BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE FINANCE
AND ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEES

JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING

In the Matter of the
2021-2022 EXECUTIVE BUDGET ON
HIGHER EDUCATION

Virtual Hearing
Conducted Online via Zoom

February 4, 2021
9:32 a.m.

PRESIDING:

Senator Liz Krueger
Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein
Chair, Assembly Ways & Means Committee

PRESENT:

Senator Thomas F. O'Mara
Senate Finance Committee (RM)

Assemblyman Edward P. Ra
Assembly Ways & Means Committee (RM)

Assemblywoman Deborah J. Glick
Chair, Assembly Higher Education Committee

Senator Toby Stavisky
Chair, Senate Higher Education Committee

Assemblyman Erik M. Dilan

Senator John C. Liu

Assemblywoman Karen McMahon

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PRESENT: (Continued)

Assemblyman William Conrad

Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

Senator Diane J. Savino

Assemblyman Steve Englebright

Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy

Assemblywoman Rebecca A. Seawright

Assemblyman Al Stirpe

Senator Pete Harckham

Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman

Assemblyman Harvey Epstein

Assemblyman Doug Smith

Senator Andrew Gounardes

Assemblywoman Diana C. Richardson

Senator James Gaughran

Assemblywoman Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn

Senator Shelley B. Mayer

Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon

Assemblyman Jake Ashby

Senator Gustavo Rivera

Assemblywoman Judy Griffin

Assemblyman Victor M. Pichardo

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PRESENT: (Continued)

Assemblywoman Vivian E. Cook

Assemblyman Mark Walczyk

Senator Robert Jackson

Assemblywoman Sarah Clark

Assemblyman Kevin M. Byrne

Assemblywoman Phara Souffrant Forrest

Assemblyman Garett Gandolfo

Senator Jeremy A. Cooney

Assemblyman Robert Smullen

Assemblyman Steven Otis

Senator Peter Oberacker

Assemblyman John Salka

Assemblyman Kenneth Zebrowski

Assemblywoman Latoya Joyner

Senator James Tedisco

Assemblyman Mike Lawler

Assemblywoman Inez E. Dickens

Assemblyman Michael Reilly

Senator Phil Boyle

Assemblyman Philip A. Palmesano

Senator Joseph A. Griffo

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Assemblywoman Marcela Mitaynes

Senator Elijah Reichlin-Melnick

Assemblyman Jeffrion L. Aubry

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CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Good morning. I am Helene Weinstein, chair of the New York State Assembly Ways and Means Committee and the cochair of today's hearing.

Today we will begin the sixth in a series of hearings conducted by the joint fiscal committees of the Legislature regarding the Governor's proposed budget for fiscal year 2021-2022. And the hearings are conducted pursuant to New York State Constitution and the Legislative Law.

Today our committees will hear testimony concerning the Governor's budget proposal for higher education.

Let me acknowledge the members of -- the Democratic members of the Assembly who are here. Senator Krueger, chair of the Senate Finance Committee, will introduce her members from the Senate. And then our ranking members, respectively, will introduce their members.

So we have with us the chair of the Assembly's Higher Education Committee, Assemblywoman Deborah Glick. We have

Assemblyman Conrad, Assemblyman Dilan, Assemblyman Englebright, Assemblyman Epstein, Assemblywoman Hyndman, Assemblywoman Richardson, and Assemblyman Stirpe. I'm sure other members will join us as we continue.

Senator Krueger, if you want to introduce your Senate colleagues.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you so much, Assemblywoman.

Of course we're joined by the chair of the Higher Ed Committee, Senator Toby Stavisky. We're also joined this morning by Senator Diane Savino, Senator Gustavo Rivera, Senator Pete Harckham, Senator Robert Jackson, Senator Shelley Mayer, chair of Education. Those things seem to go together all the time, higher ed and education. Sorry.

Senator -- no, that's it for Democratic Senators.

I would, if you don't mind, pass it to Senator Tom O'Mara, my ranker on Finance, to introduce his members.

SENATOR O'MARA: Good morning,

Chairwoman Krueger. Thank you.

We have been joined thus far on our side of the aisle by Senator Peter Oberacker.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And before I go to our ranker, we've also been joined by Assemblywoman Cook, Assemblywoman Clark, Assemblyman Pichardo.

And now I'd like to introduce the ranker on Ways and Means, Assemblyman Ed Ra, for introduction of his conference members.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chairwoman. Good morning.

We are joined by the ranking member on the Higher Education Committee, Mark Walczyk, as well as Assemblymembers Byrne, Smullen and Gandolfo.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Just before I introduce the first witness, I just want to remind the witnesses and the members that -- to keep your eye on the clock. It's particularly important with the virtual hearings; we've been having more participation, which is good, but it also extends the hearings. And we want to make

sure that everybody has a chance to both speak as a witness and be able to have the opportunity to ask questions as a member.

So just to go over the -- sort of the ground rules, governmental entities -- and we have four today -- will get 10 minutes to make an oral presentation. And we're going to be starting just in a few moments with a presentation from our SUNY Chancellor, Dr. Jim Malatras.

Then we'll hear testimony from other witnesses after the four -- typically, nongovernmental witnesses who have asked to testify here today. These witnesses each have three minutes to make an oral presentation.

In terms of members, the chairs of the Higher Ed Committees will each have -- and Ways and Means and Finance Committee -- will each have 10 minutes to ask questions. That's for both questions and answers. The ranking members of the respective committees will have five minutes.

All other members have three minutes

to ask a question, and the three minutes is for the witness to respond. So it's three minutes total for both question and answer. So don't use your three minutes to ask a question and then say what do you think, because we will not have time to hear the answer.

And if people adhere to the guidelines, I think we'll be able to have a really lively discussion today.

And with that, let me just -- I think we've been joined by a few more members. So I see Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon is here, Assemblywoman Buttenschon, Assemblywoman Fahy, Assemblywoman Forrest, Assemblyman Otis, and Assemblywoman Seawright.

So with that -- and I'm sure as -- yes.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, one more Senator, Senator Jeremy Cooney. Thank you. And Senator Gaughran.

SENATOR O'MARA: And we've been joined by Senator Jim Tedisco as well, on our side. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Sorry, Helene.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: No problem.

And just for the members, we want you to know that if you want to get on a list to ask a question, you can use the raised hand function on Zoom.

We also have enabled the chat room -- not to make comments, but if you have a question about the order of the members or a question about a contact information, please feel free to use the chat. Or if you need to explain why you need to take a little break and to come back, we will -- I monitor that as well.

So with that, we're very anxious to hear from our new chancellor, Chancellor Jim Malatras, someone known to many of us for quite a while.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you. Good morning, Chairpersons Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky and Glick, and all the members of the Senate and the Assembly, as well as their staff. That clock of course is

intimidating as it ticks down, so I will go quickly.

As a former legislative staffer, I appreciate all that you do to put together these hearings.

I am Jim Malatras. I'm the 14th chancellor of the State University of New York. I'm honored to be the first SUNY graduate to ever serve as chancellor. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to discuss the 2021-2022 Executive Budget.

We have provided our full budget submission to the members for consideration, but today I would like to briefly address several of those important issues.

Students are the lifeblood of SUNY. Even in tough economic times as a result of the pandemic, it is critical to protect key access programs such as TAP, EOP and EOC. We have made this our top priority and are happy that the Governor has held these critical programs harmless in the Executive Budget. We are heartened by the Legislature's strong

and unwavering support for these programs as well.

The pandemic has greatly strained our students, and every dollar matters. That's why we did not raise tuition this year, though we would like to continue to have the authority to make reasonable increases in the future, and support the Executive's extension of the Predictable Tuition program.

Our research and doctoral universities are second to none and have done amazing work, from developing the world's number-one-ranked COVID-19 saliva test to developing the next generation of lithium-ion batteries to help combat climate change. We support the Executive's budget proposal to provide flexible tuition for these institutions to continue to invest in world-leading research while ensuring access for not just disadvantaged students, but for all SUNY students.

Because of your investment in SUNY, resident tuition is significantly lower than most other states, and with the extension of

predictable tuition we will keep it that way and avoid the unforeseen staggering increases of the past.

Because of the global health crisis, students are struggling with social and physical isolation, economic anxiety, and academic normalcy. In September, SUNY rolled out a comprehensive mental health and wellness program called ReachOutSUNY, expanding mental health and wellness services for every student. But to ensure students have access, we'd like to invest more in the program, including additional telehealth and peer-to-peer counseling.

Students are also struggling with everyday expenses. Thanks to Governor Cuomo, New York State is combating food insecurity by expanding SNAP benefits to 75,000 SUNY and CUNY income-eligible college students. But only 23 percent of our eligible students take advantage of this important program. To increase use of the program, we now are automatically helping enroll our EOC students into SNAP. That's nearly 10,000 students,

and something we're very proud of.

Although this is an important step forward, we're always looking for additional investment to help meet the nutritional demands of our students.

We must continue to rise to the challenge of defeating COVID.

