients chosen for the 2019
9 Norman R. McConney, Jr., Award for EOP Student
10 Excellence.

11 Aleah plans to attend medical school to give
12 back to her community.

13 Marissa [ph.], another EOP student, who lost
14 all her support systems through unexpected deaths,
15 continued to find that determination deep within
16 herself to persevere towards pursuing her career in
17 nursing.

18 Your continued support for programs like EOP
19 speaks volumes, and puts a support system in place
20 for students like Aleah and Marissa to achieve their
21 dreams of becoming college graduates.

22 The current 4-year graduation rate of our EOP
23 program is 66 percent, which is well beyond the
24 expectations that anyone could imagine.

25 Through continued financial support from

1 Governor Cuomo and legislatures, we are able to
2 provide services and programming toward student
3 success.

4 There are countless more stories of how
5 direct support to students and the University
6 of [sic] Buffalo have played a key role in student
7 success.

8 With your continued support, the University
9 of [sic] Buffalo will continue to its paths of
10 excellence and share many more success stories such
11 as these.

12 Thank you for allowing me to address this
13 important topic.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

15 Do you have questions?

16 SENATOR KENNEDY: Sure.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay.

18 SENATOR KENNEDY: Well, thank you all for
19 your testimony, thank you for your being here, thank
20 you for your leadership.

21 First of all, especially Cheryl, the last
22 thing you followed up, the Arthur O. Eve legacy and
23 the higher-education opportunities.

24 I -- it's just -- as has already been
25 mentioned by Chair Stavisky, has helped thousands of

1 individuals across this state, over many years.

2 And -- he -- his legacy continues to carry on.

3 He is a constituent of mine.

4 And we had the proud honor of designating the
5 downtown campus as the Arthur O. Eve Higher
6 Education Campus, not too long ago.

7 It's just a wonderful thing to hear how well
8 the program is doing.

9 So thank you again for your leadership.

10 I want to touch on a couple of things, as it
11 pertains to capital funding, and as it pertains to
12 student tuition.

13 First of all, from a capital-needs
14 perspective, I'd like to hear from the university,
15 as well as from ECC, of your plans; what you're
16 doing, where you're going, what your vision is,
17 where we can be helpful.

18 And then, from ECC, it's my understanding
19 that there are enormous needs at all institutions.

20 And I want to get into the details a bit here
21 while we have this forum.

22 DR. BETH DEL GENIO: Thank you, Senator.

23 At the University at Buffalo we have a campus
24 master plan for our three campuses.

25 And as you might expect, we have -- we've

1 been -- we've been growing. We have critical
2 maintenance needs as -- as well.

3 And what we -- when we think about our
4 capital master plan, it's our -- it's our
5 programming -- it's our academic programming, it's
6 our research, that really drives what happens inside
7 of the -- of the buildings.

8 As I mentioned in my testimony, is that, if
9 we want our students to be successful, if we want to
10 do the type of impactful research that I -- that
11 I brushed upon a little bit in my testimony, then we
12 want to make sure that we are providing our students
13 the best living-learning spaces to begin with. We
14 want -- which includes classrooms, libraries,
15 et cetera.

16 We also want to make sure that we have a
17 research environment that is modern, and can move us
18 forward in terms of, not just our -- our own areas
19 of inquiry, but so that we can have an impact, a
20 real societal impact, in terms of the work that
21 we're doing in our research.

22 So we need to have really modernized spaces
23 for -- for our -- our research arena and for our
24 academics.

25 We've seen, as I mentioned, much growth in

1 terms of engineering. We've seen that across, you
2 know, all areas of higher ed, the growth in STEM
3 fields.

4 We also know that, at the University at
5 Buffalo, we -- our employers are coming to us.
6 They -- they look to our graduates to -- to fill
7 important posts in their businesses and industries,
8 especially in the STEM areas.

9 And as we take a look at our capital master
10 planning, of course, in terms of the -- the physical
11 environment, you know, engineering, of course, is an
12 area in which, again, we've seen that growth, the
13 student demand.

14 And we believe that we can actually have an
15 impact here in -- in our community in
16 Western New York and across New York State, in terms
17 of the graduates we produce and, of course, the
18 research that we're doing.

19 SENATOR KENNEDY: So I know that the
20 university has come to us with many different
21 capital needs, including, as you mentioned, the -- a
22 new engineering school -- new engineering building
23 for that school.

24 That is on the table.

25 But for the lack of an appropriation, from a

1 capital-projects perspective, our hands have been
2 tied.

3 No one has been a greater advocate than the
4 Chair of the Higher Education Committee.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: It was in our one-House
6 budget.

7 SENATOR KENNEDY: Right.

8 And as a matter of fact, I was discussing
9 this morning with some friends about
10 Senator Stavisky's leadership, and that the fact
11 that there was no capital-projects funding was
12 really, not only under her skin, but driving the
13 entire Conference mad.

14 We are dead-set on getting that done, and
15 making sure that the University of Buffalo, and
16 other universities throughout the system, have the
17 resources necessary to make these strategic
18 investments.

19 So thank you --

20 DR. BETH DEL GENIO: Thank you.

21 SENATOR KENNEDY: -- for articulating that,
22 and your continued leadership.

23 President Hocoy, you know, I've actually
24 heard concerning things about ECC and the lack of
25 investment in capital, and it being the biggest

1 budgetary need.

2 Can you speak to that, please?

3 DR. DAN HOCOY: Sure.

4 We're in the midst of a master academic and
5 facilities plan being done by JMZ.

6 We expect a report in the spring.

7 But, Senator Kennedy, you are absolutely
8 correct, our facilities are in dire need of
9 maintenance.

10 Just a few weeks we had an HVAC unit fall
11 through the ceiling and onto the corridor, which
12 could have killed someone.

13 You know, gone are the days where people use
14 chalkboards and sit in seats that face the front.

15 And our facilities are very outdated and no
16 longer relevant.

17 You know, obviously, we need SMART Boards and
18 connected environments for our students.

19 The goal of mine is that, once we have this
20 report from JMZ, that we would initiate a SUNY Erie
21 2025 campaign for capital improvements, and that we
22 would work closely with the County, SUNY, and the
23 State to improve our facilities.

24 We feel that we make a difference in
25 Western New York.

1 We're a pivot institution. We change the
2 trajectory of people's lives.

3 And it's my belief that we're the best use of
4 the public buck, with UB coming a close second.

5 [Laughter.]

6 SENATOR KENNEDY: Do you have a master plan?

7 DR. DAN HOCOY: It -- like I said, JMZ is
8 currently in the process of doing that, exactly.

9 And we would have -- we do have a master plan
10 report scheduled for the spring of 2020.

11 SENATOR KENNEDY: Another thing I wanted to
12 ask you, President Hocoy, was about concerns I've
13 heard about intellectual property.

14 And so the facilitators, the educators, being
15 able do their work and educate the students, and do
16 so in a manner where their work is protected.

17 And I want to know if you're privy to these
18 conversations, and if you have any plans to address
19 these issues?

20 DR. DAN HOCOY: No, I haven't heard anything
21 regarding those concerns, actually.

22 SENATOR KENNEDY: Video programming?

23 Taking a professor's educational work,
24 putting it on video, and then dispersing it, is that
25 ring a bell?

1 DR. DAN HOCOY: No --

2 SENATOR KENNEDY: Okay.

3 DR. DAN HOCOY: -- it's news to me.

4 SENATOR KENNEDY: It's been brought to my
5 attention.

6 We'll get back to you.

7 DR. DAN HOCOY: I'd like to know more about
8 that.

9 SENATOR KENNEDY: Yeah, we'll get back to you
10 on that.

11 Just, some concerning issues regarding
12 intellectual property, regarding capital, that
13 I think we should work closely on to address.

14 The master plan, do you know -- do you have a
15 timeline on that master plan?

16 DR. DAN HOCOY: Spring 2020.

17 SENATOR KENNEDY: All right. Great.

18 And then, as far as students go, and the
19 affordability, and we've talked about the
20 opportunity program that's available.

21 I want to talk a little bit about TAP funding
22 and the impact that that is having on your students.

23 Can you speak to that, Mr. Melvin?

24 LEE MARVIN: Sure.

25 So as I mentioned, we have over

1 8,000 students that are currently receiving
2 TAP funding.

3 And we think, with that funding, that has
4 reduced their tuition costs.

5 And we believe it's allowed students to
6 pursue degrees that they are interested in pursuing,
7 and at an affordable price, with an outstanding
8 faculty available to teach those students.

9 We also believe those students are in line
10 with what we're promoting at the institution, which
11 is to graduate in four years. So the TAP funding is
12 set for four years.

13 The TAP funding is flexible when it comes to
14 students that are no longer eligible, but then can
15 receive the funding the following semester or year.

16 And so that's been very helpful for our
17 students.

18 We've been able to talk about the TAP funding
19 when we're out doing presentations to families
20 across the state.

21 And so we believe that, you know, this
22 information allows students and families to compare
23 us to other schools that they're considering, both
24 public and private institutions.

25 And we also believe that it gives us an

1 opportunity to encourage them to come to an
2 institution that we believe is positioned to help
3 retain those students, but also to graduate more
4 educated citizens for Western New York, but also for
5 the state of New York.

6 So that -- and that TAP funding will help
7 those students throughout the rest of their lives
8 because they will not have to repay those funds.

9 SENATOR KENNEDY: Thank you.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Assemblywoman.

11 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Hi.

12 Mr. Melvin, thank you for your testimony
13 today.

14 I've heard recently from some high school
15 students in my district. I think it was a project
16 in their AP government class, perhaps to write to me
17 about an issue.

18 And one thing that has come up is the
19 Excelsior program.

20 And many families in Amherst, they have the
21 benefit of having some means, but they might be
22 right over that \$125,000 limit, and they're just
23 squeezed, you know, it's that -- that sweet spot,
24 where you make too much money to qualify for aid,
25 but maybe not enough to just write that check.

1 And so I'm wondering -- so the questions to
2 me are:

3 What about merit aid?

4 What about taking into account -- well, this
5 may not be a question for you -- but, the Excelsior
6 program taking into account household numbers, or
7 maybe sliding scales of income?

8 How -- how would you address prospective
9 students who find themselves in that -- that -- that
10 conundrum?

11 LEE MARVIN: Well, the merit-aid piece, let
12 me start there, because that one is in my purview.

13 Over 32 percent of our incoming freshmen
14 receive some type of merit aid at the institution.

15 Five years ago we were around 26 percent.

16 So we've been taking our merit-aid funds that
17 we have and we've spread those out to students,
18 based on their area of interest, if they're majoring
19 in engineering or in arts and sciences or nursing or
20 architecture.

21 So we've been able to stretch the funds that
22 we currently have available to us.

23 Our funds have not increased, but we've been
24 using them more strategically to help reduce the
25 cost for students and families, but -- and making

1 sure more students can come in on merit aid.

2 Merit aid is tied to SAT scores.

3 Higher SAT scores are usually tied to
4 families from higher-income levels.

5 And that's what all the research shows, not
6 all, but many of those students are coming from
7 higher-income families.

8 Another opportunity for students in the
9 state, especially if they're going into the STEM
10 program, is the STEM Tuition Reimbursement Program.

11 You know, so those in the top 10 percent of
12 their classes, and they're looking at STEM, those
13 families, there's no income cap on that number, so
14 they can request those funds if they are in one of
15 those majors. So that's reducing their cost as
16 well.

17 And as far as -- I'm going to talk about the
18 expected family contribution quickly, because
19 that's, of course, determined through the federal
20 methodology.

21 And so we use the federal methodology, not a
22 school methodology.

23 And so once we receive that information, we
24 apply that to the student's aid package.

25 The families are going to pay that expected

1 family contribution at most institutions that they
2 attend.

3 So if you have \$5,000, most financial-aid
4 packages are designed with that \$5,000 in family
5 contribution.

6 If you have \$25,000, most financial-aid
7 packages are designed with that \$25,000 in mind.

8 And so students that are just above the
9 \$125,000, our advice to them, is they continue to
10 look for scholarships.

11 And so we've created new scholarship portals
12 on the campus, so students can go in, fill out
13 information, and have a drop-down menu of
14 scholarships they might be eligible to receive.

15 But we also remind students and families to
16 work with our financial-aid office and their
17 advisors, especially when their families come under
18 financial stress, where they may have to withdraw
19 from school if we can't provide emergency funding
20 for them.

21 So we are looking at as many ways possible to
22 help them afford the higher education, but also to
23 stay in college and persist on to the next level.

24 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Dr. Del Genio,
25 getting back to capital funding, I hate to ask you

1 to prioritize things. It's like picking a favorite
2 child.

3 But, I was visited by the dean of the
4 engineering school, who, I was sad to learn, has
5 taken another job, or plans on leaving?

6 DR. BETH DEL GENIO: Yes, she is now the
7 provost at the University of Arizona.

8 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Well, she was
9 very -- she was really enthusiastic about the
10 project. And I can see that it would have a lot of
11 value to, not just the university, but our community
12 as well.

13 That seems to be a priority project for the
14 university.

15 Is that -- am I reading that correctly?

16 DR. BETH DEL GENIO: You are -- you are
17 absolutely reading that correctly, yes.

18 And -- and, of course, we also have, just
19 like President Hocoy spoke to earlier, in terms of
20 general, you know, critical maintenance needs, you
21 know, across our three campuses.

22 But engineering is definitely an
23 institutional priority.

24 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Thank you.

25 DR. BETH DEL GENIO: Thank you.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

2 And, yes, I'm well aware of the needs for --
3 the need for capital funding for your engineering
4 school.

5 UB has come to see me in Albany on this
6 issue. And so has -- Senator Kennedy and I have
7 discussed it on multiple occasions.