First, SUNY has produced tests and PPE that are helping to defeat this virus. We want to continue our work and welcome your support of a new "SUNY COVID Response Fund" to help expand critical healthcare capacity, increase testing capacity, and to expand much-needed PPE manufacturing in the State of New York.

Second, we must support the critical demand for additional healthcare staff. We've seen a 21 percent increase in applications this year at our four medical schools.

New York State needs over 250,000 additional nurses by 2028, and we at SUNY can meet that demand, but we lack the necessary space, especially at our community colleges.

Therefore, we respectfully request $20 million to expand our clinical spaces to meet that growing demand.

In addition, we are facing urgent staffing challenges at our SUNY hospitals. We are requesting authorization to temporarily provide additional financial incentives to retain our healthcare staff at our SUNY hospitals.

Now more than ever, new jobs require some type of post-secondary credentialing, yet millions of New Yorkers, many who are struggling for the next job or career opportunity, have not completed college. It's projected that 70 percent of all new jobs in the United States will require post-secondary education by 2027. Currently, more than 2.2 million New Yorkers between the ages of 25 and 44 have no degree.

The pandemic has caused real harm to our institutions. Our enrollment overall is down 5.3 percent year-over-year. However, while the pandemic may have exacerbated our challenges, it did not create them. Overall,

our enrollment has declined 16 percent over the past decade.

We must adapt to the changing economic landscape. This has only been accelerated by the pandemic. This challenge presents an opportunity, but we need your help. We've announced a new campaign called SUNY For All, where we focus on every segment of New York.

We recently launched a SUNY Online Training Center that offers 20 free college preparation and certifications in high-demand industries, like healthcare and advanced manufacturing, to those underemployed or unemployed. Graduates are automatically accepted with no application fee into any of our 30 community colleges and two of our four-year institutions.

The Governor in his State of the State called for the expansion of this program, and we'd welcome the Legislature's support as well.

Second, we want to focus on emerging industries that provide well-paying jobs. One area is green jobs. Thanks to

Governor Cuomo and the Legislature, the state has created ambitious goals to reduce our carbon footprint -- and SUNY can fuel the needed workforce for the state.

The state's $20 million investment in the Offshore Wind Training Institute is a huge step forward, and we'd like to build on that momentum by creating the SUNY Clean Energy Workforce Academy, mobilizing colleges from all corners of the state to create academic, apprenticeship, and training programs that focus on sustainability and clean energy workforce areas in their direct locations, and fast-tracking prospective students to provide them with the credentials necessary to meet the emerging workforce needs in that area.

Finally, we must keep up with our competitors if we are to thrive. For instance, more than 50,000 New Yorkers are enrolled in online programs outside of New York, in many cases because SUNY cannot offer the modern programs that they want. Getting those students back will help with

our enrollment challenges.

Yet program approvals for high-demand areas are met with a lengthy process. On average, it takes 221 days before receiving final approval for a new program.

In comparison, 35 other states have no state-level approval. And in states that are similar in composition to New York State, the approval process ranges from approximately 40 days (Massachusetts) to 60 days (Maryland).

We are already accredited by independent bodies and have a robust internal review. But we would like to work to modernize the process in New York to reverse our significant disadvantage, which results in lost revenue for SUNY programs that benefit students, and for New York.

But we're not just confronting COVID and its many effects. The stress of cultural and political division has frayed the social fabric of this nation, and SUNY isn't immune to the impact of it. We have a lot of work to do to make SUNY more diverse, equitable,

and inclusive. Recently, we've appointed several phenomenal diverse college presidents at Old Westbury, Monroe Community College, and Upstate Medical University.

But we must strengthen our career ladders for our diverse faculty members. We need to do more. With your help, we will continue to invest in other areas as well, like the recently created Hispanic Leadership Institute. And we're finalizing an action plan that will focus on things such as developing curricula towards racial equity and strengthening the role of the chief diversity officer on every campus.

We're happy that the Executive Budget includes substantial restoration of offsets caused by the collapse of revenue, as well as capital investments. Your continued investment in SUNY has paid dividends for millions of New Yorkers. According to the Opportunity Study, 13 SUNY institutions rank among the best in advancing economic and social mobility.

While many things today are uncertain,

SUNY is not. We thank you for your support, and I would be happy to answer any of your questions.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. And thank you for keeping mind of the clock.

Now we go to our Higher Education chair, Deborah Glick, for 10 minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much, Chancellor. Very happy to have you here. I'm unmuted?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: You are unmuted.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay, great. What I'm going to do is cut off my video to ensure that my bandwidth stays solid, or at least not completely unstable.

The -- over the years, the TAP gap has grown with each successive increase in tuition. The predictable tuition that grows at $200 a year adds to the TAP gap. How large is the TAP gap currently? And have you and the board discussed with the Governor changes that would help reduce that strain on campuses?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Right now -- Chair, thank you for that question. And thank you for having me today.

I believe currently the TAP gap is about $69 million, roughly. This year we've talked long-term about the future stability of the system. This is one of those areas. We are also mindful of the economic considerations, given COVID and the challenges there. So this is a project that we will focus on long-term.

In many cases our campuses, of course, through the SUNY 2020 program of 2011 make up the difference to make sure our students have access. And this year in particular, we were most concerned that the critical access programs -- EOP, EOC, TAP program -- were held harmless. But this is something that our campuses would like to work on. This is a concern to them long-term, and this is something we will have to continue to work on in the future.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: In that same vein, the issue of fees -- because, over

time, there were frozen years without tuition increases, campuses have resorted to using fees. Now, as we've discussed privately, I'm not concerned about a parking fee, but fees for things that are integral to a student's academic work -- a technology fee or the like.

Do you have plans to work on reducing fees and making them part of the tuition? As we increase tuition $200 a year, which is of course the request of the Governor, is there some plan to fold in those essential fees that students can't avoid but need for their academic work?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you, Chair.

The fees are something that I have spent a lot of time on. Just on the predictable tuition point, we're just asking for authorization -- not that we would increase tuition every year. The Board of Trustees and I were very mindful of the economic considerations of our students this year, and we forwent our ability to raise the

tuition $200. We convened with our presidents and other leaders on campus to have that discussion.

With respect to fees, the pandemic of course has given life to a lot of these issues. In many cases we worked with our University Centers, they reduced some of their fees upwards of 25 percent this year, mindful of the students' needs.

I do think we would like to work on rationalizing the fees. I think we've discussed this in the past.

The issue of our research centers is something that needs attention. If they are going to be the sort of research innovation juggernauts in the country -- and I think they are already, but we can take it a step further. Whether it's Stony Brook University or Albany, Buffalo and Binghamton -- Binghamton is doing some fantastic work -- they have in many cases a higher fee structure to support that research, but it's not aidable. So that's something we'd like to consider as well.

But we have taken great care, at least over my short tenure as chancellor -- I began at the end of August -- on reducing some of the fees over the course of the pandemic, especially when those services were not being offered to students -- athletic fees being some of those fees, transportation fees -- and then rationalizing the process overall.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Let me go to a couple of other areas.

Obviously, with the pandemic, we are concerned about the increase in mental health concerns and the strain and stress that this has put on everyone, especially students. And the -- there is a rather modest part of the budget, the telehealth part, that is actually cut in the Governor's budget. I think you said you would hope to increase that.

Again, have there been any discussions in making that more available across the system?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: It's an important point.

I -- one of the things I've done as chancellor, I've met with I think about 50 of the 64 student groups in the individual campuses. And the issue that comes up time and time again are mental health services and wellness services.

It has been a difficult time for our students, like it has been for all of us. We are all convened on Zoom; I've never had a budget hearing in my long career in government in Albany via Zoom. It's an interesting way of dealing with this. But we're all adapting.

But if you think about what students are going through, living on campus -- we had to reduce density. They're largely living by themselves. They don't have many of those activities in person to connect them as part of the college experience, and they're struggling.

So we did come up with a really comprehensive program in September and October called ReachOutSUNY. This was undertaken by the Board of Trustees, and the

Board of Trustees should be thanked for their leadership on this issue. And it was tasked -- it's headed by President Stanley of Oswego and President Riley of SUNY Downstate. But we came up with a comprehensive plan.

Telehealth hubs, using Downstate Medical and Upstate Medical psychiatric and other services -- an important step for our students. They've many inquiries, I think upwards of 500 or so inquiries and use of those telehealth services.

We expanded the peer-to-peer network services used by the University at Albany. They're a wonderful peer-to-peer service, but we want to expand those things.

We're doing training and we want to expand our training, something students have asked us for, especially training our RDs and RAs in crisis management. Because we've had situations, crisis situations on our campuses that we've had to deal with. We would like to have more investment in that. We think the small investment that we've asked for is money well spent. We have shown a tremendous

return on investment.

We're not asking for a lot of money on this, but this is really important, the overall well-being of our student body. And without students, we're not really a college system. So we're doing everything in our power to expand those services. And any help you would provide, we would absolutely take, because our students really need it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Let me ask you two more questions, as time is -- it's like watching sand through an hourglass. Two different areas.