8 The real problem is that we have not had a
9 capital budget since -- a 5-year capital plan since
10 2008, and as a result, buildings are crumbling, and
11 repairs are beyond the capital maintenance -- the
12 critical-maintenance phase.

13 And we are planning additional hearings,
14 probably in Albany, on the need for a 5-year capital
15 plan.

16 We've had legislation in Albany requiring a
17 5-year capital plan.

18 The Assembly has passed it. We have passed
19 it.

20 It has not been enacted.

21 The legislation does not specify the program;
22 simply the concept of a 5-year capital plan.

23 But let me ask one question, and that is:

24 The relationship between the University at
25 Buffalo, and I guess Erie County Community College

1 also, but particularly UB, and the business
2 community, because I think that is extremely
3 critical, because everybody will benefit with the
4 jobs that are created, and so on.

5 And I must say, I visited Cornell Tech about
6 a year ago, on Roosevelt Island in Manhattan. And
7 it is an amazing, amazing place.

8 And I would love to see something like that
9 in Buffalo because of the economic benefit.

10 So can you tell us a little bit about how the
11 university and the business community are working
12 together?

13 DR. BETH DEL GENIO: Thank you.

14 And, you know, that is very important to us.

15 We all know, you know, we are -- we are
16 citizens of -- of -- of -- of Buffalo, of Erie
17 County, of Western New York, and we know that
18 business and industry come into our region from
19 places across the nation, and across the world,
20 because they want to be located or co-located with
21 major educational institutions: SUNY Erie,
22 Buffalo State College, the University at Buffalo.

23 And they are looking -- business and industry
24 are looking at our graduates, our intellectual
25 resources, the innovation that we're doing, to drive

1 their businesses and industries.

2 So there is absolutely a synergistic
3 relationship between and among business and industry
4 and the University at Buffalo.

5 So we actually, a few years back, our office
6 of the vice president for research expanded its
7 purview into the vice president -- the office of the
8 vice president for research and economic development
9 so that we could have a front door to business and
10 industry.

11 We know how important it is, not only to
12 graduate students, but to keep them here in Buffalo,
13 in Western New York, in New York State, so that we
14 can -- we can have, not just a -- not just see some
15 economic impact today, but have sustainable economic
16 impact.

17 And I think, Senator, you're exactly right,
18 when you have innovation happening as well, not just
19 our graduates, but innovation, that is fueling new
20 ideas, and it is attracting really great companies.

21 And, we also want to make sure that we have
22 created an ecosystem, so that our students who are
23 doing entrepreneurial work, and our faculty and
24 their spin-off companies, is that they can actually
25 stay here in Buffalo, in Western New York, in

1 New York State.

2 So it's absolutely -- it's dynamics, it's
3 synergistic, and it's -- it's something that --
4 that -- that we do here.

5 Thank you.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

7 DR. DAN HOCOY: I --

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Kennedy -- oh, I'm
9 sorry.

10 Yes.

11 SENATOR KENNEDY: We at SUNY Erie consider
12 the business community a very close partner in terms
13 of improving the socioeconomic and cultural
14 prosperity of Western New York.

15 As you might know, there's a huge skills gap
16 currently in Western New York, and our job as the
17 community college is really to address those needs.

18 So we have been working closely with GM,
19 Western Automotive, Citibank, Facebook, Tesla, as
20 well as many others, to ensure that they get the
21 talent they're looking for, and that our students
22 get the training and the jobs that they're looking
23 for.

24 So it's really a win-win.

25 We have industry actually investing in the

1 college.

2 Citibank, for instance, provided us with
3 \$200,000 just to put a tablet up to advertise their
4 summer and career opportunities.

5 West Herr just gave us \$150,000 to put in new
6 lifts so that they can get more auto technicians.

7 And so we feel that this is a close
8 partnership, and this is to the benefit of the
9 county.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Senator Kennedy.

11 SENATOR KENNEDY: Thank you very much.

12 Going back to the capital, Beth, and
13 I appreciate you pointing out the impact that the
14 curriculum, combined with a proper capital expense,
15 and a strategic capital expense, can have on the
16 local economy.

17 The UB 2020 initiative was a brilliant
18 investment that is truly transforming our entire
19 downtown corridor.

20 And it's kudos to the leadership here once
21 again at the university.

22 So, thank you.

23 And then just to touch on the ECC's capital
24 again, I -- my -- my concern goes to us planning
25 ahead here, and looking to, once again, make sure

1 that we have what's necessary in the capital plan,
2 and from a financial perspective.

3 If the -- the -- the capital master plan is
4 not coming until the spring, it may not be possible
5 to include that in those numbers in what we are
6 advancing within the confines of our Democratic
7 Conference budget.

8 So -- so if there's any way that we can --

9 DR. DAN HOCY: Sure, we can --

10 SENATOR KENNEDY: -- fast-track that --

11 DR. DAN HOCY: -- when do you need the
12 numbers, Senator Kennedy?

13 SENATOR KENNEDY: Yesterday.

14 [Laughter.]

15 SENATOR KENNEDY: The sooner the better.

16 I think it needs to be a priority.

17 And the only way we can fight for those funds
18 is if we know what we're fighting for.

19 And especially from a budgetary perspective
20 that we're advancing these numbers, it's imperative
21 that we get those.

22 You know, we will be, in very short order --
23 you know, look, if the gov -- if we can get the
24 Governor to include this within his budget, that --
25 that -- that -- that is a great way to get out of

1 the gate.

2 Then it's just a matter of finessing the
3 numbers to make it work for everyone.

4 If that does not happen, then our Conference
5 is committed to, once again, advancing it. And that
6 would be within the first week of January where a
7 lot of these conversations are going to have to take
8 place.

9 But leading up to that, within the next two
10 months, I would say --

11 DR. DAN HOCY: Okay.

12 SENATOR KENNEDY: -- the sooner we can get
13 those.

14 DR. DAN HOCY: Great.

15 SENATOR KENNEDY: Thank you.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, and please
17 understand that the legislative session in January
18 is going to be a little bit different than the past,
19 because the anticipated close will be the first week
20 in June.

21 And we are going to be in session additional
22 days during the beginning of session.

23 Where, traditionally, it's been, you know,
24 Monday and Tuesday, they're going to Wednesday, to
25 make up for the -- 57 days have been scheduled for

1 2020.

2 But they are planning to close June 2nd, or
3 maybe June 3rd.

4 In the past, it's been the end of June.

5 SENATOR KENNEDY: One last thing.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: One last thing.

7 SENATOR KENNEDY: And one last comment, on a
8 separate note, and let me just reiterate this:

9 The Chairwoman's extraordinary advocacy for
10 the capital plan is just -- it's -- it's
11 unbelievable.

12 I think part of why she wants to get this
13 capital plan done is so that she stops hearing from
14 people like me.

15 [Laughter.]

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes, right, absolutely
17 true.

18 [Laughter.]

19 SENATOR KENNEDY: But I just want to switch
20 gears for a moment, because I think it's critically
21 important we get it on the record about the
22 University at Buffalo and the debt, and the issue
23 regarding the downtown campus, the debt that
24 ultimately has been put on the back of the campus,
25 the commitment that was made initially from the

1 State of New York, and, ultimately, being able to
2 financially deal with the issues that you have at
3 hand, at the same time, trying to advance the agenda
4 actually for the students on the campus.

5 Can you just speak to that?

6 DR. BETH DEL GENIO: Certainly.

7 Talking about the Jacob School of Medicine
8 and Biomedical Sciences, as I said in my testimony
9 earlier, our -- our physicians, our
10 clinicians/researchers, populate our hospitals.

11 They, literally, lift up the clinical care in
12 the city of Buffalo and our region, including ECMC,
13 Oishei Children's Hospital, Buffalo General
14 Hospital.

15 When you go into those hospitals, you will be
16 treated by a resident or a physician who is UB MD.

17 As we populate, as we hold up clinical care
18 in this community, we, of course, we need support,
19 additional support for the state, to make sure that,
20 in critical-need area, critical clinical areas, that
21 we have physicians who -- who are providing clinical
22 care.

23 And if we don't, then we have actually gaps
24 in our practice.

25 With those gaps, that means that we're -- you

1 know, we won't be able to improve patient outcomes.

2 It means that we won't be able to reduce
3 health-care disparities.

4 So when we talk about additional support from
5 the State, in terms of the Jacob School of Medicine,
6 is be -- is that we need -- we, literally, need
7 faculty in -- in critical clinical areas so that we
8 can provide the very best patient care.

9 And when we think about patient care, of
10 course, we're thinking about our families, our
11 friends, our neighbors, the members of our
12 community.

13 But I think it's also important, as we talk
14 about clinical care, is that it also can be -- it
15 attract patients from outside of our region and our
16 state.

17 So, we don't want folks here in Buffalo and
18 in Western New York to go to Pittsburgh, to go to
19 Cleveland Clinic, to go to the Mayo Clinic, to
20 buy -- provide -- to find the very best clinical
21 care. We want them to find it right here.

22 And we want other folks from across the
23 nation to come into our region, to come into our
24 city, for the very best transformative clinical
25 care.

1 We can only do that if we've got -- we've got
2 the right docs in all of the right specialties.

3 And that's why we need support.

4 SENATOR KENNEDY: And the bottom line is, the
5 State needs to make good on the State's commitment
6 to the university, and to the medical school in the
7 downtown campus.

8 And to this point, there is a gap in funding,
9 and it is on the back right now of the university
10 debt.

11 Was that -- is that an accurate depiction?

12 DR. BETH DEL GENIO: It means that there are
13 certain things that we are not able to do, just as
14 I described.

15 SENATOR KENNEDY: Thank you.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, and that theme,
17 I think, is very apparent throughout the SUNY system
18 in this part of the state, because I've heard from
19 campuses nearby that they're losing students to
20 other states, and what -- particularly, Ohio.

21 And to me, that's sort of mind-boggling.

22 And the question is, how do we deal with
23 that?

24 Whether we have -- and it doesn't apply to
25 the health care. It applies to the entire SUNY

1 system.

2 And how do we stem the concept of people
3 going elsewhere for their education?

4 And we've talked internally about
5 differential tuition, allowing colleges to set their
6 own, which I don't think is a good idea.

7 But, nevertheless, we're losing students in
8 the North Country to Vermont and Canada.

9 And we're well aware of that issue.

10 So I understand what you're saying.

11 We're trying to find a solution, we're just
12 not there yet.

13 And I -- your discussion of the Jacob School
14 is for non-cap. It's for operating (indiscernible)
15 rather, I think ought to be clear, than capital.

16 Okay?

17 Anybody else?

18 And I guess we're good.

19 And we thank you all for coming.

20 SENATOR KENNEDY: Thank you, all.

21 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Thank you.

22 (All witnesses say "Thank you.")

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Oh, I'm sorry.

24 Next we have Blair Horner, the executive
25 director of the New York Public Interest Research

1 Group.

2 And then we'll have the students.

3 Traditionally at these hearings, I've had the
4 students come second.

5 But, we thank Mr. Horner for making the
6 trip.

7 BLAIR HORNER: Well, thank you.

8 Thank you, all.

9 Thank you, Senator Stavisky, Senator Kennedy,
10 Assemblywoman McMahon.

11 My name is Blair Horner. I'm NYPIRG's
12 executive director.

13 NYPIRG is a statewide organization that has
14 college and university students elected from the
15 schools. That's my board of directors.

16 So there are state universities, city
17 university, and independent colleges that are on our
18 board.

19 Not surprisingly, higher education is an
20 issue that is of importance to them.

21 And we submitted written testimony, but I'll
22 summarize the comments, because I heard the -- that
23 the hook might be out if I go past five minutes.

24 And no filibustering on my end.

25 So when we were looking at -- looking at the

1 hearing, the -- we looked at it in the context of
2 the SUNY 2020 law that passed in 2011.

3 And as you all may recall, when the SUNY 2020
4 law passed, there was sort of a grand bargain: That
5 college students would pay more through regular
6 increases in tuition, and the State would maintain
7 its effort so that the tuition hikes were not used
8 to backfill budget holes.

9 And the theory was, that the increases in
10 tuition would be used to improve student services on
11 college campuses.

12 So when we -- and as you all know from
13 legislation that has passed in both your Houses, the
14 maintenance-of-effort legislation had a loophole in
15 it, basically, ignoring key things; inflationary
16 cost, collective bargaining, et cetera.

17 And the Legislature has repeatedly tried to
18 fix that, because the -- the -- it creates financial
19 stress on the colleges and universities so they
20 don't have the resources to cover those services.

21 And the legislatures passed it, and the
22 legislation, as you know, has been vetoed by the
23 governor.

24 And so one part of the SUNY 2020 bargain, in
25 terms of the State's effort, is inadequate, in our

1 view.

2 And then the second part of it is, and
3 there's been increasing discussion on this, is the
4 TAP gap.

5 As you know, as tuition goes up, part of the
6 grand bargain in SUNY 2020 was that, you know, back
7 in the old days, every time tuition would go up at a
8 public college and university, the TAP award would
9 go up as well to cover the tuition cost for the poor
10 students.

11 Part of the deal in 2020 was that, instead of
12 that, the colleges would make up the difference,
13 that the TAP award would be capped out, spend,
14 roughly, \$5,000.

15 Tuition kept going up, and so now there's,
16 roughly, a \$2,000 difference between tuition and
17 TAP. And so the campuses have to eat that.

18 So there's two financial pressures on the
19 system that we think are reflected in the comments
20 you'll see in our testimony, of examples of where
21 college and universities are now complaining that
22 they don't have the resources that they need, and
23 that they've been involved in department cutbacks,
24 reductions in services.

25 We've heard from it students -- again, we

1 touch on them in the testimony -- from students,
2 that advisement services have been cut back, and so
3 that they're having, instead of an enhanced student
4 experience, they are not having the enhanced student
5 experience that was part of the grand bargain.

6 And so one of the things we did recently is,
7 we looked at: Well, what's been the financial cost
8 to public-college students as a result of SUNY 2020?

9 And we did an analysis, where we looked at
10 full-time-enrolled college students at four-year and
11 two-year state university and SUNY university
12 systems.

13 We looked at the amount of tuition has gone
14 up at each one of those institutions and aggregated
15 it. Deduct it from it what seemed like a reasonable
16 estimate on how much TAP covered the increases in
17 tuition.

18 And we come up with at least \$2.5 billion
19 more college students have paid as a result of
20 SUNY 2020.

21 And so we think it's pretty clear that the
22 students have kept their end of the bargain from
23 SUNY 2020.

24 We think the State should do more.

25 And so we highlight in our testimony, really,

1 four areas that we recommend, that, certainly, to
2 the Governor, and to the Legislature, in the final
3 budget:

4 One is, to freeze tuition;

5 Two is, to close the TAP gap, and to approve
6 enhanced maintenance-of-effort legislation;

7 Enhance TAP and Excelsior Scholarship
8 programs in ways that make it more useful to more
9 students;

10 And, fourth, to -- and this is really
11 directed at the Governor's Office, is to at least
12 ensure the opportunity programs are not cut.

13 As you know, there's the annual dance between
14 the executive and the legislative branch, where
15 opportunity programs, which you've already heard
16 about, and everyone knows, work extremely well, are
17 cut as part of the executive budget. And then you
18 guys get to add the money back in.

19 We think that that kind of dance should end
20 and that those programs be expanded.

21 So all of those things are sort of our
22 analysis.

23 We've had, (indiscernible) others, as
24 Senator Stavisky mentioned, college students have
25 testified.

1 The reason I'm here today is because we did
2 do this recent analysis, there may be some questions
3 on that.

4 And -- let me stop there.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

6 Incidentally, TAP has not increased since
7 2014.

8 BLAIR HORNER: I thought there was the
9 increase from 5,000, to \$5,165.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: And that was a very small
11 increase.

12 BLAIR HORNER: That's right, that's right.

13 SENATOR KENNEDY: First of all,
14 unsurprisingly, you are very concise, to the point,
15 and got right to it.

16 So thank you.

17 Thank you also for your leadership on just a
18 myriad of other issues across the state.

19 Your leadership is really extraordinary.

20 So, really, thank you.

21 As it pertains to the TAP gap, I think our
22 entire Conference, I can speak for myself, but
23 I think our entire Conference feels the same way.

24 We have to close the gap.

25 We have to eradicate the gap.

1 There should not be a gap.

2 There should not be an obstacle when it comes
3 to finances in this state for individuals that are
4 looking to gain a higher education.

5 In 2019, heading into 2020, the time is
6 absolutely now to resolve this issue.

7 So I believe we're going to be going on into
8 the next legislative session with a head of steam on
9 resolving that issue.

10 As far as the other initiatives that you've
11 outlined, I think it's very important that we take a
12 strong look at every single one of them, and do our
13 best to make it work, make it work for the system.

14 And, again, you have been on the front lines
15 of all of these initiatives, and I just want to
16 thank you for your efforts.

17 BLAIR HORNER: Well, thank you. That's very
18 nice.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: And that report you
20 prepared.

21 BLAIR HORNER: Just mention one thing.

22 The 2.5 billion, by the way, we think is a
23 very conservative estimate.

24 It does not include the per-credit-hour
25 increase for part-time students, because that would

1 have been a nightmare to try to figure out.

2 We didn't look at winter or summer students.

3 We did not include the current academic year.

4 And so it's an estimate, and we tried to be
5 as conservative as possible, because we don't want
6 to blow smoke or anything like that. Right?

7 We want to be as best as we can.

8 But it's billions of dollars.

9 "So where did it go?" is the question for you
10 guys.

11 If it's -- is it being used to backfill
12 budget holes, which would run counter to what it is
13 that you all said in 2011 as part of SUNY 2020, or
14 has it gone somewhere else?

15 I mean, we don't know.

16 We could not look that up.

17 And certainly one thing I would flag for the
18 legislative branch, in your oversight capacity, it's
19 pretty clear the students are paying billions of
20 dollars more.

21 What's it getting used for?

22 And I think that's a legitimate line of
23 inquiry that could lead to, there may be other
24 issues that come out of that sort of conversation.

25 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Thank you,

1 Mr. Horner.

2 When you talked about your four points,
3 Number 3, enhance TAP and Excelsior programs, could
4 you just briefly speak to that?

5 Like, what do you envision those enhancements
6 to be?

7 BLAIR HORNER: Yeah, I'm -- the -- I'll give
8 you more -- I'll just give you one example.

9 At one point in New York's career, graduate
10 students were covered under the TAP program, and now
11 they're not.

12 So there's a long list of things that can be
13 done to modernize the TAP program.

14 And some steps have been taken, and it's not
15 like nothing's happened in this area. It's easier
16 to get part-time aid, for example, than it used to
17 be.

18 But there are a number of things you could
19 you do to modernize TAP.

20 When it comes to Excelsior, the thing that
21 I hear that is the most disturbing about it, and,
22 again, Excelsior program, if you get it, it's really
23 good news.

24 If you don't get it, well, you know, no harm,
25 no foul.

1 But for those students who get into the
2 program, and then, for whatever reason, end up not
3 being able to maintain the minimum standards, that
4 turns into a loan.

5 And for the students, that's the more
6 troubling, sort of, anecdotal things that we've
7 heard about, and I think we refer to some of those
8 things in the testimony, where students that thought
9 they were getting a grant now turns into a loan.

10 And, you know, it's the twenty-first century.

11 In the same way as 100 years ago,
12 progressives advocated for K -- or, elementary and
13 secondary school being free and universal, we think
14 that college should be the same thing as you're
15 looking into the twenty-first century.

16 And I know that there are -- there's been
17 legislation that's being discussed to amend the
18 state constitution to do just that.

19 And I would think the public-policy direction
20 should go that way.

21 The public-policy direction should be, you
22 get college education as long as you can -- you
23 know, you can meet whatever standards are required
24 to get into school.

25 It shouldn't be a financial obstacle.

1 So, to go back to the sort of tuition issue,
2 that really does matter where that money went
3 because, if it's not being invested in student
4 services, you need -- you have a right to know that.

5 The public does too.

6 And what is being shortchanged by the TAP
7 gap, the lack of an enhanced maintenance of effort,
8 for example, could create the financial stresses
9 that set up an environment, where -- you know, all
10 money is fungible, but where the tuition money is
11 being sort of clawed back into, really, filling
12 budget holes.

13 Long answer.

14 You didn't even ask a question, I gave you a
15 long answer, no matter what.

16 I'm sorry.

17 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: I think you --

18 BLAIR HORNER: I promised not to filibuster,
19 and then what did I do?

20 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: It was a good
21 answer.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: (Inaudible.)

23 BLAIR HORNER: Right, exactly.

24 Anything else?

25 SENATOR STAVISKY: No, and we thank you.

1 BLAIR HORNER: Well, thank you for having me
2 up here up. I appreciate it.

3 And, hopefully, I set a standard for being...

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: And I must say, we've had
5 students from NYPIRG testify at all of the hearings
6 so far, and it's appreciated.

7 BLAIR HORNER: Today you got the old guy.
8 Thank you.

9 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Thank you.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

11 Now we have the student government heads.

12 We have Gaelle Jean-Baptise, president,
13 undergraduate student government at Buff State;

14 Yousouf -- I apologize if I mispronounce your
15 name -- Yousouf and Georgia from UB.

16 (Inaudible) will be Andy Sako after.

17 And then UUP.

18 Thank you for coming.

19 SENATOR KENNEDY: Thank you all.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay.

21 SENATOR KENNEDY: Welcome.

22 YOUSOUF AMOLEGBE: Hello. My name is
23 Yousouf Amolegbe.

24 There was a mistake on my name on the agenda,
25 but it's all right.

1 But I'm here on be -- I'm the undergraduate
2 student association president at University at
3 Buffalo.

4 I'm here on behalf of my 20,000 undergraduate
5 constituents -- undergrad constituents, as well as
6 on behalf of the SUNY trustee and SUNY Institute and
7 Assembly president, President Ostro, as the
8 1.4 million students of our green university system.

9 We very much appreciate the efforts of
10 Senate -- Senate Committee Chair Stavisky,
11 Senator Kennedy, and U -- UB undergrad and
12 law-school alumni, Assemblywoman McMahon --

13 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: McMahon.

14 YOUSOUF AMOLEGBE: McMahon. Sorry about
15 that.

16 -- (indiscernible) a series of hearings
17 across the state of New York to address the cost of
18 public higher education, affordability, and
19 accessibility.

20 The student assembly -- student assembly is
21 recognized systemwide, supporting the students of
22 SUNY. The student assembly is comprise -- comprised
23 of student leaders from across the state, and
24 represents the students from the many universities,
25 centers, and colleges -- technology colleges, and

1 community colleges, and advocates, on the local,
2 state, and federal level.

3 The president of the student assembly serves
4 as the head of the organized student government for
5 all 64 campuses in the system, and holds the
6 position as the only student member of the
7 student -- student board of trustees.

8 Twice, annually, the student assembly brings
9 together hundreds of student leaders from across the
10 state, and beyond, to participate in
11 student-leadership conferences, where student
12 advocates the prioritize -- priorities are final --
13 are -- are finalized, and members are offered the
14 opportunity to network and learn leadership skills
15 from students, campus and system administration and
16 faculty, through various workshops and net --
17 network -- networking opportunities.

18 Additionally, the student assembly
19 representatives meet on a monthly basis to
20 coordinate advocacy efforts, and for the refined
21 strategies toward the advancement of quality and
22 affordable -- afford -- affordability in public
23 higher education.

24 The student assembly operates in a very -- in
25 a variety of committees, focused on a share -- and

1 sharing academic excellence throughout the system,
2 and (indiscernible) the areas of campus safety,
3 disability services, gender equity, and
4 sustainability.

5 The student assembly, and as well as the
6 student association, urges the student -- the State
7 to recognize and act upon the magnitude under which
8 underfunding -- underfunding public higher education
9 has on the delivery of services and the quality of
10 education across the system.

11 The committee clearly identifies the benefit
12 of the state from accessible state university, due
13 to return on investment made by students pursuing
14 with higher education in New York.

15 Graduates of SUNY are likely to work and live
16 in New York, and continue to stimulate local and
17 state economy -- economies through employment and
18 taxes.

19 Adequately funding higher education holds the
20 potential to yield a great return on investment for
21 the state, as students, faculty, and staff from
22 across the SUNY system continue -- continue to
23 enhance the quality of life and econo -- economic
24 prosperity in their communities.

25 Various state and federal financial-aid

1 programs greatly benefit the students of SUNY.

2 The tuition assistance program is
3 (indiscernible) students in attending in-state
4 post-secondary institutions; however, there is a
5 consistent gap in the funding mechanism that
6 penalizes campuses for accepting and enrolling
7 students who utilize the tuition assistance program.

8 The shortfall in funding by the State to
9 provide this support has severely diminished and --
10 the ability of our campuses to provide quality
11 educate -- quality education and critical student
12 services.

13 With increased investment by the State in
14 institutions of public higher education, students
15 can benefit more from quality education, services,
16 and programs, such as mental health, counseling, and
17 food pantries, EOP, academic advisement, and gender
18 and sex -- sexuality resources at -- at a -- at an
19 affordable cost.

20 Additionally, the ex -- the
21 Excelsior Scholarship, in combination with other
22 student financial-aid programs, allows eligible
23 students to attend a SUNY college tuition-free.

24 This program is successful, as it aids
25 students in graduating on time with less debt.

1 The University of Buffalo Student
2 Association, as well as the student assembly, urges
3 the State to expand the promise of the Excelsior
4 college scholarship, and implement measures that
5 would allow for a greater number of students to
6 apply -- apply the scholarship to the academic area.

7 As well, the University of Buffalo Student
8 Association and the student assembly urges the State
9 to invest in public higher education by funding the
10 shortfall created by the tuition assistance program,
11 making amendment to the current financial programs
12 available to students, and recognizing its
13 fundamental role and responsibility for a
14 world-class education at a -- at an affordable cost
15 to all.

16 With an increase in funding and expansion of
17 aid -- expansion -- expansion of aid programs,
18 campuses across the state will be equipped to
19 provide greater quality edu -- greater quality
20 education and student services that address the
21 backgrounds and needs of all students.

22 Now I would like to call on United Student
23 Government president, Gaelle Jean-Baptise, to expand
24 upon the importance of some of -- some points I just
25 mentioned.

1 GAELE JEAN-BAPTISE: Good afternoon.

2 SENATOR KENNEDY: Good afternoon.

3 GAELE JEAN-BAPTISE: My name is
4 Gaelle Jean-Baptise. I'm a Buffalo State senior,
5 majoring in sociology. And I'm also the United
6 Students Government president.

7 I'd like to thank you all for the opportunity
8 to be heard, and to speak on behalf of my peers.

9 As president, and as a student, I have
10 noticed so many different issues throughout, not
11 only my campus, but other campuses as well.