One has to do with the withholding of either transcripts or the preventing of registration for small amounts of money. At what -- you know, we'd like to understand what the dynamics of that are and how much, essentially, your receivables are in that area.

And then the other thing I'd like you to address is we're very happy that there is some focus on green jobs. I think the community colleges do a great job in

responding to what's happening in the world. But how much would the Workforce Academy -- you know, how much money do you need to get that going? And is there a plan for SUNY to move forward with all of its capital investments going forward in actually employing green technologies?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: So we'll try to answer this, because I see the clock ticking too.

On the green jobs side, I think this is one of our most exciting areas, because the future job growth is significant. I think that is the future. I think they're well-paying jobs. I think the Green Academy, which brings together many of the important programs that we have across the state system, from our community colleges to our four-year schools, could be between $2 million and $5 million to stand it up in a real and meaningful way.

The return on investment on that would be huge, though. I mean, you're thinking of tens of thousands of jobs being created in

the State of New York.

On the side of the capital investment, I think you required, under the CLCPA -- which was a big step forward for the State of New York on addressing climate change -- the SUNY system had to reduce their carbon footprint, the greenhouse gas emissions, by 37 percent, I believe by 2030.

We've already achieved a 40 percent reduction in our system, so we take this very seriously. I was president of Empire State College, one of our new facilities that was built in Saratoga, which used geothermal power. So we're taking this seriously. We want to decarbonize our electric system.

And we want to do something different we haven't always done, which are use the students that we're training in our various programs to participate in the jobs that we're creating because of the green energy revolution on our campuses. I want to do more as chancellor to connect those things.

And the final point on the fees, that is something that is a concern to me. We

will get you the specific details. I think it's in the realm of $64 million of unpaid fees, things that are impacting about 18,000 students. But many of our campuses have been really mindful of not putting holds on transcripts, not letting people suffer economically because of the economic considerations.

I did this at Empire State College when I was still president in March, April and May as well, of last year. So we've been mindful of that.

But I will get you all the exact details on it. But it's about $64 million and about 18,000 students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much. I appreciate that. And I'm very sorry for you being a Jets fan.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I -- well ...

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

And since we started, we've been joined by a number of members: Assemblywoman

McMahon, Assemblywoman Griffin, Assemblyman Zebrowski.

And in the Republican Conference, our colleagues Assemblyman Smith, Assemblyman Lawler, Assemblyman Reilly, Assemblyman Ashby and Assemblyman Palmesano.

And now we go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

We have been joined by Senator Gounardes, Senator Savino, Senator Boyle, the ranker on Higher Ed, and Senator Griffo.

And I confess I don't really follow football, but I follow New York State, and I think you just alienated everyone north of Poughkeepsie. I'm not sure, but I think you did that, Chancellor. So you'll have to make up for that.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: To my defense, though, I am originally from the great State of New Jersey, although I moved to New York when I was just a wee lad of 6 years of age. But still, I feel like a

certain kindred spirit to my suffering New York Jets in New Jersey.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, since we're outing each other, I moved out of New Jersey at age 17. I still don't follow the Jets.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: But with that, our chair --

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: You're a happier person for it.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: There you go.

Toby Stavisky, chair of our Higher Ed Committee, to get us back on track. Come off mute, Toby.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay. Am I unmuted?

THE MODERATOR: Yes, we can hear you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay, good.

I'm agnostic on the Jets and the Giants. But Buffalo is the only team in New York.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR STAVISKY: Chancellor, thank

you very much for joining us.

Let me ask you, as a first question, 10 years the state support for both CUNY and SUNY combined was 46 percent. Tuition was 54 percent of the operating side of the budget. Now, it's 32 percent. It went from -- the state support went from 46 down to 32, and the tuition increased from 54 percent to 68 percent, which to me is trending in the wrong direction.

Can you discuss this?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you, Chair. And --

SENATOR STAVISKY: And perhaps even more, the solutions?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: The numbers have trended in that direction. I do think we -- as you're going to hear from many people today, that they would want more investment. I am not alone in that, probably, of course, of folks.

I do believe, though, that we have an ability to change our financial situation where other sectors do not, through

enrollment and others things. And for instance, so when you see 50,000 New Yorkers, those are folks that should be at a SUNY institution or a CUNY institution, for instance. Chancellor Matos Rodriguez and I work very closely. Many of his residents from New York come to my schools; many of our residents from upstate go to his schools. We're losing those students. So we have an ability to turn that around, I believe, through enrollment.

I do believe that targeted investment to show, to demonstrate to you return on investment is important. I do think in this current environment, where there are economic challenges, as long as we're providing access to our students -- that's the key piece for us. That's why we asked for this first, direct access and support to our students. If we have students enrolled, we will thrive. We can thrive on that basis. But when students struggle and they can't maintain their college activities because of economic conditions or lost tuition assistance or lost

tuition support or scholarships, then we are more harmed than ever.

So we're focusing on those areas where we can really show value to our students, reverse the enrollment trend.

The pandemic, as I mentioned, exacerbated and accelerated some of our decline, but our enrollment has been declining for more than a decade. So we're always looking for investment.

We would like targeted investment. We mentioned some areas where we think we can be a net benefit for the State of New York. I think the clean energy space is a really important area for us. I think the online training, some of those high-demand certificates, I think are really important and will help. I think the healthcare sector, that's one area of significant growth. We've seen our applications actually increase on healthcare enrollment. But we need help with building out our clinical and other space to meet that demand.

I think sort of -- certain targeted

investment is the way we'd like to go to show you, as legislators, that what you're giving to us is actual money well spent, and that we'll do in a meaningful way. But we do want to protect key access programs for our students because we don't want them falling further behind. EOP is an absolutely important program, for instance.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. You mentioned the healthcare aspect of higher ed, which I know is growing -- the SUNY hospitals, in particular. For a number of years we've tried to get the state to absorb the debt service; it's about 46 or so million dollars. All of the other agencies -- and I -- their debt service is paid by the state, I understand.

What can we do to get the state to pay that debt service for the SUNY hospitals and relieve them of that expenditure?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I think the state has taken on some of that debt. I'll have to confer with my budget folks.

But we are proud -- and this is

because of the work of the Legislature as well as the Governor. We're one of the few systems where you pay for our fringe benefits, you pay for a lot of our other services that many campuses and public systems do not have. And that is a significant investment by the state, so we appreciate that.

On the hospital side, especially on the debt side, our hospitals have been working very closely with the state as well as with the federal government through this pandemic, and through the stimulus actions, to try to get some more federal money as well. So we're going to be focusing on both of those areas.

I think, Senator, you raised a good point. Our hospitals have stood up and met the challenges of COVID in a major way. Our SUNY Upstate Medical University was not only the folks who came up with the world-leading saliva test, they're currently dealing with COVID-positive patients and they actually sent many of their staff to other hospitals

in the spring to deal with the challenges. They didn't have to, but they did it.

SUNY Downstate took on being a COVID-only hospital in the spring. Giving back to the communities? That's a big thing. And even the vaccine, which we're all hoping that we get more of. The Pfizer vaccine, who was the principal investigator of the Pfizer vaccine? That was Upstate Medical University.

So I think we've demonstrated time and time again through our hospitals that public SUNY hospitals can make a meaningful difference, provide real support and care. But any way we can get more resources to them to keep doing all these phenomenal things, we will work with you on.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, they are producing. And I think we've got to recognize our obligation toward those SUNY hospitals and certainly the people who work at them.

Let me get into a couple of other areas. You mentioned in your testimony the

7 1/2 months it takes for new programs. And we discussed this at some length not long ago, how long it takes to get approval. What do you think is causing that 7 1/2 -- I mean, obviously it's a rhetorical question, but what would you do in terms of speeding up the process?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I do think we have different layers of review that other states don't. And this is not being critical of any other agency that has regulatory authority, but I think we've modernized. When we were created in 1948, in many ways they built many guardrails around SUNY because they didn't want SUNY to grow at the time. But now we're in a different place.

What we do is we have an internal process. We have a shared governance model. Any program that's developed on any campus goes through a really significant review process of our faculty and staff on campus. It gets approved through their academic approval committees.

Then it gets approved through our

state -- our SUNY system administration process. That could take upwards of a year as it is. Then it goes to the State Education Department for an additional layer of review. That is something that now 35 other states do not have. That slows down the time.

But let me give you a real-world example of like major areas of need that we're trying to meet. For instance, Downstate Medical is trying to get a nursing education MS currently approved. It went through the sort of year-plus review at SUNY. It's now been waiting for 326 days at the State Education Department. Still not moved. That is now 400 days of waiting for a dramatic need in nursing that we need to provide.

Medical assistants at Sullivan Community College. They need an AAS. That's one area, medical assistants, we need more medical personnel. That has been waiting for 241 days.

Disaster management's one of those

areas that we've been focused on because of the pandemic. Buffalo State has had a proposal at State Education Department for 263 days. That's on top of the year-plus program.

What ends up happening is we lose out to other programs. They're enrolling in other schools outside of the state that don't have these reviews.

We're accredited through an independent body called Middle States. So we have an independent accrediting body that looks at us constantly, we have an internal campus review process, we then have a system administration process and then a State Education Department process.

We need to just speed it up, or we're going to keep that enrollment decline piece. In growing areas we're not going to be able to meet the nursing demand because of clinical space challenges but also just program expansion challenges.

I'll give you one more example of it, Child --

(Overtalk.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: One minute left.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Sorry. Child Advocacy Studies. One area where we have a great teaching shortage right now is in the pre-K space. Fredonia has an advanced certificate program that's been waiting 250 days. We can't wait that long, because we're not going to be able to meet the workforce demands.

So that's what we're looking to modernize and speed up a little bit.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Because I know about the understaffing at the State Education Department. They don't have the folks to process these applications.

And you mentioned Fredonia, which is a school which I visited many years ago for a committee hearing.

And the process I think has to be improved, but I'm not sure the Governor's solution is the best.

One quick question. What is the

full-time-faculty ratio?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: That depends, Senator, on the campus. And many of our -- so if you take our University Centers, it's about 80/20. But if you take our community colleges, it's a little bit of the reverse of that. So it depends on the sector. We can provide you that full breakdown.

And I do like to caution, sometimes we do use folks, part-time or adjuncts that have a real value. By the way, I teach; I'm considered an adjunct. But I think it's important to still teach. I taught in the fall. So it's a balance. It depends on the sector, though. It's -- at the University Centers, for instance, it's much higher full-time --

(Inaudible overtalk.)

SENATOR STAVISKY: You'll get it -- thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We've been -- in the Assembly now, we've been joined by Assemblywoman Dickens and

Assemblywoman Mitaynes.

And we go to the Higher Ed ranker, Assemblyman Walczyk for five minutes. Five minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Chancellor, good morning.

First, I just want to thank you. You have a reputation as a smart guy, but you also have a reputation as a really hard worker. And I know you and your staff over the last year have been in overdrive, not just in higher education but in a lot of ways helping New York get through this thing.

So from the bottom of my heart, and of on behalf of the residents of Northern New York, thank you for all of your efforts.

How are the testing sites coming along?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I think -- I am just -- first, I'm honored to be the chancellor of SUNY. Being a graduate, I love this system. And the way we've stepped up has been remarkable. Every one of our campuses are testing every one of the

students, faculty and staff because I've required it. But it's important.

We have volunteered more than half of our campuses to be vaccine distribution sites, and they're going extraordinarily well. We've had students step up and say, We're going to volunteer on the healthcare side. We had 2500 students in healthcare programs that said, We'll volunteer to help with vaccines or testing. No money, no credit, they just want to give back.

We've had this time and time again, and it's been impressive. And I think a system like ours, which is so large -- we have the largest system of public higher education. We're one of the few systems to bring back some of our students to in-person learning. And we've done more than 8,000 tests since September, which is more than some states have done since the beginning of the pandemic, and our positivity rate is 0.5 percent.

That shows you that our students are doing the right things. They deserve to be

applauded for this. They want to be back in learning. It's just amazing to see. We --

(Overtalk.)

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: You're doing a great job. I appreciate it.

Your faculty and staff, how are they handling it? And do you think if there was a retirement incentive you would have a huge drop?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: You know, I'm not exactly sure about that. I think there's been great strain on everyone. I think you see strain all across society, right? This is not specific to SUNY.

But our faculty and staff have struggled. Many of our support staffers have been on campuses since the beginning, exposing themselves in ways that we can't even comprehend, in food service and other areas. Our academic staff had to transition really quickly, and I think they've done that well.

It's a little like Sisyphus. That rock gets pushed up the hill and then the

rock slips back down and we push that rock up the hill -- because that's the choice we have, because we both have a moral obligation and an ethical obligation to supporting our students. And that's what this is all about.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: We appreciate you doing it. You mentioned that enrollees are down this year. I know that was certainly true in talking anecdotally with local students, many of them taking a gap year.

Do you expect that that will rebound? And it seems like there's a real focus on the flagship or the research institutions and supporting them with future enrollment. What about, you know, your run-of-the-mill SUNY schools?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I -- first of all, I think the research institutions have actually done fairly well on enrollment. They've been basically flat or a little bit up, net.

Our community colleges have had some difficulties. Most of our enrollment decline

has largely come from our community colleges. I think it's about 10 percent year over year, about 9.9 percent. But over the last 10 years our enrollment in our community colleges has declined nearly a third.

We want to focus our attention there. That's why I focus so much of my attention on community colleges. They provide fundamentally important access programs and the EOC programs that feed into our community colleges.

I was just at the Capital City EOC program, the welding program, the cosmetology program, the health services program. We need to support those programs, because those are going to be the access points for so many New Yorkers. As we're transitioning into the modern economy, I think we need to pay more of our attention and care there.

And I've spent a lot of time on the community colleges as well as the comprehensives. I think we have a lot of different opportunity points for people. We have to support all of those different

sectors because they all play a vitally important role.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Thanks, Chancellor. I appreciate it. And I know we don't have a lot of time here.

You know, I can respect you as a Jets fan, I guess, as a lifelong Buffalo Bills fan. But I want to tell you a quick story about hockey in the North Country. So in HECap, New York State invested $3.45 million in Clarkson, and that turned into a $25.7 million investment in Shell Arena and Campus Center, which is now, as I understand it, world-renowned ice as far as hockey goes, to skate on. It's an incredible thing.

We had a cut of $30 million in this budget to HECap. So this is -- this is with your platform, and I would just urge the legislative leaders to restore that in our one-house budgets and hopefully negotiate that at the table with the Governor.

I also wanted to bring up flexible tuition changes. Your Article VII language

will allow schools that have doctoral programs to increase tuition by 1.5 times. What institutions do you anticipate will see that large of an increase in tuition?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: We're not -- we would not want to do that actual increase every year. We would just want the authority to consider that and go through a transparent process. We look at our University Centers, the four University Centers, and our medical institutions especially for those services.

It's more about transparency for us. Already the differential exists between many of those University Centers and our other colleges, but they're done, as the chair of the Higher Education Committee in the Assembly said, through fees and other things. That's not aidable. There's lots of problems associated with that. This is a way to rationalize the program across the system.

We wouldn't do the 1.5 every year, we would just want the ability to consider that going forward.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: I appreciate the time and conversation. Thank you, Chancellor.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sorry, guys, I had a little trouble catching the mute.

Our next questioner is Senator Phil Boyle, ranker on Higher Ed, five-minute clock.

SENATOR BOYLE: Thank you, Madam Chairman. And you forgot to mention lifelong Jets fan.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Three-minute clock. Oh, no, just kidding.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR BOYLE: Thank you, Chancellor, for being here. Thank you for the great work you're doing, and your staff.

Just two quick questions. One pertains to the offshore wind. I know during the Governor's State of the State he mentioned a $20 million investment in

Offshore Wind Training Institute, which would be funded by NYSERDA. My question is, how is that -- where is that money coming from, basically, through NYSERDA, and what's the time frame for operational capability on that? Any ideas?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: We're really excited by that.

So there's two sources of funding that I know about. One is NYSERDA funding. One is we have some clean energy money that you appropriated to us that we want to access as well. It's about, I think $7 million or so, but we want to use a portion of it. It is for SUNY Farmingdale as well as Stony Brook University. Stony Brook University is going to put together much of the curriculum, working with President Nader, who's done a phenomenal job on the green energy side at Farmingdale State College.

We would like to have our pieces in place to start training people by this summer. We don't want to wait. I think we've been putting the pieces in place. So

by this summer we'd like to start enrolling students; we're thinking in the range of about 500 people to start, but then ramp that up to at least 2500 people.

But I think it could be bigger than that. I think the project alone will produce many jobs, including the manufacturing capability that we're building in the State of New York.

So that's the two sources, and that's sort of where we are timewise.

SENATOR BOYLE: Great. Thank you. Those of us, obviously, on Long Island are very excited about that project.

A question about the -- you mentioned about the flagship schools. This is kind of a pet peeve of mine. I've talked to some of your predecessors over the years. I went to Geneseo, and I have a master's from Albany, but I also graduated from the University of North Carolina. And it always killed me that all of our greatest athletes from New York State are going to other -- Kentucky, Florida, North Carolina.

I believe if we had some kind of flagship -- not academic flagship but athletic flagship university, we would make millions and millions and millions of dollars in New York State, keep it here just for our purposes. Just a thought.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Well, I'm not going to get into who should be the flagship, because this is where I get myself in trouble.

SENATOR BOYLE: I know. I know.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: But I will just note, not -- irrespective of picking it, the UB football team, if you haven't seen them play, you should watch that team play. They could probably beat the Jets by 40 points, that's how good they are. The gentleman ran for like 800 yards and eight touchdowns one game for UB. They are a phenomenal team.

SENATOR BOYLE: Well, thank you.

And my last is a comment -- you can answer if you want to -- regarding a concern of mine, and that involves cancel culture and

free speech on our campus. I believe a great threat to the future of our country is when students are protesting, left or right, and not allowing the other side to speak on our campuses.