12 One thing all struggling campuses have in
13 common is usually money.

14 On Buffalo State's campus, students come to
15 me all the time with different ideas, and many of
16 them can't be implemented due to the lack of money.

17 I've also noticed that many students have
18 left Buffalo State because they can't afford to be
19 here, which is extremely unfortunate.

20 There are more important things that should
21 be at our schools, like mental-health programs and
22 better advisement and resources, to help all our
23 demographics.

24 As a college student, we deal with so many
25 different issues daily.

1 I myself have four jobs, and one of the most
2 important ones is being a student, and we don't get
3 paid to do that.

4 Students like myself are constantly
5 financially-challenged, living from check to check,
6 and hoping that our tuition is covered, and that we
7 can continue our education.

8 The Excelsior Scholarship should match the
9 disparity, by percentage, to the increase in
10 tuition.

11 Being that the annual income requirement is
12 set by the State, that should reflect as a residency
13 cost for students, and bridging that divide is
14 imperative to ensure that students who need the help
15 get it.

16 We are in need for adequate funding for all
17 of our institutions because funds are constantly
18 being moved to things that don't necessarily benefit
19 us as students.

20 Financial burdens tend to overwhelm students
21 like myself, and we need the additional support.

22 Thank you for your time and support, and
23 I would like to introduce Georgia Hubert [sic].

24 GEORGIA HULBERT: Hello.

25 Is this working?

1 Okay.

2 Hi.

3 First and foremost, I want to say thank you
4 for coming to the University at Buffalo here today
5 and, obviously, listening to us as we represent the
6 students.

7 First and foremost, my name is
8 Georgia Hulbert. I'm a senior at the University of
9 Buffalo, studying political science and legal
10 studies.

11 And this year I have the honor, with Yousouf,
12 to represent the 21,000 undergraduate students here
13 at the University at Buffalo.

14 And I can tell you it's a very unique
15 experience, where we get to meet and talk to
16 hundreds of students, and listen to their concerns
17 and the issues that they face on a day-to-day basis
18 as students.

19 And one of the things I think -- actually,
20 two key issues that we notice, and as we speak to
21 students, and the first one is that, right now,
22 students are still be -- students are still facing
23 many financial issues.

24 We have students who are concerned every
25 semester whether or not they are eligible for

1 financial aid, and have to deal with that anxiety
2 as -- while being full-time students.

3 We also have students who are working two to
4 three part-time jobs, just to be able to afford, you
5 know, their time as students at the University at
6 Buffalo.

7 Students are constantly concerned and anxious
8 about whether or not they can truly pursue their
9 degrees, and have the financial ability to be able
10 to do that upon graduation.

11 All of these things combined, that is a --
12 that can be -- take a toll on many students.

13 And so while we need the financial-aid
14 programs, and an expansion on those programs,
15 desperately, we also need the support -- the
16 financial support for the programs that help
17 students see those four years through.

18 Like I said earlier, as we are students who
19 get to meet with many, they come to us with various
20 degree -- varying issues.

21 As we know, mental-health issues are on the
22 rise, and the support services, unfortunately, have
23 not been able to expand due to, you know, financial
24 concerns on behalf of the University at Buffalo.

25 And while (indiscernible) asked, as

1 undergraduate student government, so, you know, what
2 can we do? unfortunately, we can't do a lot. And
3 we're using student fees to do what we can to find
4 alternative solutions.

5 But, ultimately, these types of programs need
6 to expand in order to help students complete their
7 four-year degrees.

8 Other situations in which we've faced and
9 we've noticed, is that students are -- there's many
10 food and financial insecurities in that regard. So
11 we had to start our own food pantry.

12 And, mostly, the funds coming out of that
13 were from the undergraduate student association, and
14 not the University at Buffalo.

15 We -- and to demonstrate the scale of this
16 issue, is that we are currently supplying over
17 30 bags of food a day to students, and to be able to
18 support them through their time at UB.

19 Also, as the number of students with
20 disabilities increases throughout New York State,
21 accessibility resources, what we call our office at
22 University at Buffalo, disability services offices
23 across the state, are not being supported
24 adequately.

25 There has been a drastic increase in the

1 number of students attending colleges. And as more
2 students identify as having mental-health issues,
3 unfortunately, the funding for that -- for the
4 disability services offices has remained stagnant.

5 So that is also a concern on many of our
6 students, not only receiving equal access to their
7 education as our able-bodied peers, but also, on top
8 of that, being able to -- for those offices being
9 able to provide the extra services in order to make
10 those students feel included and supported
11 throughout their time at the University at Buffalo.

12 And, of course, outreach programs, we get the
13 opportunity to meet and work with many students who
14 have been impacted by those programs.

15 And while we know that for -- or, like,
16 higher education is 100 percent needed, really, in
17 today's age, for some people, that is really like a
18 lifeline.

19 And it's essential that we can expand on
20 those programs to, you know, allow all students the
21 opportunity to seek a higher-education degree.

22 So these are the types of programs.

23 So while we would love for, you know, the
24 expansion on financial-aid programs, there are
25 also -- while that number -- or, while the number of

1 students increases, we also need to expand upon the
2 programs that help students complete those degrees.

3 So I just want to say thank you for listening
4 to us today, and thank you for being here.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

6 Incidentally, Austin was at the New Paltz
7 hearing.

8 I'm proud to say I work very closely with
9 the -- both the student association of --
10 SASU [ph.], whatever, the student governments, both
11 at SUNY and CUNY.

12 Questions?

13 I'll tell you what, should we let the
14 Assemblywoman go first?

15 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Sure.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, let her.

17 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Well, first of all,
18 I just want to thank all three of you for being here
19 today, and I want to commend you for all you do.

20 It's hard enough just to be a student and to
21 get through those four years.

22 But, you're working, and you're so active in
23 student government, and taking on roles that a lot
24 of people have no interest in.

25 So I really -- I'm so impressed, and I really

1 think you're going to do great things in the future.

2 So, congratulations, and thank you for being
3 here today.

4 I would like to touch a little bit more
5 about, Georgia, you mentioned the food security, and
6 other hidden costs of -- of attending higher -- a
7 higher-education institution, not just food, but,
8 you know, the cost of books, the cost of
9 transportation.

10 You know, if -- if you could --

11 GEORGIA HULBERT: Of course.

12 I know that, you know, we ran for student
13 government, all three of us. And between all of us,
14 I mean, we must put in 20 to 30 ours a week in what
15 we do for our universities.

16 With that said, we do get paid in our
17 respective roles, but we still work part-time jobs
18 on the side, and we're full-time students.

19 Like, I work two part-time jobs.

20 I'm sure I can speak for the others too.

21 And that's just something that we go through
22 as students because the cost of living is expensive.

23 A lot of students, you know, also have to
24 worry about health insurance and health care.

25 That's also a big concern, which is why we

1 need to expand on medical programs at the univer --
2 you know, at our universities so that they can
3 afford these types of services, because health -- as
4 we know, health insurance and health care is not --
5 is not cheap.

6 Also, yes, transportation costs, you know,
7 and things along those lines, cost money.

8 Living at universities, or whether we have to
9 support our families too, that's always -- also
10 another concern.

11 So while tuition is expensive, and tuition
12 costs are funded, we also need those other services,
13 to be able to get us through those four years, and
14 so we're not constantly worrying about, you know,
15 the next paycheck, or whether we can afford our
16 bills, and such, but we can actually concentrate on
17 our degrees, and making sure that, you know, we're
18 taking up opportunities to be able to, you know, be
19 competitive, you know -- be competitive once we
20 graduate college.

21 YOUSOUF AMOLEGBE: And just to kind of --
22 just to kind of touch on the men -- the food pantry
23 a little bit more, we are (indiscernible) -- so
24 (indiscernible) piloted last spring by the
25 previous -- previous student government, executive

1 board, with -- in collaboration with university
2 health promotions.

3 Although the student government, let's say,
4 had to sponsor a great amount of it through, like,
5 monetary sponsors, food drives, to kind of get food
6 for students, to be able to stock the pantry, we --
7 I do -- university mission also did help donate
8 towards it.

9 But we know that, like -- we -- we would hope
10 that, like, there would be like a fixed funding for
11 the -- for the pantry for the future.

12 As we understand that, like, we were told
13 that university tuition fees couldn't be used to
14 feed other students. But, like, we feel that, like,
15 food security is a very big issue on campus.

16 Not every student can afford to have a meal
17 plan (indiscernible), and because SUNY can't afford
18 to buy a meal every single time.

19 We are spending so much time in school and,
20 like, studying, that not every student has time to
21 sit at home and, like, buy groceries and cook, or,
22 some may not know how to cook at all.

23 So it's really important that, like, food
24 security is like -- is really, like, paid attention
25 to.

1 We can find like a way of, like, to making,
2 like, the food pantry being stocked, like a
3 permanent thing, because (indiscernible) like, the
4 same way tuition and fees, not necessarily shouldn't
5 be -- isn't allowed to cover other students
6 (indiscernible), student activities fees shouldn't
7 be -- shouldn't -- shouldn't also have to go through
8 as that, because the student activities fees should
9 be providing services to all students, and not just
10 certain students that can -- can -- that can't eat.

11 Also, as for transportation, I know for --
12 for the -- for the longest time, student governments
13 at UB had to, like -- we had a safety shuttle that
14 student governments at UB were funding, to take
15 students that lived right by on the South Campus
16 within a 1.5-mile radius.

17 And (indiscernible) -- ever since the change
18 of our fiscal agents, (indiscernible) used to
19 operate the services, the university park and
20 transportation has taken on that role. And student
21 governments don't pay for the safety shuttle
22 anymore.

23 But -- and -- but we would -- I would hope
24 that, like, because there will be a way that more
25 funding can could go towards. This way, we can

1 expand, like, the distance on which to we take
2 students to, because students -- housing close to
3 campus always tends to be on the more expensive
4 side. And students find themselves going a little
5 further off campus, away from campus, to kind of,
6 like get the much cheaper housing.

7 But this comes into, like, to the cost of
8 being able to have -- have -- have -- have to be
9 able to buy a car.

10 Or, if you don't have a car, be able to --
11 the public transportation in Buffalo doesn't really
12 serve, like, enough routes. So, like, it's kind of
13 really tough to, like, use public transportation to
14 get to campus.

15 Or, like, even if you had a car, like,
16 maintaining a car, like, putting gas in there, like,
17 the regular wear and tear of cars, like, this is
18 stuff that are very expensive.

19 And we would hope that, like, we can kind of,
20 like, expand the reach of, like, transportation for
21 students in like a more broader scale, rather than
22 just 1.5 miles within South Campus.

23 But actually, like, be able to cover, like,
24 students that live off of North Campus or
25 South Campus and a wider mile radius.

1 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: (Inaudible) from --
2 we all would benefit from improved public
3 transportation (indiscernible), certainly.

4 Just one last thing.

5 Am I correct in assuming that there are no
6 requirements to buy a meal plan, or are there?

7 If you -- if you're living on campus, for
8 instance, are freshmen required to buy a meal plan?

9 I know at some schools --

10 GAELLE JEAN-BAPTISE: For Buffalo State
11 College, I believe, for freshmen, you do -- you do
12 have to get one because you are living on campus.

13 So for the first two years you live on
14 campus, and you have a meal plan. But when you do
15 live off-campus, you have the option of not having a
16 meal plan, which does takes off money, which I know
17 from my experience with other students, that they
18 don't get the meal plan in order to pay their rent
19 for off-campus.

20 So it's either you eat or you live in a
21 house.

22 So, I know for Buffalo State College
23 students, there has been an issue of, like, campus
24 safety, and stuff like that.

25 So when you live off-campus, you also have

1 the issue of, how am I going to get home at night
2 after an 8:40 class?

3 Or, how am I -- just to touch on the issue of
4 transportation, also, if the shuttle buses don't go
5 as far -- farther than the 1.5 radius, then how am
6 I going to get home safely?

7 And then, if I can't afford an Uber or Lyft,
8 or I can't stay somewhere else, then there's an
9 issue that I might get robbed, or something like
10 that.

11 And I think that's a really big issue within
12 Buffalo also.

13 In regards to the meal plans, I think -- we
14 do have commuter meal plans, but they're extremely
15 expensive also. And, on top of them being
16 expensive, for one meal, it's \$10 for that.

17 I can go somewhere else to get a different
18 meal.

19 So I think, when it does comes to the meal
20 plans, and different things like that, we -- we do
21 need to work more with our students and make sure
22 that they're affordable.

23 So...

24 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Thank you.

25 YOUSOUF AMOLEGBE: At UB -- at UB, students

1 on campus also have to have a meal -- that live on
2 campus have to have a meal plan in their freshman
3 year.

4 SENATOR KENNEDY: Well, I said it earlier --
5 first of all, thank you all.

6 I said it earlier, and I'll repeat it: The
7 most important testimony we're going to hear today
8 is from the students.

9 And we really appreciate your leadership,
10 each and every one of you, not just here today, and
11 being so brave to come and testify on behalf of your
12 fellow students, to the tune of thousands of fellow
13 students, but your leadership throughout the year.

14 And the -- the -- the -- the role that each
15 and every one of you has taken on is a major
16 leadership role.

17 And so we certainly appreciate your activism
18 and your engagement with the student body.

19 You know, Georgia, you had mentioned
20 something, and -- and I -- and I just want to go
21 back to it, you know, your -- your -- your
22 conversation about getting students engaged.

23 And, you know, how you ultimately got
24 engaged, and the three of you, I think, is very
25 important.

1 You said you're a political-science major.

2 The first thing that comes to my mind is that
3 the three of you need to be signed up for our
4 greater community.

5 And it's great to see young people really
6 playing a role in the future and the vision for the
7 University at Buffalo.