It kills me when, for example, a conservative wants to come speak at a college campus -- and I tell them, when I speak to students, you want to protest across the street? Great. Wave a flag, whatever you want to do, yell at them. But you can't start burning things, breaking windows.

And then the head of the college -- which has happened at other schools, not too much at SUNY that I've seen -- suddenly cancels the speaker from even coming on campus. That's a bad sign for our future.

And I'd like to know if you guys have any plans about doing something about that.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Well, I think in the academy, now more than ever, I think what we're trying to do is engage in a civil discussion. I think what we've lost in this country a little bit is the ability to

interact with one another with differences, work those things through. Sometimes you will never agree; sometimes you will agree.

I think our students have been leaders on that front at SUNY, quite frankly. We've had protests on both sides. But how do you engage people more in this society, which is highly divided, you feel the cultural divide. I think our students can drive the change there, and I think SUNY has been a good example overall of allowing the free expression of ideas, as long as it doesn't cross the boundaries, as you said, into other activities.

I think we should have all voices. That's the point of college. All voices should be heard. You should work these things through, you should think and focus on those issues and then see where you go.

SENATOR BOYLE: Thank you, Jim. Thank you, Chairwoman.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go now to -- well, let me just announce who -- we've been joined by a few Assemblymembers. Assemblyman

Aubry, Assemblywoman Joyner, Assemblywoman Bichotte Hermelyn.

And we go to Assemblyman Epstein for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you, Madam Chair. And it's good to see you, Chancellor.

You know, so many questions I had were already asked. But I don't understand why at this point we would support cuts at all to the SUNY system. We know there's a reduction in enrollment, but the reality is we need to improve our public education. Would you support additional revenue if additional revenue became available?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Absolutely. One million -- one million percent absolutely. If you want to offer, we'll take it.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Yeah, we're looking for money for you. We need to raise revenues to make sure that our public education schools have more revenue.

Excelsior. You know, you know, we've

heard some real success in Excelsior on the tuition, but we've heard a lot of concerns about people being left out because they've had a grade that has hasn't gone well or, you know, they had to go part-time because of family issues.

Would you support expanding Excelsior to include either part-timers or people who had reasonable reasons that they needed support outside of, you know, the existing model that we have today?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I think certain scholarships have different end goals, and I think the Excelsior scholarship had a completion end goal, which was something I helped write, and a retention end goal. And we've seen the retention rates actually up a little bit in the Excelsior programs. Upwards of three-quarters of the students are maintaining their academic status when it's lower in other areas.

I do think you raise a very solid point. Our system and model has changed. People come in later in life. They need to

go to college over a longer period of time. Our incentive structure does not actually work around those types of students quite well. Those are the types of students I dealt with at Empire State College, the post-traditional student. I hate the terminology because a student is a student, it doesn't matter when you come to college.

I do think we should look at other ways and other avenues financially to allow students who need a longer runway to complete college successfully because of life issues and other things, to have the same type of access.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great. I appreciate it. I'd love to collaborate with you on that.

I know the chair mentioned the withhold on transcripts and the risks that it has. The Housing chairmen mentioned that. I would love to support any follow-up around that.

So students with disabilities play a really important role in our student body,

they are really active, but we've heard time and time from students with disabilities saying they don't have enough support in schools. Would you support additional resources to go to those students who may need help? And some of them have physical accessibility issues, but a lot of them have other special needs that the schools aren't able to provide.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Two issues. Yes, they need more support. We have tried across the board as -- when I became chancellor, we just created something called the Center for Autism Inclusivity, which is one area. And I --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Chancellor, I've got like 10 seconds. I'd love to talk to you more about that also --

(Overtalk.)

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Talk to Collin Lacki from Niagara County Community College, a visually impaired student. He's phenomenal on this space. Collin Lacki from Niagara County Community College.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great. And the last thing is we talked about money for student organizing. Love to follow up with you at a different time about that, resources for student organizing on campuses.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Peter Harckham for three minutes.

SENATOR HARCKHAM: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chancellor, good to see you. Thanks for being here.

As chair of the Committee on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, I'm glad to hear about your enhanced efforts on behavioral health outreach. I want to drill down a little bit on some of those issues.

Do any of our campuses have dedicated support residences for students in early recovery?

Number two, how much are we spending

on substance use disorder services, and what more could you do with additional funding?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Assemblyman {sic} you have been a phenomenal advocate, Assemblyman, in this area, and I don't want to misspeak. Let me get you the actual facts on recovery services for our students. That is something we did a lot of research analysis on at the Rockefeller Institute, because the opioid crisis has really not abated as much as we would have liked it to, especially in our student population. So let me get you more of those facts and then what the specific needs of our colleges would be.

But I think there is a -- I think the pandemic has created more challenges for our students, where they are turning to substance misuse, and we want to deal with that. But let me -- we would love to even convene something with you on that, because it's an important thing. But I want to get you the right facts and numbers. I don't have them as a recall right now, so I don't want to misspeak.

SENATOR HARCKHAM: Okay, yeah, I'd love to work with you on that.

The reason I asked the question is some of the private colleges and universities are now setting up specific dedicated dorms and residences with supportive services for students reentering their academic careers in early recovery.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Yeah, it's a great idea. It's something that we worked on when I was in the government still on the recovery high schools and things like that. I think we need more of those types of supports. Because if you provide the support, the students can be highly successful. We just need to give them that opportunity for recovery.

SENATOR HARCKHAM: All right. Terrific. Look forward to working with you on that.

And Madam Chair, I yield the rest of my time.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much, Senator.

Assembly, it's your turn.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. We've been joined by Assemblyman Salka.

And we go to Assemblywoman Sarah Clark, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Hello. Thank you, Chancellor, so very much for taking time and spending it with us, all about SUNY. It is a huge priority. I am a SUNY Stony Brook graduate and currently serving in the Rochester region in the Assembly.

I have two very quick questions. My first has to do -- I wrote a letter with a bunch of my colleagues regarding on-campus staff and faculty. Currently we know professors are part of the 1b eligibility, but not the food workers and other folks who are on campus, whether it's in-person learning.

So I just wanted your thought as to whether that would really help to build some equity on campuses, to make sure that where there is in-person instruction, that the entire campus, particularly those who are

most around other people, are getting the vaccine as well.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: That we -- so we did advocate to include our in-person instructors in the 1b. We've also advocated for our support staff and our administrative and professional staff on campuses. That is something that UUP, President Kowal from UUP, the president of the United University Professions and I have advocated together on. We understand that there is of course limitation of the supply, so we're mindful of that. We're happy that about -- I think about 40 or 50 percent of our folks on campus now qualify, so that's a good thing.

And that's why we're also requiring testing every week of all of our faculty, students and staff, because that also allows us to monitor the situation. Right now our staff positivity rate on our campuses is 0.32 percent. It's very manageable. But we have been advocating for the inclusion of those folks as well. They are heroes in this pandemic.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Great. Thank you. And we'll keep working on that.

My second piece is in some conversations that we've had with our community college here -- MCC is just a gem for us, both regionally and nationally as a model for community colleges. When the CARES funding was passed and money went to support student services, they have expressed that the support they were able to give students who were struggling made such a difference in terms of them coming back this fall.

So now that there's another round of federal money passed, one of the things we talk about a lot is you guys -- if the SUNY system can't spend that again on the student services because it's being held back until we figure out the budget, that could be harmful. So I would just love to hear your thoughts about how important it was to support students in need during COVID and how much that allowed them to come back in the fall and enroll again. And if we aren't allowed to let SUNY use this next round of

federal funding to do it, instead, the horrible idea of offsetting budget cuts instead with the federal dollars.

So I just wanted to hear what you thought about how important that money was to helping students who were struggling and staying on campus and staying enrolled.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you. It's absolutely essential. It has been a life-changing experience for students to have access to that.

And thankfully the Governor in the Executive Budget did not offset our costs. They have allowed us to spend that money on student services, which was really key for us. So we're hopeful in future stimulus discussions that we would have the same access.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: I did hear that this round they are being asked not to spend it quite yet. Is that true?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Not that I have heard of. We've put out, I think, about $220 million or so on student services, and

will continue to do so.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Perfect.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Our next questioner is the ranker {sic} on education, Shelley Mayer, five-minute clock.

SENATOR O'MARA: The chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Shelley?

SENATOR MAYER: Can't open my video, but --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. We can hear you.

SENATOR MAYER: Okay, very good.

Hello, Chancellor. Nice to see you. Congratulations.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you.

SENATOR MAYER: The first is, as you may know, I have a bill that I sponsored early into COVID that creates additional revenue targeted at K-12, and 15 percent for SUNY and CUNY. I wonder whether as -- I don't think you were chancellor at the time.

Now, as chancellor, would you support an additional tax on high-income earners with the money to go to K-12 and SUNY and CUNY?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Well, thank you, Chair, for that question. I don't opine on how you raise revenue. We would always -- as I said to other members of the committees, we would always welcome more revenue. But I don't feel it's my place to opine on how you do that piece.

SENATOR MAYER: Okay --

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: But we won't look away if you give it us to us.