8 So, again, congratulations.

9 But as far as you're concerned, Georgia, you
10 know, how do we do that; how do we get more people
11 engaged at this level?

12 And what can we do as electeds to -- to make
13 that happen?

14 GEORGIA HULBERT: I think one of the ways in
15 which -- you know, a lot of times, students would
16 like the opportunity to get involved, and join
17 clubs, and be in the leadership roles, and do
18 research, and all of that stuff.

19 But, unfortunately, most of the time, like,
20 the things that are holding students back is that
21 they don't have the time, because they're having to
22 work several jobs to be able to support themselves.

23 I know that, like, this year, for me to be
24 able to, you know, get -- to take on this type of
25 role, I had to move -- I had to move back home and,

1 you know, live a little bit back in with my parents.

2 So, lucky them.

3 But I think, you know, that is kind of one of
4 the biggest issues facing students, is just the
5 financial concerns.

6 And the ways that we engage students more,
7 you know, on campuses in the political process, all
8 of that type of thing, is by alleviating the anxiety
9 of, you know, how am I going to be able to afford
10 this?

11 YOUSOUF AMOLEGBE: To kind of piggyback on
12 what she said, I know that us, as student government
13 leaders at UB, we have, like, one of the largest
14 student activity-fee budgets among the SUNY -- among
15 SUNY schools.

16 So, like, our stipends are fairly higher than
17 most other SUNY schools, but, even for us, we still
18 find ourselves struggling financially to live on
19 what we get paid.

20 So I always think to myself, that if we are
21 tech -- kind of, like, struggling to keep -- live --
22 live on the wages that we earn as student government
23 leaders, what about the other -- other SUNY schools
24 that earn way much less -- are much less than us, or
25 the ones that doesn't get paid at all, like, how are

1 they keeping up (indiscernible)?

2 Like, I'm very sure, we might -- we -- we --
3 I would say that we have -- we don't have enough
4 student involvement within -- enough involvement
5 with student government.

6 Like, for example, our student government
7 election have about, like, a 1 to 2 percent voter
8 rate in the elections. And it's, like, of the
9 20,000 students, only about 2,000 -- 2,000 come out
10 to vote. You're not serving the majority; it's not
11 the majority vote you in. But it's just, like, who
12 cares enough.

13 And it's important that, like, I think one of
14 the -- one of the things that really draws back
15 student involvement in student government is -- is,
16 like, they have -- students have to think about, all
17 right, yeah, I care about it. I mean, I want to be
18 involved, I want to make a change. But, if my
19 parents are not paying my tuition, if my parents are
20 not giving me monthly allowance to stay in school,
21 I have to find another way to fund me being able to
22 stay in school, and making it kind of, like,
23 feasible for me to stay in school.

24 So if you -- (indiscernible) -- you come --
25 you join a student government, it's not going to be

1 to, like, keep up -- keep up with your, like --
2 your, like, daily needs, and, like, kind of, like,
3 keep you on the, like, a financial and stable
4 position.

5 You're going to look to other -- to other --
6 to other -- to other means -- means of -- means of
7 earning any money, in which is going to take away
8 your involvement in student government.

9 And, like, I know this is one of the things
10 that our previous student government, the previous
11 e-board did, was actually raised the -- raised the
12 hourlies for our student staff, to \$15 an hour,
13 because we wanted to make it comp -- comp -- make
14 our student government positions competitive with
15 other -- with, like, other jobs around, so that no
16 student says, that I would rather go work at
17 McDonald's than come work -- come work with
18 (indiscernible) and actually make an impact and make
19 a difference for the students on campus.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

21 Let me just mention one other aspect.

22 You mentioned -- I think it was Georgia who
23 mentioned the mental-health facilities.

24 Back in February, Senator Kennedy, and, in
25 fact, the entire Democratic Conference, sent a

1 letter.

2 And the last sentence says, "We are proud to
3 stand with the SUNY Student Assembly and the
4 Assembly."

5 We made a request for restoration of -- it's
6 a teleconferencing system.

7 I think it was \$600,000, where students from
8 upstate help folks with mental-health needs.

9 And I believe that was restored to the
10 budget.

11 So we are aware of this.

12 And I think we can -- we're using student
13 resources, which I think is helpful.

14 GEORGIA HULBERT: And so, as of right now,
15 that is definitely a resource that is available to
16 students. And, you know, that's definitely, you
17 know, like, a wonderful safety buffer, if you want
18 to call it that.

19 However, I'm sure that, you know, many people
20 know that, you know, the best interaction and the
21 best help is a one -- you know, one-on-one with a
22 professional mental-health, you know, a
23 professional.

24 And right now, our students at the University
25 at Buffalo are having to wait three weeks for an

1 appointment. And they cannot afford to go to --
2 through with the private route.

3 So that is still a concern on our end,
4 regardless of the, you know -- the tel -- I can't
5 remember the name of it.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: The letter says that, as a
7 result of the program, they were able to expand to
8 eight campuses to provide enhanced services for the
9 students.

10 So I think that's, you know, something that
11 we are looking at.

12 Senator Kennedy has...

13 SENATOR KENNEDY: Yes, on that same point,
14 just before I came to this public hearing today,
15 I was co-host of another public hearing, actually,
16 on the opioid epidemic. And we had the opioid task
17 force, and our colleagues from across the state that
18 came together, dealing with that.

19 And the number-one issue that came up, was
20 making sure that the mental-health capacity is --
21 is -- is a focus of the decisions that we're making
22 out of Albany.

23 And to hear you discuss the issues on campus
24 here, the fact that we have to properly fund, we
25 have to give the proper resources, for mental-health

1 issues, so that students can hit their highest
2 potential, so that they can deal with their own
3 personal issues that they may have, so that they can
4 be the student that they want to be and hit their
5 highest potential, I think is absolutely important,
6 and essential, to exactly what it is, why we're
7 doing this today.

8 So, to hear you say that and speak of it, and
9 the need for more of a focus on this campus, and it
10 speaks to the entire system, is vital.

11 So, thank you.

12 GEORGIA HULBERT: Mr. Senator, one more
13 thing would I like to add as well.

14 And while, you know, counseling definitely
15 plays into, you know, supporting students with
16 mental-health issues, a whole other aspect of that,
17 and what has been on the rise, and what has been a
18 concern of disability services offices, is more
19 mental health nowadays is being considered a
20 disability, and, you know, a severe barrier to
21 students being able to receive their education.

22 And with that, there needs to be, also, a
23 consideration and an expansion on the funding
24 towards disability services offices so that they can
25 also support students to getting equal access in the

1 classroom.

2 And a lot of times, you know, students are
3 struggling to be able to get the adequate
4 accommodations to be able to succeed.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: We done?

6 Okay. Thank you all for coming.

7 We have Andy Sako, president, Faculty
8 Federation of Erie Community College, to be followed
9 by our friends from UUP.

10 ANDREW SAKO: Good afternoon.

11 Chairwoman Stavisky, Assemblywoman McMahon,
12 and Senator Kennedy, thank you for this opportunity
13 to speak today.

14 I am Andrew Sako, president of the Faculty
15 Federation of Erie Community College, and I'm
16 representing SUNY Community College today, as well
17 as my local.

18 NYSUT represents more than 80,000 academic
19 and professional individuals in higher education.

20 Thank you again for this opportunity to talk
21 about the cost of public higher education, student
22 borrowing, and other challenges to the affordability
23 and accessibility.

24 I know you've heard earlier from my colleague
25 Roberta Elins from the Fashion Institute of

1 Technology. And I'd like to reiterate some of the
2 things that Roberta had said.

3 At this time I would like to discuss
4 community colleges and the impact of State funding,
5 or lack thereof, has had on the affordability and
6 accessibility; more specifically, Erie Community
7 College and its students we serve.

8 Community colleges educate all types of
9 students. They have -- they help them advance,
10 social mobility, and are located where they live.

11 Many times, our students, it's their first
12 chance, and sometimes their last chance, to become
13 successful.

14 They often collaborate -- our community
15 colleges often collaborate with businesses and
16 employers to develop and provide training activities
17 that address our local workforce needs.

18 We are, basically, the engine for Erie County
19 in providing highly-trained graduates to this
20 community.

21 State education law stipulates that the State
22 will pay 40 percent of operating costs at community
23 colleges; however, to date, the State has not been
24 meeting its obligation.

25 In order for our campuses to maintain and

1 enhance academic programming and student support,
2 their funding needs to be increased and stabilized.

3 Even though enrollment at some campuses has
4 decreased, operational costs have risen.

5 Reduction in community college enrollment are
6 related to our economy.

7 You've heard that earlier from my president.

8 When we're doing -- when the community is
9 doing well, traditionally, community colleges have a
10 drop in enrollment.

11 Our campus rely on State funding to offer
12 programs and student services that not only respond
13 to the current and future business needs, but also
14 to attract potential students.

15 In the absence of predictable funding,
16 campuses are forced to raise tuition, or limit
17 courses or programs, which diminish their appeal to
18 future students.

19 The '19-'20 state budget that was enacted
20 provided community colleges with the greater of
21 \$100 per FTE or an established floor of 98 percent
22 funding.

23 We appreciate what the Legislature was able
24 to do there, and we -- we -- as NYSUT supported that
25 language.

1 While the enacted budget had the funding
2 floor, unfortunately, it did not insulate community
3 colleges from the enrollment declines.

4 According to the data that was submitted to
5 SUNY from Erie Community College, they were supposed
6 to receive 1.5 percent more in State operating aid;
7 1.5 million.

8 And in the '19-'20 year, while we are
9 grateful for the additional funding, it is not
10 sufficient to allow community colleges to plan and
11 maintain programs and services to attract and retain
12 students.

13 NYSUT continues to advocate for the adoption
14 of a hybrid FTE model methodology, as proposed by
15 SUNY, for their community colleges.

16 During budget negotiations this year, SUNY
17 and NYSUT reached an agreement on the statutory
18 language to codify the hybrid methodology.

19 The language and proposed hybrid methodology
20 would provide community colleges with greater level
21 of support, using 3-year average rather than a
22 1-year or FTE dollar amount for the college.

23 This methodology change could have provided
24 our community college with some level of security,
25 and allowed them to have a strategic plan for the

1 future, as well as provide with additional financial
2 support.

3 At Erie Community College, nearly 50 percent
4 of our cost -- of the burden is shouldered by
5 students, with about 30 percent provided by the
6 State, and, roughly, about 20 percent from the
7 county government, our local sponsor.

8 Without appropriate funding, community
9 colleges are endangering student affordability and
10 access to public higher education, as well as the
11 quality of the education that they receive.

12 Therefore, a significant investment is needed
13 to reverse this trend, and preserve and enhance the
14 quality of education to our students.

15 Additionally, I just wanted to bring up a
16 couple of other points.

17 Over the past 30-plus years I've had a career
18 at Erie Community College, there has been minimal
19 investment in our facilities or infrastructure.
20 Some might even say it's been years of neglect.

21 We desperately need additional funds and
22 infrastructure and facilities renovation over the
23 next few years.

24 There was a bill last year, 2622, which would
25 have helped with the improvements, and would be

1 quite helpful if we were able to get a lesser
2 amount, a 25 percent local share, in order to do
3 some of these improvements, and the 40 percent for
4 the new bills.

5 So I wanted to just throw that out there.

6 The state-of-the-art facilities will attract
7 more students.

8 It will improve my members' ability to
9 provide the highest-quality education.

10 ECC is an asset, it's a jewel; it should be
11 funded as such.

12 And, again, I wanted to thank you for the
13 opportunity to speak to you today.

14 Thank you.

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: You mentioned the hybrid
16 model with FIT.

17 You refer -- FIT has a unique problem, and
18 that's the charge -- the potential chargeback issue.

19 Does that apply to you; is that what you were
20 referring to?

21 ANDREW SAKO: No, I was --

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay.

23 ANDREW SAKO: -- I was -- no.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: All right.

25 Do you have any questions?

1 SENATOR KENNEDY: Yeah.

2 The -- to that extent, the chargeback model
3 is in place?

4 ANDREW SAKO: Oh, I don't have to push it?

5 Okay.

6 I thought I was at the County, I'm sorry.

7 You got to hold it down all the time.

8 The chargebacks are an issue for us with
9 students migrating over to NCCC, for example, or
10 students coming from JCC to our institution.

11 SENATOR KENNEDY: But aside from that -- and
12 that was just for clarification -- you know, I --
13 I -- and I mentioned this to President Hocoy
14 earlier, you know, that I have heard some concerning
15 things regarding the capital investment, or lack
16 thereof, at ECC.

17 And maybe you can elaborate a little bit.

18 And the president did talk about the need for
19 that capital investment.

20 And as I'm sure you heard, we urged him to
21 expedite that master plan, so that we can have
22 the -- the -- the -- really, the vision of the
23 community college and the funding necessary to
24 realize that vision.

25 Can you just speak about, on a very personal

1 level, and the things that you're seeing, areas
2 where that capital investment is necessary, and,
3 really, the impact that it will have from a
4 budgetary perspective for ECC?

5 ANDREW SAKO: Yes, I could.

6 I also teach in that area, so I'm very
7 familiar with the construction needs of the
8 buildings.

9 So, if you take a look at our North Campus,
10 our North Campus really has -- and I was a student
11 there many years ago -- some of the labs and walls,
12 and so forth, are still the same color. They've not
13 been updated since I was a student. Now, that's
14 over 30 years -- 30-some-odd years ago.

15 I had a career before this.

16 And if you take a look at, you know,
17 our City Campus, there was a lot of deferred
18 maintenance on that building up until recently.

19 We were very fortunate to get the STEM
20 building out at North, which is a great asset.

21 In the '90s we were able to get the
22 Burt Flickinger Center; however, we weren't able to
23 get \$1.2 million to maintain the facility.

24 You know, we, basically, were just given the
25 building without -- without any ability to maintain

1 the building.

2 You know, they just replaced all the heat
3 pumps, for example, at City Campus.

4 You know, if they would have maintained them,
5 they probably could have lasted another five or
6 six years. They weren't able to hire enough
7 personnel to take care of those things.

8 If you look at our grounds... it's on and on
9 and on.

10 It's just unfortunate that, because of the
11 lack of funding, or lack of planning, one or the
12 other, that we're not getting what we need.

13 SENATOR KENNEDY: So, in your estimation,
14 it's -- this has been years in the making. This is
15 really deferred maintenance that has become major
16 capital --

17 ANDREW SAKO: Yes.

18 SENATOR KENNEDY: -- necessities, just --
19 just to keep the lights on, it sounds like.

20 ANDREW SAKO: Yeah, right now, basically,
21 it's a Band-Aid.

22 And I've been advocating, and I've spoken
23 with you and others, about, you know, over the
24 next five years they really need to invest in
25 Erie Community College.

1 They need to invest in community colleges
2 statewide.

3 But we're in a critical place.

4 People are looking at our facilities, they're
5 looking -- and, should we go there?

6 You know, if it's antiquated, they're not
7 going to go there, and that affects my members.

8 But we also have some of the finest faculty
9 around this area, and students are choosing to go
10 elsewhere, which is costing our taxpayers additional
11 funds if they go to NTRIP [ph.] or down to
12 Genesee Community or other schools, which I have
13 nothing against any of those schools, by the way.

14 It's just that I'd just like to see
15 Erie County residents stay in Erie County.

16 SENATOR KENNEDY: Of course.

17 Thank you.

18 ANDREW SAKO: Okay.

19 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Hi, Andy.

20 ANDREW SAKO: Hi.

21 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Thank you for coming
22 in today.

23 ANDREW SAKO: Thank you.

24 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: You had mentioned
25 that 50 percent of the cost of the operation of ECC

1 is shouldered by the students.

2 And I'm just wondering, does that include --
3 is that just -- is it tuition? is it financial aid?

4 Like, where does financial aid fit in that
5 picture into those percentages?

6 ANDREW SAKO: Most of our students are
7 eligible for financial aid.

8 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: But I was wondering.

9 ANDREW SAKO: The ones that aren't are
10 working two and three jobs, as you've heard, at the
11 university level as well.

12 But it's -- it's getting close to 50 percent,
13 is what I'm saying, and it does not meet the
14 statutory requirement of the State is what I was
15 getting at.

16 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: One-third,
17 one-third, one-third?

18 ANDREW SAKO: Right.

19 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Well, that --
20 that -- that student contribution, that includes
21 money that they would pay, and --

22 ANDREW SAKO: It --

23 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: -- that which is
24 covered by financial aid?

25 ANDREW SAKO: -- well, basically, all that

1 that covers is tuition, because there's additional
2 costs, which are kind of a dirty little secret in
3 community colleges, and elsewhere, where you have
4 lab fees, you have all these other fees, that are
5 included.

6 You also have textbooks. You have other
7 items.

8 I mean, there's a list probably a page and a
9 half long in our college catalog, which is online.

10 ASSEMBLYMEMBER McMAHON: Okay. Thanks.

11 SENATOR KENNEDY: And if you could speak to
12 the intellectual-property issue?

13 ANDREW SAKO: Sure.

14 SENATOR KENNEDY: You know, I -- I brought
15 that up to the president before. He didn't seem to
16 be knowledgeable on that as an issue.

17 Maybe because it's a new issue with the new
18 technological advancements.

19 But this is something that I've heard is a
20 concern, at ECC in particular, that the -- the --
21 the direct -- direction to which this may have an
22 impact on the educators there --

23 ANDREW SAKO: Yes.

24 SENATOR KENNEDY: -- and not getting paid --
25 potentially, not getting paid for a class that they,

1 or, in their likeness, would preside over.

2 ANDREW SAKO: Well, our concern is, the
3 provost -- the new provost at the college --

4 And I was surprised to hear that Dr. Hocoy
5 did not know about this.

6 -- but the provost, who was from SUNY Canton,
7 started discussing things about what they would call
8 "flex courses," where you could come in and go to
9 your class, or you could look at it at another time,
10 which, at community colleges, is somewhat of a
11 problem, especially when we're training people to go
12 into the workforce.

13 I can understand online courses, distance
14 learning, we have language to protect those.

15 But this flex-course idea, where you can just
16 kind of watch things in your jammies when you feel
17 like it, is somewhat problematic.

18 Also, once my image is out there, my -- my --
19 my -- my craft is out there, I have no control over
20 it. And that's one of my concerns.

21 So that's something that we're very concerned
22 about, and, you know, we're going to continue
23 talking about that.

24 But I was a little taken back when he had no
25 idea what you were talking about.

1 SENATOR KENNEDY: So -- so you'd say,
2 arguably, so, that that is proprietary information,
3 and proprietary likeness if it's a video?

4 And we're seeing this in other areas of
5 society.

6 And that being said, the educators should --
7 the idea is, that if this is information that's
8 going to be used, that those educators should be
9 rightfully compensated for it?

10 ANDREW SAKO: Well, it's compensation or
11 control.

12 I mean, you're bringing your intellectual
13 property out there. And when students pay for a
14 course, okay, now, if that -- if they take a picture
15 and decide to rebroadcast something that you've
16 done, and next thing you know, they don't need you.

17 And that's really the bottom line with this
18 situation.

19 So, I have some concerns about, also, you
20 know, just the idea of people being able to take a
21 course whenever they feel like it, because, in
22 certain fields, nursing, you know, some of your
23 technologies, your engineering areas, you have to be
24 there, you have to absorb the material.

25 And, yes, online courses are fine, but this

1 is a new model, it's kind of a bizarre model, that's
2 come up recently.

3 And, obviously, we would be discussing, and
4 looking at the SUNY intellectual-property rights,
5 and so on, with this.

6 So we're in conversation with the provost
7 about it, but, you know, again, it is an issue.

8 SENATOR KENNEDY: Is this something that you
9 feel will need legislative attention, or we're not
10 that far yet?

11 ANDREW SAKO: I don't think we're that far
12 yet, but it is something that is problematic.

13 SENATOR KENNEDY: Okay.

14 Thank you.

15 ANDREW SAKO: Okay. Thank you.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you very much.

17 ANDREW SAKO: Thank you very much.

18 Thank you again for having me.

19 And we have our friends from UUP.

20 We have Dr. Frederick Kowal, the president
21 of UUP.

22 We have Joe Petrick from Alfred;

23 Philip Glick from the Health Science Center;

24 Fred Floss from Buff State, whom I've known
25 for a number of years.

1 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: We're going to break up.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay, it's your call.

3 Let me just read the names -- oh, why don't
4 you take care of it.

5 We have UUP from Fredonia, and other
6 campuses.

7 But I just would like you to understand that
8 I have to leave at 4:00. Jet Blue is not going to
9 wait for me.

10 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: No.

11 And we don't want you to miss your flight.

12 DR. PHILIP GLICK: We'll take you to the
13 airport personally. It's an easy airport.

14 SENATOR KENNEDY: Do you have a rocket ship?

15 JOE PETRICK: Well, first and foremost,
16 Senator Stavisky, we want o thank you for holding
17 these hearings across the state.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Which you have attended,
19 faithfully.

20 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yes, and we will
21 continue to do so. They are very important to this
22 union and to our members.

23 I would also like to thank Senator Kennedy
24 and Assemblymember McMahon for your steadfast
25 support of SUNY and the members of our union.

1 I will be brief, so that there is time for my
2 colleagues to give you the details of the situation
3 at their respective campuses.

4 As you have heard from other testimony, the
5 situation facing SUNY is severe in terms of funding.

6 Because of 10 years of flat budgets, there is
7 going to be, inevitably, impacts on campuses.

8 Furthermore, I think that there is an impact
9 on the entire system, that what you begin to see is
10 a fracturing in the system as campuses suffer.

11 Some campuses are doing okay.

12 We heard about UB.

13 They have some -- they have certain
14 advantages, economies of scale, that smaller
15 campuses, especially those in the rural areas, like
16 Alfred, and you'll hear from Joe Petrick concerning
17 Alfred and its situation, and Fredonia.

18 And, again, it is -- these are unique
19 circumstances.

20 We believe strongly in maintaining the
21 integrity of the system, from the hospitals, to the
22 tech campuses, and all of those campuses in between.

23 As you know, what the lack of funding has led
24 to -- well, there's many results.

25 One is the increasing adjunctification of the

1 faculty. More and more courses taught by part-time
2 faculty as a way for campuses to economize.

3 That leads to an exploitation of these
4 faculty, but, also, a situation where tuition is
5 rising and students don't have the benefit of
6 full-time faculty.

7 The other situation that I'm sure colleagues
8 will address is the unique demographic pattern
9 that's developing.

10 Over 57 percent of the students in SUNY come
11 from the five boroughs of New York City,
12 Nassau County, and Suffolk County.

13 That is a challenge for these campuses in
14 Western New York, to attract, but then, especially,
15 to retain, those students.

16 It's why we favor expansion of the
17 Educational Opportunity Program, which is so
18 successful at recruiting and retaining and
19 graduating students from the city, but, in general,
20 from underresourced areas.

21 The other area that I do want to touch on,
22 that I cover in more detail in my written testimony,
23 because it is very relevant out here at the
24 University of Buffalo, is the legislation we
25 continue to push for, regarding transparency at the

1 campus foundations.

2 We are on the campus with the largest
3 foundation.

4 And need I remind you that the foundations
5 were created to serve the academic mission of the
6 campuses.

7 Our legislation, which I'm pleased that you
8 are sponsoring in the Senate, if approved --

9 OFF-CAMERA SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

10 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yes.

11 -- which approved, would compel CUNY and SUNY
12 campus foundations, and their subsidiaries, to
13 submit annual reports, and to post them on the SUNY
14 website. Those reports would include financial
15 information, contract vendor data, and a list of
16 foundation and SUNY employees, including salaries,
17 job titles, and descriptions.

18 We are hopeful that the legislation will move
19 in this session, at the very least, so the
20 foundations serve the academic mission at a time
21 when resources are scarce.

22 Again, thank you for the time that you have
23 taken for this hearing, and all the hearings.

24 And I look forward to answering any questions
25 you may have.

1 I will yield my time now to another Fred,
2 Dr. Floss, from Buff State.

3 FRED FLOSS: Thank you.

4 Thank you, Senator, for all of the service
5 you've done, and everything else, over the years.

6 You have been a beacon for all of us as we
7 get out there.

8 Before I start, I just want to mention, if we
9 can have my three students from EOP who came today,
10 just to stand up so that you can see them.

11 And Jocelyn Tejada who's here too.

12 Who -- these are the students that we keep on
13 talking about. And they came here just to hear
14 what's going on.

15 So I wanted to make sure that you saw them
16 and that we recognized them.

17 I'm not going to do my testimony.

18 I do want to respond to a couple of things
19 that have been talked about today.

20 First, rational tuition is neither rational
21 nor stable.

22 The second thing about that, is that what
23 we've seen, while well-intentioned, I believe, is
24 that, as campuses have had to fund their educational
25 mission, they've taken money out of programs, like

1 room and board, and others.

2 And, in effect, what we've done is, is we've
3 moved things that were TAP-able and Pell-able to now
4 be student loans.

5 So if you want to talk about why we have a
6 student-loan program, we can do that.

7 I have an analysis. I can share it with you
8 at another time.

9 But it is a pretty dire thing that we're
10 doing because, you've heard from all of our
11 students, 96 percent of the students at
12 Buffalo State are working more than 32 hours a week,
13 none of them with benefits, because they're doing
14 more than one part-time job, so that when they can
15 no longer afford to be there, after they've taken a
16 year, or two years, and you've heard that the
17 retention rate at UB is only 56 percent, which is
18 shocking for the richest economic group in SUNY,
19 that they then have to pay that all back without a
20 degree.

21 That's the fundamental problem that we have
22 because of what we've done.

23 The second part of that is, we talk about it
24 as a TAP gap, but let me explain.

25 96 percent of Buffalo State students are on

1 full TAP and Pell.

2 What does that mean to Buffalo State?

3 That means that we have not seen any tuition
4 dollars for any of the students that we have,
5 because we can't charge them any.

6 But on the other end, you've raised tuition.

7 So those people who could have paid tuition
8 and come to Buff State are now going elsewhere
9 because it's too expensive to go to Buffalo State.

10 Those are the students you hear that are
11 going to Pennsylvania, that are going to Ohio, that
12 are going to New Jersey.

13 As we look at this, an analysis I did for
14 Buffalo State, using standard economic models, for
15 every \$100 in tuition that you increase, we lose
16 57 students because they can no longer afford to be
17 here.

18 That means, while Buffalo State was a few
19 years ago at 10,000 students, we're now looking at
20 losing almost 3,000 students. Over 2500 of those
21 students are attributed almost directly because of
22 income problems of them not being able to afford to
23 come to a SUNY campus.