SENATOR MAYER: Well, we would love your more active support than that passive statement, but I understand that.

Okay, second thing is on the issue of these -- lowering the cost of certificate programs that are deemed in high demand. Are you doing a regional analysis? My question is, for example, for -- what's a certificate in high demand? In WCC, for me, it might be different than in upstate community colleges' regional demand. And how connected are you

to the employers in determining which certificate programs are deemed in high demand?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you for that question. This is a really important thing for us.

We have begun working with employers. We just recently had a conversation with the Business Council, we're working with MACNY, for instance, and other employers. What we're running into are the Courseras of the world, who come in and can underwrite certificate processes because they have a different business -- for-profit business model, which then undercuts our community colleges in other sectors, which provide higher-quality certifications.

So what we're asking for is flexibility, because we can deal with the volume. And volume helps us, right? Even if you lower the cost a little bit. Right now we're locked into certain cost structures in the state. This is one area where we want to reduce the cost of our certifications because

we're actually losing out to some for-profit models where we don't think they're as high quality.

We would do it as a regional thing, because I do think every region has a different cost structure. And we would want to link it with the high-demand job areas that are needed, not just willy-nilly.

And our community colleges, to their credit, have done a pretty remarkable job on this front. You mentioned Westchester Community College. They have done a really good job on that. I've heard about Monroe; Monroe is like a star when it comes to workforce development, and other of our community colleges. So that's what we're looking for on that front.

SENATOR MAYER: I appreciate that. I think there is a real competitive disadvantage to the community colleges now. With the for-profit sector getting ahead, I think we have make-up to do.

The other is, what is the institutional relationship between SUNY and

the community colleges and the public high schools? Is there -- have you made a concerted effort to build relationships and ensure there's communications?

I'm thinking of again, in our experience, WCC being the school of first choice for so many graduates of high schools, and yet the relationships are not always strong enough.

Have you built any kind of structure to enhance that?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: We have to do more there, frankly. I think there's always an ability to break down barriers between different institutions. Because our students, by the way, don't get the difference between their high school and then community college or a four-year school. Right? It's artifices that we create, not that they understand.

We do have board members who have been really helpful. Trustee Stan Litow, who has done a lot of work on the P-TECH and early college high school front, I think has helped

break down those things. Our provost office has been really focused on that.

But we want to build more of those relationships, so however we can partner, we absolutely will.

SENATOR MAYER: You may have answered this earlier on the proposed increase in tuition for some of the schools. Have you given any consideration of the fact that for most of our communities that have been disproportionately hit by the economic impact of COVID, this could result in decreased enrollment?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I'm trying to rationalize and make more transparent the process, Chair.

The issue really is if you take one of our University Centers now, the overall cost is about $28,000, $29,000 -- compared to one of our four-year traditional comprehensive colleges, which is in the realm of 22,000 or 23,000. The issue is it's not -- a lot of those differential dollars aren't aidable in any case.

But we want to try to rationalize the system while giving our University Centers the ability to invest in research. If we want to build research juggernauts, they do need additional investment.

We have created a pretty good cost price even for our University Centers, but this is part of our transparency piece of reducing some of those other fees and associated things in a more transparent way.

SENATOR MAYER: Thank you. Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, we go to Assemblyman Smullen, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Thank you very much.

Can you hear me?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Three minutes --

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Jim, it's good to see you. It's been a long time since my Executive Chamber days.

I've got five questions for you. I'll read them all so they're on the record, and appreciate your response either here or your staff replying in writing.

I'll get going here. So the first question is, regarding SNAP enrollment, did you seek a federal waiver to substitute school enrollment for work, or do you need us to legislate that authority for you?

The second question is, can our economically countercyclical community colleges be supported on 10-year per capita enrollment formula, which would help their year-to-year budget issues?

Third question, SUNY medical personnel are highly credentialed, they're outstanding, and they receive some of the highest public salaries in New York. Can the actual sources of their compensation be broken down by funding source?

Fourth question, what's the status of the conversation on renaming SUNY the, quote, University of New York at Such-and-such, to better brand the system?

And then the fifth question is, do you consider private colleges in New York State to be competitors in the education marketplace in New York State?

So if we could roll back up to SNAP enrollment, what are the requirements that the feds have for that program?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I will try my best to answer all of these. If not, we will have a follow-up conversation with you.

The SNAP was a waiver that was approved. The Governor and the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance got that approval, which allows us now to substitute that work requirement, which is a game-changer.

On the community college, we could spend probably 25 hours on community college funding formulas itself. We would like to have that discussion about how do we come up with a stronger model for our community colleges.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: I really would -- I really would, because I have

community colleges in my district and they're very important to workforce development, a host of issues. So thank you on that.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Compensation, yes, we've been try -- we've been more transparent, at least as I've been chancellor, on compensation. In fact, just so you all know, we understand the economic challenges. I've required our senior staff here to take reductions. We've had new staff come in at significantly reduced cost as well, because we know that's important.

University of New York, we're always looking for new ways of branding the system. I have not had a discussion about the University of New York, but I do think we have to move sometimes beyond the location-based name to what the college is known for, because I think that has more cachet and value.

And then on the last piece -- I forgot. You had one more piece.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Private colleges and SUNY. How do you work the relationship

here within our state between, you know, publicly supported public benefit institutions and other institutions of private learning that are also in the same space?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: We have great collaboration often among our private institutions and our public institutions.

I'm a public guy. I've always been a public guy. I'm a SUNY guy. I'm always going to advocate for more SUNY, because I think we're the best, so I always want to put us front and center. But I do think there's often an important relationship between our private institutions and our SUNY schools. They're often collaborating on all sorts of things that improve the academic experience for all New Yorkers.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Thank you very much for your time today. I appreciate it very much. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Our

Finance ranker, Tom O'Mara, for five minutes.

SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you, Chairwoman. And thank you, Chancellor, for your time this morning in answering our questions. Appreciate it.

In the budget a lot of capital projects with matching funds involved are being put on hold. And I certainly understand that in light of the fiscal issues we have.

What is your sense of when we'll be moving forward on these projects that are going to be put on hold in this coming fiscal year?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you, Senator.

With respect to the private match one, that sector, I know that's something that was adopted in the budget a year or two ago. We do have a couple of projects that are potentially in the pipeline. I do think we can move forward with those as we're moving out of the pandemic issue, hopefully into next year. I will give you a better briefing

when we have a better sense of when those can move forward. But there are a couple in the pipeline that could potentially move forward right now.

SENATOR O'MARA: Can you highlight what those are at this point?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Well, I don't want to blow the deals for the respective colleges, because then they'll get mad at me, because then the private folks will pull out.

But I will be happy, as it becomes more soup, to bring that to the Legislature and brief you fully on where those are.

SENATOR O'MARA: Okay. What is the state doing and SUNY doing in relation to aid for non-credit programs, whether they're certificate programs, non-degree programs for local workforce development, which we've certainly seen great efforts at our community colleges in recent years. Are we looking at receiving any federal funding or seeking any of that for these types of programs?

You know, I know a lot of the aid

through the SUNY system is kind of degree-centric, focused on degrees being issued, as opposed to certificates and those types of workforce development programs. So what is the stress that you're putting on -- or the highlights on those types of programs for our local workforce developments?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: We have been advocating for some incentive-type program or scholarship. I know the Governor, in his State of the State, has put forth some ideas on scholarship for that type of workforce certification area. We would like federal dollars invested in that.

President Duffy, who is the president of the Adirondack Community College, who serves as sort of the unofficial chair of all of our community colleges, has been a leader in this space, and will continue. That's one area.

The second area, in talking to Chairman Mayer, is lowering the cost of some of -- giving us flexibility to lower some of the costs of our certification high-demand

programs, which helps us enroll more people. We're kind of locked into costs.

The third piece is sometimes we are doing it for free. Our new SUNY Online Workforce Training Center provides those certifications for underemployed and unemployed New Yorkers for free. You give us significant investment, we want to get them involved, we want to get them either matched to a job -- our self-interest is sometimes they'll move on to our community college after the certification, or a four-year school, because they're now interested in additional educational opportunities.

So we're willing to do some of that to meet the traditional workforce -- the immediate workforce demands and provide -- and demystify what education is to so many people who just feel like they can't have access in a way that is affordable.

So we're working on those three planes. But we would, we should look at the structures of how we underwrite tuition support or financial support for some of

those core programs for workforce development.

SENATOR O'MARA: Great. Great. Because I think those are vitally important to our local workforce development issues.

Finally, on the side of community colleges and the FTE funding -- which is, to my understanding, held flat this year. However, our community colleges, you know, in recent years have seen wide fluctuations in the enrollment. I know a couple of years ago we tried instituting a kind of a floor, where if your enrollment went down, your aid didn't necessarily go down, you know, one for one with that.

But with the FTEs being held flat, I don't see any floor of that type in this year's budget. Where are we on that as far as some colleges taking a big hit because of a significant drop in enrollment?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I think some of those colleges have real challenges because of the enrollment decline.