24 Lastly, one of the things that you've talked
25 about is food security.

1 I want to tell you what we're doing at
2 Buffalo State.

3 The faculty and staff is raising fundraisers.
4 And in my business -- in my building alone,
5 we have a food pantry.

6 I'll just give you one example of what
7 happened.

8 I had a student.

9 We were doing an event, and we had granola
10 bars, you know, out there, just to -- to be
11 friendly -- right? -- and to talk, and a couple of
12 things of water.

13 A student was hiding sort of in the corner.
14 We didn't know who he was.

15 And I walked over and said, Well, what's
16 wrong?

17 And he said, "Well, could I have a granola
18 bar?"

19 I said, "Here, take three."

20 And he said, "You don't understand.

21 I haven't eaten in 24 hours."

22 Think about that.

23 "I haven't eaten in 24 hours," yet I'm trying
24 to come to class. I really don't have a place to
25 stay.

1 And, what are we doing?

2 This is where SUNY really is the engine of
3 growth and is economic development.

4 I'll leave you with one last thought about
5 this.

6 As I was just talking to one of our largest
7 employers, Moog -- okay? -- and they said to me,
8 "Economic development is your students."

9 I'm meeting with them next week, to try to
10 work on making sure that they have local students
11 that graduate from SUNY because, what do we know?

12 We know that 90 percent of our students in
13 SUNY, and 90 percent of our students in CUNY, by the
14 way, stay in New York and raise taxes.

15 That's an extra \$149,000 in state income
16 taxes alone, if you want to think about it.

17 You're causing your next debt crisis in
18 New York State because you're not funding SUNY, and
19 you're not looking at it as a capital project, the
20 operations part about it, not the building, that
21 we're providing you with the students.

22 And what did Moog say?

23 We want to hire local students because
24 they're the ones that stay, they're the ones that
25 have local family here, they're the best workers.

1 You need to come and help us.

2 And that's we're trying to do at SUNY.

3 And, thank you for your time.

4 JUDE JAYATILLEKE: Good afternoon.

5 My name is Jude Jayatilleke. I'm one of the
6 EOP counselors at Buffalo State College.

7 Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you
8 this afternoon.

9 Again, I have given you a written statement,
10 so I'm going to summarize some points, key points,
11 about college, accessibility, and affordability.

12 As I mentioned before, I work for the EOP
13 Program, which is a very successful program;
14 however, many of our students are facing challenges.

15 Many of our students aren't able to pay their
16 bills.

17 If they're unable to pay their bill, they
18 cannot register for classes for the following
19 semester.

20 Buffalo State has been quite generous to
21 saying to our students, If you are able to bring
22 your bill to under 500, then you can register for
23 the next semester.

24 But the case is not the same for many of our
25 students.

1 So we lose a lot of students who aren't able
2 to pay their bills, so this affects our retention.

3 We spoke about the TAP gap.

4 That has been a huge problem to many of our
5 campuses.

6 Many of our students -- EOP students are
7 those who are highly active on our campus. They are
8 very busy students.

9 The three students we brought here today are
10 part of the honors program. They work multiple
11 jobs, so they give back to our community.

12 I wanted to leave you with a story about one
13 of our students.

14 He came to us from The Bronx. And after his
15 first semester, his parents couldn't afford college
16 for him.

17 He had an open bill and he couldn't return to
18 the second semester.

19 So, as a part of the -- he was a part of our
20 learning community. And we were able to work with
21 the college honors program and EOP program, and
22 bring him to the EOP program.

23 So he was able to graduate last year with a
24 3.92 grade-point average.

25 He maintained a 4-point average throughout

1 his academic career. Worked multiple jobs to pay
2 for college. And he is doing very well now.

3 So that was one fortunate student we were
4 able to save.

5 There are many students we cannot save.

6 We get over 6,000 applicants for EOP at
7 Buffalo State, and we can bring only 250 students.

8 So, I'm hoping today you would support
9 Buffalo State, support SUNY, efforts to keep our
10 students here and make sure they graduate.

11 And I also want to introduce my colleague
12 Jocelyn Tejada.

13 If she gets an opportunity to speak, she had
14 some really good points that she would like to share
15 with you as well.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

17 DR. PHILIP GLICK: Good afternoon.

18 My name is Phil Glick. I am a UB MD
19 pediatric surgeon.

20 I'm chapter president for the health sciences
21 chapter.

22 And I was the former chair of the faculty
23 senate.

24 So I speak to you with much understanding of,
25 both, the academic side, as well as the employment

1 side, of UB.

2 At our fall DA last week, Senate Majority
3 Leader Andrea Cousins said to us, "Education is the
4 great equalizer."

5 And we vociferously agree with her.

6 She went on to say, that, "The Empire State
7 has a pulse."

8 We're grateful for that.

9 She then said, that, "SUNY is on life
10 support."

11 And that's not very good.

12 I'm a doctor, I understand what that means.

13 So we're here today to help you understand
14 how to help fund SUNY properly.

15 I'm here in the spirit of shared governance
16 to ask Senator Stavisky and her colleagues in the
17 New York State Higher Education Committee to help
18 resuscitate SUNY.

19 And in this matter, I'd like to speak to you
20 about three matters at UB.

21 I'd like here -- I'd first like to say to
22 you, that, please help the chancellor, SUNY
23 administration, and both sides of the Legislature to
24 bring in a good budget.

25 Our budget has been flat for the last

1 six years.

2 During that time you've heard about the TAP
3 gaps rising.

4 It's a \$70 million gap this year.

5 The Excelsior gap is rising.

6 The maintenance-of-effort contracts have not
7 been funded properly.

8 And there's a variety of unfunded mandates
9 that have not been funded properly.

10 UB is currently using our reserves.

11 Other campuses are using their reserves.

12 Some campuses have no reserves and are
13 actually borrowing money from SUNY.

14 This is terrible.

15 We really need an adequate budget this year.

16 Secondly, I'm here to ask your Committee to
17 support the passage, and obtain the Governor's
18 signature, on Senate Bill 06275, and that's the
19 Campus Foundation Transparency Bill.

20 This is very important, not only for UB, but
21 for all the campuses, because they help make the gap
22 smaller so we can function and meet our educational
23 mission.

24 And, lastly, Mr. -- Senator Kennedy, I'd like
25 to answer your question directly about the

1 Jacob School of Medicine.

2 The Jacob School of Medicine had its
3 groundbreak in 2013. We moved in 2017.

4 What I'm here today to ask you is, for
5 construction-bond forgiveness that's costing us
6 \$1 million a month/\$12 million a year, for the next
7 28 years.

8 This is severely impairing our strategic plan
9 down at the medical center.

10 And as Dr. Del Genio said, the medical center
11 is the backbone of health care in Western New York.

12 We're being hamstrung.

13 Not to go into too much detail about the SUNY
14 budget, you're all very familiar with that, but it's
15 very important that we do not take a flat budget
16 again.

17 When the budget remains flat, we put the
18 operating costs of our universities on the backs of
19 the students' tuition and their fees, or we cut
20 programs.

21 And that's what has been going on around here
22 for the last four or five years.

23 And, remember, the flat budgets were on top
24 of a severe cut after the 2008 recession, so we're
25 not even back to where we are at baseline.

1 So, please, try to fund this budget
2 adequately, it's very imperative.

3 With regard to SUNY transparency, I'm here in
4 the spirit of shared governance, and one of the
5 essential features of shared governance is
6 transparency.

7 Currently, the SUNY campus foundations hide
8 behind a legal curtain.

9 Let's use UBF as an example.

10 UBF is a private 501(3)(c). It's not subject
11 to any of the public institutional reporting and
12 transparency that SUNY is or the comptroller is, or
13 UB specifically is.

14 We think it's very important that this bill
15 be passed, but not only passed, get signed.

16 You know, we know -- we're looking for your
17 leadership, Senator Stavisky, because we know this
18 bill is never gotten out of the Higher Ed Committee
19 on the Senate side before.

20 We really think it's important.

21 But it needs to get signed also.

22 And there are important forces fighting
23 against it, including the UB Foundation.

24 What are they afraid of?

25 Just as you should know, two weeks ago, the

1 comptroller cited the UB Foundation for \$900,000 in
2 financial "questions."

3 And the transparency bill would fix those
4 things.

5 And, last, let me address the question that
6 you asked Dr. Del Genio, and I'll answer it
7 directly.

8 In 2013, the Governor, in the Western
9 New York community, stuck a spade in the ground for
10 our medical school.

11 They did it in a very unconventional manner.

12 It was the first time, that I'm aware of,
13 I've been at SUNY for 32 years, that a building was
14 actually funded without all the money in the bank,
15 without 10 years of maintenance in the bank, and
16 with all the furnishings in the bank.

17 45 percent of the construction costs were
18 paid for by the State or SUNY capital budgets.

19 The other 55 percent was financed with
20 bond -- bonding that the medical school has
21 guaranteed.

22 We are paying \$1 million a month to the
23 bonding agency; \$12 million a year. And this is on
24 the backs of the faculty for the next 28 years.

25 Imagine what that's going to do?

1 We've asked in the past to have forgiveness
2 for this.

3 We need it. It's, just we're desperate.

4 If we really want Buffalo-Niagara Medical
5 Center to grow and the medical school to grow, and
6 the people of Western New York to be healthy, we --
7 we need -- we need this loan forgiveness so we can
8 use that \$12 million a year for other programs.

9 Right now it's just going to the bank.

10 In conclusion:

11 I ask Chairwoman Stavisky and her colleagues
12 to please be certain, this year, that the
13 New York State Higher Education Committee gives your
14 colleague a higher -- the higher-education
15 leadership to make higher-education needs of your
16 constituents, our citizens, the best possible health
17 care and education they deserve.

18 New York State deserves to be the best in the
19 world, and right now we're failing at that.

20 Thank you very much.

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

22 Let me respond quickly to some of the points.

23 There are -- really, we're talking, not just
24 the campus foundations, but also the research
25 foundation, that -- so let's be -- now, they were

1 subject to FOIL, oh, I would say, maybe seven or
2 eight years ago, by a reporter from the
3 "Times Union."

4 And I think it was Hearst that owns the
5 "Times Union."

6 They took that very seriously.

7 They went to court, and they won their case.

8 So they are subject to FOIL.

9 Secondly, we have discussed this issue, but
10 it was a little late in the session, if my memory is
11 correct, if not after session. So we never really
12 had the opportunity.

13 The comptroller has -- the State comptroller
14 has done a lot of audits, very critical of the
15 research foundation. He's been very good on this.

16 But, in fairness, they've gotten better.

17 I think after they lost their case and were
18 subject to FOIL (the Freedom of Information Law),
19 they have gotten a lot better than what they were.

20 Nowhere near where they ought to be, but
21 I think they have to -- it has to be recognized that
22 it's gotten a lot better.

23 And as far as the bonding goes, that, I have
24 met with representatives of, not of the hospitals
25 affiliated with the academ -- the medical -- the

1 four medical schools.

2 Obviously, Buffalo doesn't have one.

3 They also have a very serious -- the
4 hospitals have a very serious debt issue. The --
5 and they've asked us to absorb -- to have the State
6 absorb the debt as well.

7 I tried, during the budget negotiations, to
8 have that included in the capital budget, because it
9 seems to me that debt is a function of the capital,
10 or lack of a capital, program.

11 I was not successful.

12 But we are aware.

13 And the Senate, and Assembly I'm sure, but
14 I know the Senate Democratic Conference understands
15 this issue, and we're going to continue.

16 DR. PHILIP GLICK: Thank you.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes.

18 DR. PHILIP GLICK: Can I just mention one
19 thing about the UBF.

20 When I was chair of the faculty senate, the
21 UBF is, obviously, very important in making our
22 budget whole.

23 I had several conversations with the chair of
24 the UB Foundation, and we talked about transparency.

25 And what he told me was, that the UBF is

1 sufficiently transparent. Thank you very much.

2 Hung up the phone, and refused to meet with
3 me again.

4 This arrogance is just wrong.

5 This is public money.

6 This is -- they are not a private entity.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: (Indiscernible.)

8 DR. PHILIP GLICK: They really are essential
9 to public education in Western New York.

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: I have been extremely
11 critical of the foundations.

12 And, in fact, 10 years ago, when I chaired
13 the Committee very briefly, my first question at the
14 budget hearing is: Why are they charging tickets to
15 the Moscow Circus to the research foundation?

16 And it sort of went downhill from that point
17 on.

18 [Laughter.]

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: So I understand what
20 you're saying, but, it's gotten better.

21 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Okay, if our colleagues
22 from Alfred State could --

23 SENATOR KENNEDY: Uh --

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: I'm sorry.

25 SENATOR KENNEDY: -- I wanted to ask a couple

1 of questions, if I could.

2 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: -- okay.

3 I'm sorry.

4 SENATOR KENNEDY: Dr. Glick, you're not
5 getting off that easy.

6 DR. PHILIP GLICK: I'm sorry.

7 I didn't want the Senator to miss her flight.

8 SENATOR KENNEDY: I couldn't -- I suppose I'm
9 less concerned about that.

10 My apologies, Senator.

11 I'll buy you a beer and a beef-on-wick and a
12 couple of wings.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: I saw the Anchor Bar when
14 (inaudible).

15 SENATOR KENNEDY: You certainly did.

16 I'll be very brief.

17 First of all, I want to thank each and every
18 one of you for your extraordinary leadership.

19 I mean that from the bottom of my heart.

20 I mean, you're on the front lines. You're
21 constantly communicating with us.

22 You're tremendous representatives across this
23 entire state, especially as it pertains to our
24 flagship schools here in Buffalo; the University of
25 Buffalo, Buff State.

1 Just, it's a pleasure to work with all of
2 you.

3 Dr. Glick, you wore the right colors today,
4 you often do. You are UB through and through.

5 Just a couple of issues I wanted to just
6 touch on.

7 And maybe, Fred, you can speak to this
8 briefly, about your energy initiatives that you're
9 working on.

10 We have -- and we didn't touch on it today,
11 Ut we've been working closely, sort of behind the
12 scenes.

13 But you've been doing this on your own, UUP,
14 in formulating a new vision for the future.

15 I think it's important to get on record where
16 you're headed.

17 Clearly not done yet, in draft form, a lot of
18 work still needs to go into this.

19 But I think it's important for folks to know,
20 really, the innovative efforts that you and the UUP
21 have been making on behalf of the SUNY system and
22 the state, and the partnerships that you've created.

23 We'll start with that.

24 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Yeah, first thank you
25 very much.

1 It has been a priority for UUP, really, going
2 back to 2015, when we first proposed funding of
3 about \$15 million to go towards the development of
4 baccalaureate programs throughout the SUNY system,
5 geared to the development of new technologies and
6 work within those technology areas.

7 The Governor embraced the program, found
8 other funding sources for that. And it's a grant
9 program now, into effect for its second year.

10 What we are proposing this year is, actually,
11 for that program to be expanded, in fact, doubled,
12 so that there can be more development of such
13 programs.

14 We are also, as you know, we've been working
15 closely with, you know, a firm out here in
16 Western New York, the Green Machine Corporation,
17 with the idea of developing a pilot program at
18 six campuses in the SUNY system, that would be
19 geared to utilizing the latest battery technology,
20 so that there can be energy efficiencies that
21 campuses can take advantage of, to control costs,
22 and then, also, ameliorate the problems caused by
23 CO2 production.

24 We are also working on plans that would
25 expand greatly what SUNY does in terms of its energy

1 conservation.

2 SUNY needs to be the lead institution in
3 New York State, because of, literally, the brain
4 power, the capital, that is within SUNY, the
5 students and the research that is done.

6 But then, also, simply by the fact that
7 40 percent of the state buildings are in SUNY.

8 And so as SUNY moves, we hope, very
9 aggressively to being carbon-neutral, they take on,
10 you know, radical ideas, like, perhaps, a
11 cap-and-trade system among campuses, to get to that
12 point, basically, to lead the way, to show, you
13 know, New York State, the nation, and the world,
14 that this is how it can be done when you have
15 institutional commitment.

16 And that's we're looking for.

17 And we're looking forward to working with
18 SUNY closely on this, as well as with the private
19 sector.

20 It will benefit students, it will benefit our
21 communities, and, obviously, it will benefit the
22 world in the long run.

23 SENATOR KENNEDY: The leadership of you,
24 Fred, and UUP, and your entire team, has just been
25 sensational.

1 So thank you for all your efforts.

2 And I know we're up against the clock here.

3 But, again, Fred, Jude, Dr. Glick, and

4 Fred, thank you all.

5 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: Thank you.

6 I'll call up our other spokespersons now,

7 from Alfred State and from Fredonia.

8 And I want (inaudible) --

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: I have been to both.

10 FREDERICK E. KOWAL: -- and I'll let them
11 introduce themselves so that they can get right to
12 their statements.

13 My name is Joe Petrick. I'm a librarian from
14 Alfred State College.

15 As you know, the College of Technology -- the
16 colleges-of-technology sector in SUNY has particular
17 problems, where neither colleges of arts and
18 sciences, nor are we community colleges, although,
19 the community colleges of technology often serve, as
20 we do in Alfred, as a de facto community college in
21 the area.

22 So we have both associate and bachelor's
23 degrees.

24 We are engaged in workforce development.

25 We have liberal-arts programs, but we also

1 have a number of applied-technology programs.

2 We have an applied-technology campus in
3 Wellsville, New York.

4 We are currently working with Erie Community
5 College in the north -- Northland Workforce
6 Development Center. So we have a presence in
7 Buffalo as well.

8 A lot of those programs are very expensive.

9 If you have, for example, sonography,
10 radiology, as we do, radiologic technology, or
11 welding, or machine-tool technology, those programs
12 are very expensive, comparatively more expensive,
13 than liberal-arts programs.

14 And as a consequence, we've had to rely on
15 donations of equipment, or, in some cases, we rely
16 on purchasing surplus equipment, for our programs.

17 So I think it's important that we have some
18 relief in terms of an aggressive tuition-assistance
19 increase.

20 In conclusion:

21 I'd like to say, as a librarian, I think it's
22 important -- and this was not in my written
23 testimony -- but I think it's important that the
24 libraries receive some increase in funding, because
25 what happens is, when a college campus runs into

1 problems or financial (indiscernible), often, it's
2 the libraries that are the first to be cut.

3 I'm a graduate of the University of Buffalo.
4 I went to the -- I got my doctorate at Buffalo.

5 And I think it's important, not only for the
6 research centers or the colleges of arts and
7 sciences, but also for the colleges of technology,
8 that we have an increase in library service.

9 And this could all be assisted by an increase
10 in TAP funding.

11 Thank you.

12 ROBYN HORN: Hello, thank you so much for
13 having us.

14 My name is Robyn Horn. I'm a second-year
15 Ph.D. student at UB in theater and performance
16 studies. I'm a presidential fellow. I'm a proud
17 union member.

18 And I just wanted to come share a little bit
19 about, sort of, my perspective, why I chose to make
20 my future here in Western New York.

21 The very first time that I came to Buffalo,
22 I was from New Jersey and New York City, I turned to
23 my now-husband and said, Why aren't we living here?
24 This is great.

25 And the truth is, when he graduated from

1 Princeton 20 years ago, there weren't -- he was
2 looking for a job in Buffalo public schools, and
3 they were laying off teachers, not hiring them.

4 But 20 years has made this incredible
5 difference, and Buffalo is now really thriving.

6 It's a city that I love.

7 And I feel like so many of the exciting
8 things that I see happening in this community, from
9 X-ray crystallography, to outdoor Shakespeare, are
10 connected in some way to these SUNY schools.

11 When I was looking for a Ph.D. program,
12 UB was my only choice.

13 I have had really incredible professors who
14 have encouraged me to publish, to present at
15 national conferences.

16 I actually am, in, like, 13 hours, I'm going
17 to be on a plane to Texas, to do research for a
18 chapter that I just had accepted for publication in
19 a book. And that is -- that research travel is
20 funded by UB.

21 And I could not do it without that funding.

22 It's scary to pick up your life sort of
23 mid-career, quit your job, make your husband quit
24 his job, and start a new life.

25 We just got a cost-of-living increase,

1 Ph.D. students, and it has made a tremendous
2 difference in anxiety reduction.

3 My incredible colleagues at UB represent this
4 incredible diversity of experience.

5 They are doing work in representations of
6 gender and Indian dance, in robotics and AI and
7 performance.

8 They come from incredible backgrounds.

9 They're playwrights. Some have been on
10 Broadway. They've been part of international dance
11 companies. And they have brought this experience
12 and this passion to Buffalo.

13 And one of the amazing things that I've found
14 at UB, that I didn't see in other places I've lived,
15 is that, when people come here, they really want to
16 stay here. They want to give back to this
17 community.

18 So, again, I just want to thank you for
19 investing in these schools, and, in turn, investing
20 in this community.

21 Thank you.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: I guess you like it.

23 ROBYN HORN: I do, very much.

24 SENATOR KENNEDY: Welcome.

25 ROBYN HORN: Thank you.

1 SENATOR KENNEDY: We like having you here.

2 ROBYN HORN: Thank you.

3 SANDRA LEWIS: Hello. My name is
4 Sandra Lewis, and I'm from Fredonia. Recently
5 retired from 33 years of service at the campus.

6 So you have my testimony.

7 And I believe my last line is: In order to
8 help students, we need to have a real solution to
9 the TAP gap.

10 I'd like to share with you a story that one
11 of our students had for the TAP gap.

12 This young lady was born and raised in a
13 neighboring town, Dunkirk. Has a little bit more
14 diverse people of color, Hispanics and
15 African-Americans.

16 She was a (inaudible) African-American young
17 lady.

18 Throughout her entire tenure there, we'd have
19 her on campus, come to the theatrical performances,
20 and things like that.

21 And so she was really connected to our
22 campus.

23 And so it wasn't a surprise that she wanted
24 to go to SUNY Fredonia.

25 She applied, she was accepted, and she was in

1 an EDP program.

2 It's EOP in some places. EDP at Fredonia.

3 So she was as a freshman. She was living on
4 campus. She was becoming accustomed to the
5 different people, and things like this.

6 And, she still did not have enough money.

7 You know, being an EDP student, they did give
8 her some funding, but she just didn't -- couldn't
9 have enough finances.

10 So she had to go and get a job, as lots of
11 students do have to do.

12 She had a part-time job, even though it was
13 more than 20 hours a week, but it was still a
14 part-time job.

15 And unbeknownst to a group of us who worked
16 at the campus, she decided to come up with her own
17 solution to close this gap.

18 I believe it's Hilbert or Conesus --

19 One of the private universities on Route 20.
20 I can't recall the name.

21 -- she applied.

22 She went and talked to the dean of students,
23 and, of course, the dean was impressed, as we were.

24 This was an awesome young woman who loved
25 learning, loved getting involved.

1 And so they kind of closed that gap for her.
2 They gave her money to go to their campus.

3 And we were sort of disheartened, because we
4 really wanted her to graduate from one of -- from
5 the best, the best, public university in the nation.

6 So I just wanted to share that story with
7 you.

8 I thank you for your time.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

10 I was at a hearing at Fredonia a number of
11 years ago, and I was very impressed with everybody.

12 ROBERT ROGERS: Thank you.

13 I'm Bob Rogers. I'm at Fredonia. I'm a
14 professor of mathematics.

15 And first up, I want to thank both Senators
16 and Assemblywoman for having this, and having us to
17 talk with you.

18 I'm kind of the change-up pitch on this one.

19 Everybody's been talking about funding.

20 I don't want to talk about funding.

21 I actually want to talk about flexibility.

22 I think it's very important to have
23 transparency, especially with the foundation
24 accounts, to make sure that that money is going
25 towards students and things that really matter,

1 instead of other kind of slush funds that people
2 use.

3 That being said, I'm kind of concerned that
4 there is a possibility that, if there is too much
5 transparency -- and that sounds a little silly --
6 but if there's too much transparency, that, if
7 accounts start getting hamstrung.

8 And campuses -- with the funding paradigm
9 shift, campuses have been forced to be more creative
10 in how they fund things.

11 And I just have a couple examples to kind of
12 illustrate this.

13 In the written -- written testimony that I
14 have, I talk about two colleagues of mine and I, we
15 created a graduate course for our master's in
16 mathematics-education students.

17 And it's a summer class.

18 And in this class, they actually are -- they
19 develop materials. And they are counselors for a
20 middle school STEM camp.

21 And it serves the community because middle
22 school students can come and be in it.

23 Our graduate students, they really sort of --
24 they really win from this because they get an
25 experience that they're just not going to get

1 anywhere else.

2 And the university makes out on this because
3 they're getting tuition money, that they're paying
4 for this.

5 And my colleagues and I, we decided, instead
6 of taking a salary, we would have that money
7 deposited into a suture account.

8 And the reason was, it was money that we
9 could use to fund things like undergraduate student
10 travel to conferences.

11 We take 30 students every year to the
12 Association of Mathematics Teachers in
13 New York State Conference, and they present.

14 So we kind of scrounge around to get money
15 for it here and there. There's not a big pot of
16 money for that.

17 And this account that we had was supposed to
18 fill the gaps.

19 Well, as we found out, a suture account, and
20 I'm sure you're well aware, suture account does not
21 pay for student travel.

22 It will pay for my travel, my colleagues'
23 travel, but it will not pay for student travel.

24 So we decided, eventually, that we had to put
25 this money into a foundation account.

1 That -- that it was great to have the suture
2 account because, it would be before taxes, it got in
3 there. You know, it really was a nice way to do it,
4 but just was not flexible enough.

5 So we ended up taking a salary, but now we
6 donate it into our -- into a foundation account, and
7 then that can cover things that the other stuff
8 cannot.

9 So, really, I do urge you to have the
10 transparency in there. Foundation accounts have to
11 be transparent, but I think they also have to be
12 flexible enough to deal with this.

13 And while I was sitting there, one other
14 thing kind of came up, to kind of illustrate the
15 idea about flexibility.

16 (Indiscernible) -- this will be really brief.

17 Our department has a number of foundation
18 accounts that donors have given us endowments. And
19 we give some modest scholarships to some of our
20 students. I mean, they're like \$500 scholarships.

21 In the past it's been fine. We just write
22 them a check and they get it.

23 This past spring, our chairperson said that,
24 Well, we have to be careful about this because, if
25 they get scholarship money through this, then

1 they're going to lose money through the Excelsior
2 program or TAP, or whatever, because that's going to
3 be skimmed right off for tuition.

4 And that's, like, they're getting screwed.
5 I mean, there's no other way to put it.

6 So we have to actually go and try and find
7 the donors to say, okay, this money is going to not
8 go for tuition.

9 It's really kind of hamstrung us, and it's
10 really hurting students.

11 So I guess I'll end with that.

12 I like transparency, but there has to be
13 enough flexibility in there that we can help the
14 students.

15 Thank you very much.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay, we're good?

17 SENATOR KENNEDY: Thank you all.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you all.

19 For the record, it's 4:00, and the hearing is
20 adjourned.

21 (Whereupon, the public hearing held before
22 the New York State Senate Standing Committee on
23 Higher Education concluded at 4:00 p.m., and
24 adjourned.)

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