I think what we're trying to focus on,

Senator, which is where you kind of came in, where I think the strength of the community colleges are. The non-credentialing piece, the micro-credentialing is one of those areas that we're trying to get federal support. The stacking of credentials over time I think is really important. That's a sort of shift in how we approach education. Right? That's a longer process, not necessarily a degree process.

We've pushed on the part-time -- expansion of financial support for part-time students, as well as expanded Pell eligibility, which I think will help improve our community college enrollment, which will increase their funding. I do think we need, as some of the other members have called for, a longer discussion about how we fund community colleges, what the right methodology is.

We haven't quite figured it out over all this time, Senator. Chargebacks and other things, I think we have to have that discussion, because you are seeing many

inequities within the system right now because of it.

SENATOR O'MARA: Chancellor, my time is up. Thank you for your responsiveness.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, we go to Assemblywoman Buttenschon for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Good morning, Chancellor. It's great to see you again, as I appreciate meeting you at SUNY Poly as you were touring the state, and I appreciate you recognizing the needed funding and staff and research there as they have so many innovative and great programs.

Thank you again for all you're doing to support the challenges to keep faculty and students safe. And now I know you're working diligently on the staff.

I am a community college graduate, a graduate of the SUNY system as well as a Middle State reviewer. I want to reconfirm the importance of community colleges and the

role they can play in the recovery of this devastating pandemic, as well as the need, as so many have talked about, for a new funding formula as we work with our non-credit programs, the micro-credentialing that you discussed.

My questions are, can you advise me if you're working on formal plans with community colleges and SUNY institutions for the state recovery plan, as I know you have a key role in it.

Also, you address the concerns of the slow approval process for the much-needed academic certificate programs and certificates. This is a concern that I hear quite frequently. And do you have a plan that you could put forward so that we could expedite it during this recovery time?

And finally, do all your capital projects include a green component and, more importantly, antimicrobial high-touch surface areas? So thank you.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: So thank you. It was great to visit SUNY Poly and

those labs; those students are phenomenal.

The antimicrobial surface area is actually being developed by SUNY Binghamton researchers right now, with students, so hopefully we can solve our own problems on that.

On the green --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Well, I was going to -- let me just interrupt. I want to link you with Rome, we have a business here. So that would be great. Thank you.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: On the capital, we're doing more on the green side. We don't have an actual hard rule on making sure our capital projects are all green, but we are moving in that direction. Our stats are pretty good on that.

We have been focused more on if we're building new structures or retrofitting new structures, do you focus on geothermal, do you bring in some of those core activities.

I want to add a student component to that, which I still think is missing from us,

how do we turn our students into the workforce for ourselves, in a way, that -- when we do all of those things.

And on the workforce, the community colleges have to be a major part of this. That's why I've been visiting so many of our community colleges. I think I've already visited 20 out of our 30 community colleges thus far. They're going to play a fundamentally important role in the recovery of the State of New York. I think they provide the different access tools -- micro-credentialing, associate's degrees, certifications. I think the online training program feeding into the community college system will help.

And there are 5 million New Yorkers right now between the ages of 24 and 60 with no college education. Many of those individuals are being transitioned out of traditional industries, and they need more education now more than ever. So it's our job to connect them with all the various resources that we have. And that's what

we're going to work on too, is just reaching out and getting those folks to know that we even exist. I think that's part of our SUNY For All campaign as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: And I appreciate that. I would like to see formal plans. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We go to the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

Senator Robert Jackson, for three minutes.

SENATOR JACKSON: So good morning, everyone. And Chancellor, good morning. Good to see you. I am and my daughters are SUNY alums -- SUNY New Paltz, myself and my oldest daughter, and University of Buffalo. So I have a vested interest in SUNY and CUNY and education overall.

Let me thank you for your leadership. I just have several questions to ask, if you don't mind. And I have only three minutes, and so I'm just trying to be as quick as I

can, and I would appreciate it if you can answer them as succinctly as possible.

So can you tell me about -- first, I disagree with the $200 increase in tuition. People are suffering right now, not only in New York but around the entire state. And this is not the time to increase tuition. And I understand that you need money overall, and we're trying to raise the money, as Harvey Epstein said, through taxes and what have you and so forth, in order -- I heard you say that you wish you had -- a million times you would agree for an increase in money for SUNY, and I appreciate that. But it has to come from somewhere.

So how do you plan on implementing a proposed cut of $46 million? That's one question. And then the second question is, do you and SUNY plan on compensating hazardous pay for workers in SUNY hospitals that put their lives on the line during this pandemic?

So those are the two questions that I have for you.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Well, thank you, Senator.

Just -- and I want to, just for clarity -- we -- we understood the economic challenges that folks had, so we did not authorize a tuition increase this year. This is the first time, that it was important in my chancellorship not to increase tuition, which we did not do. And the board was very supportive of that, because we felt the struggles of our students.

On the second piece -- last piece first -- we would like to do more for our healthcare workers. They are frontline heroes. We have some limitations by state collective bargaining. We've asked for some flexibility to provide additional resources to those. But we've been working with folks from PEF and CSEA and UUP to try to get some more funding to them.

We're working on alternative arrangements to help those individuals -- parking or other things. We can never fully repay those folks, but we're trying to at

least do a small down payment to say we appreciate everything that you do. And by the way, they're getting poached to private hospitals that can actually pay them a lot more, so we want to maintain our ability to keep our workforce whole.

And on the reduction of $46 million, we're going to focus on protecting core academic services, protecting our faculty and our staff to make sure they can educate students, and protecting those core student services. And where we have to take reductions, we're going to focus everywhere else but there, as we can, because that's the most important thing for me. Even if I have to, you know, work in your office and give up and sell my building, we'll do all of those things.

SENATOR JACKSON: I like that, I like that attitude. I appreciate that. And as a former PEF employee -- I worked for the union for 23 years -- I will be advocating. So I'll be interested in seeing what that game plan is in order to support it.

And I thank you for your time.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Madam Chairs.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Conrad.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD: Thank you. Thank you, Chairs. Thank you, Chancellor.

I'm coming from Buffalo, so I'll take the Jets on the chin here.

I just want to point out one thing really quickly before I get to my question. Going back to UB, UB was in the top 25 for football in the ranking. They made the NCAA video games. Very proud here in Buffalo of the UB experience, so talking about flagship sports, it's one of the best D1 schools around here, personally.

I want to talk a little bit about student retention and these invisible barriers. I know that ideas42 out of Harvard had done a program at Brockport State, as

they were kind of looking at low-cost nudges to keep kids to be able to complete. Is that something that we're carrying forward in other schools right now, Chancellor, the ideas42 retention program?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I don't know specifically to that program, but we have a couple of programs like SUNY Re-Enroll and other things to get folks to re-enroll. And I think some of the things that we've been doing under SUNY For All is to try to get some folks who have some college but no degree back into our universe, especially the older demographic, which is the growing -- the growing -- the growth in higher education right now is that demographic of 25 to 44, actually.

So we have many programs. We want to unify some of that, because too often what you find in these programs, we have these one-offs, we can't actually leverage all the value. So that's something that we're now, as we're turning the page on COVID, focusing a lot of our time and energy on, in fact.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD: Okay. Because I find that these small little behavioral, you know, economical nudges -- you know, you've got to file your paperwork, you've got to do this -- you know, for somebody who's a first-time student or maybe the first time in their family going to college, you know, now having that kind of guidance is really helpful and having those little nudges along.

I know a lot of students right now are not really keen on -- I've had some friends whose kids go to UB who are kind of not going to carry on this semester, they're going to take one off until the COVID's over. But, you know, being able to get them back on and keeping in touch with them is going to be so important to I think the -- keeping SUNY going.

You know, I'm a proud graduate of SUNY Fredonia, SUNY Buff State. I think you have a phenomenal program, it's world-renowned, and I just want to keep it tiptop if we can.

So thank you.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Well, even

the -- just one final point on that is even the SNAP program, when only a quarter of our students really are participating in a program that they're eligible for -- let's just help them. We'll enroll them for it so they're not -- they're worried about their academic studies, not about hunger.

And that's just a small part of what our schools can do for folks, and I think that's a game-changer. Because the margins are so small for some of our students -- $10 matters if they eat that day or they're able to buy a book. And we don't want to have that sort of issue for them. So we have to do more.

But programs like we've just recently announced are really important steps for us, and we do it for them. Let them focus on their studies, let us focus on the bureaucratic paperwork.

ASSEMBLYMAN CONRAD: Appreciate it. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I think -- okay, you're going to hand it to me, right, Helene?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. Thank you very much. I am next up for the Senate, thank you.

So yes, Chancellor, you and I talked about SNAP maybe less than a week ago, and I was so pleased to see the announcement I think yesterday that you've already figured out a way to auto-sign up 10,000 of your students. So I applaud you and the university for being so proactive, because it's totally a win/win. I mean, you've focused on the importance of the food and nutrition for your students.

I'll just point out also, SNAP is 100 percent federally paid for. That's 100 percent new federal dollars into our local economy, our food stores, our farmers. It's a win/win/win from an economic development and health and nutrition and education perspective. Because you have researchers at your university who will explain to you that hungry students can't learn as well. So when we address the food

needs of our students, we've addressed a major issue for them educationally as well. So thank you, keep going with that.

So money. Last year -- I'm just reading my notes -- SUNY's four-year campuses received 300 million for institutional aid and 186 million for student aid from the federal government. Was that all specifically COVID-related funding, or was some of that normal, everyday money for you all?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I believe most of it is all -- but I'm going to be corrected if I'm wrong. I think most of it was COVID-related. So the student-based aid, and then what we were paying for -- what we asked for, Senator, on the institutional aid was to expand the categories of what is COVID-related, testing and other things, to help us pay for some of those costs. It was all COVID-related.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And did you spend it all?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I believe

we have spent most of it. I can get you the breakdown of the final spend-out by campus, I can get you the total dollars allocated by campus.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And my understanding is the new CARES Act actually allocates even a greater amount to colleges. Do you know how much you're expecting from the CARES funding?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I think we've netted out about -- it's about $340 million or so. But I will get you that breakdown.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: To be received in the future.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. And you expect that you will be spending that all down related specifically to COVID activities on the campuses?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I mean, yeah, there have been real significant costs. I know folks have done improvements to HVAC systems. Testing is a real cost to our

campuses. How you provide food services and isolation services has been a real cost to our campuses. Direct student support has been a real -- I mean, our students have real costs on laptops and e-technology and those types of activities.

So yeah, I think there's a real need that will be filled by those -- that funding.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So when the Governor proposes a $49 million cut to SUNY, you wouldn't respond, Well, we can absorb that because we got all that federal money? Or would you say, We can handle that because we got all that federal money?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Well, I never look a gift horse in the mouth. So if -- we will always take more funding.

I do think the federal aid has helped tremendously for our campuses for this year. If we do take a reduction in our spending, we will -- as I mentioned to Senator Jackson -- focus on those non-core academic activities in order to protect the student experience as much as possible for sure.

But we never are looking for less money, we're always looking for additional services for our college campuses. But I think if we had to manage a $46 million reduction this year, we could manage it the best we could.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So you talked quite a bit about sort of SUNY doing all kinds of work with the private sector and the value of doing that and targeting programs to the kinds of things that the labor market is asking for. You know, if they're looking for people who can do A, B and C, it totally makes sense that we should help provide an educated workforce that's got the skills that they're asking for.

You were even asked about -- or someone else brought up, excuse me, but you nodded recognition for we're creating new inventions, so to speak, in our labs with our students that have real-world important purposes that private companies are then interested in. I know several of the colleges -- I don't know the community

colleges, but several of the colleges have sort of deals with various businesses to use students in the research labs, use SUNY buildings for the actual research they're doing.

So here's my question. When the private sector goes ahead and creates something and brings it to market and patents it and makes a lot of money, people who buy stock in that company might get a return on their investment. Do we get a return on our investment in some kind of contractual way so that if somebody invents the next great sustainable battery storage for energy on a SUNY campus -- I just made that one up, by the way, although it would be really good to do that -- do we get a -- sort of a share of the stock value of that company who will do extremely well for a very long time? Do we have those kinds of contracts in place? Because I know private universities do.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Yes, the short -- I don't know about every case on every campus, but many of the programs that

we still support, like the START-UP NY program -- which by the way, helped feed the COVID-19 test at SUNY Upstate. Their partner, Quadrant Bioscience, is a START-UP NY company that helped develop the test with Upstate.

We do have an equity share in whatever happens with that company, and we're hopeful that that would become fruitful, because that would ultimately help the entire university system, right? This is also not just supporting research and innovation, but how do you give back to liberal arts and other really important programs that are making sure students are well-rounded students.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Exactly. So do you -- obviously, not off the top of your head, but do you think you could provide us a master list of all of these contracts that actually have been fruitful and are paying money back to the university?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: That will be a -- that is a question I do not know off the top of my head. But I will talk to our

folks and get you whatever we have, for sure.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. I'd appreciate that.

And I cede back my time to the Assembly, the remainder of my time.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So our next up is Jo Anne Simon for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you very much. Thank you, Chancellor, it's great to see you, and congratulations.

I have a couple of questions I'll just outline and then embellish.

One, I just want to piggyback on Assemblymember Epstein and resources for students with disabilities on our college campuses. We've talked about community colleges, which of course are -- about 75 percent of our students with disabilities enter into higher education through the community college system. And so this is critical.

But pound for pound, we really haven't had much of an increase in the dollars

serving students with disabilities for about 30 years. So I'm just leaving it at that.

The other thing is I'd like to talk to you about remote learning and how that's affecting our students, and the difference in learning that remote learning requires, and then the other issue is the teaching of reading that I want to explore.

So one is I know that there's tech issues, broadband issues, it's a statewide issue. We've heard from students that they have difficulty with connectivity. But also the means by which they're learning remotely, which for example doesn't allow them to highlight and margin-note like -- if you'd ask me to do something without making highlights or writing in the margin, I wouldn't be able to do it. We're increasingly calling on our students to do that, which puts a greater load on working memory, the speed of reading, et cetera, et cetera.

I'm curious whether we're doing any work to explore those issues so that we can

then improve those online products by which our students are being forced to learn.

And the other is the teaching of reading, and I know we've talked about this before, and I want to follow up with you on it, because it's too much for this hearing.

But the National Center on Teacher Quality has pointed out the schools that are doing a good job, according to the science of reading, in teaching young children to read, right -- so it's early reading. And of the As and Bs, only four New York SUNY schools are in that category. So, you know, the rest are unfortunately in the C, D and F category or our SUNY schools.

And so I would like to -- I'm working on a roundtable about what we need to do to move the state forward and who are those players. And I'd like to know who to reach out to in your -- at SUNY to start that ball rolling.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Certainly. We'll follow up on that piece.

I think -- in the short term, I think

remote learning is something we have to learn from this experience. I think our campuses came together extraordinarily well in March. I was a college president at the time; I was at the online college, in many ways, but it was difficult.

But I think we kept up in a big way. Students that didn't have access, we created WiFi ports for folks. We tried to do the best we can.

I do think there's a moment to learn from this. I do think this hybrid concept of giving more opportunities for students who want to reach a -- as a student at Fredonia, I want to take a course maybe at University at Buffalo? That's an important thing to keep exploring. I had to adapt my teaching -- by the way, I taught in the fall, but I taught remotely for the first time in the history of my teaching career. It's a difficult thing to do right away.

But there were benefits. There was a more engaged student body, because we're all on camera looking at each other. But how do

you take the best of that? But also how do you make sure the in-person experience is still the most robust experience? Because that's where most of our students want to be. And how do you supplement it with the online piece? I think there's a lot to learn there. We want to take the best of that and apply it.

And then for those other pieces, there's a lot of work to do. That's probably its own hearing, which we should probably have, because what we want to do is high quality, not just access. There's a lot of online colleges out there right now. And quite frankly, as the SUNY chancellor, I don't think they're very good. And I don't think they give the same quality to our students. And I think they take a lot of their money, and students get turned off by that experience and then they never go back again.

I think we have to flip the equation into high-quality hybrid in a meaningful way, not just an access type of way.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

There are no other Senators for the first round, so we're going to go through the Assembly for a bit. Is that correct, Senator Krueger? Okay.

So we go to Assemblywoman Hyndman, three minutes. Alicia, just unmute yourself and you're ready to go.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Chair Weinstein, I put my hand down. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Oh. Okay, grateful.

So we go now to our ranker, Assemblyman Ra, for five minutes.

THE MODERATOR: I don't actually see him in the hearing at the moment.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I'm here.

THE MODERATOR: Oh, I'm so sorry, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: All right, it wouldn't -- it wasn't letting me (inaudible) -- but I'm here. Thank you.

Chancellor, thank you. I just had a

couple of questions, one of which is a little bit of a follow-up to something that was asked earlier.

Chair Glick had mentioned the TAP gap. And I know that there is also now somewhat of a gap between the Excelsior Award and the -- you know, because it's set at a tuition level from a couple of years ago. Do you know what that number is? Or would that have been included in that $69 million number?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Let me -- I will have to get back to you on that actual number, Assemblyman. I'm not exactly sure. It may be a couple of million dollars a year, but I want to get the exact number to you so I don't misspeak. I will get that to the committee.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. Thank you very much.

The other question I had is I know that, you know, there was a new contract a few years ago with UUP with multiyear increases. I'm just wondering what the potential impact is if there is a cut in

operating aid to the institutions, you know, where that might be made up, if it will just fall on the individual institutions or could it be passed along, you know, in fees and things for students.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Do you mean where the increase -- if the increases on the contract actually go into effect right now? It's been paused. It's a $40 million impact a year to us. When you compound that, right, you go into the outyears, it gets more expensive. We would have to figure out a way to pay for those contracts. The campuses would have to absorb those increases.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. Great.

And then the last thing I had, I know that there is a -- you know, an elimination in the budget proposal for the SUNY mental health telecounseling initiative. And obviously this is something that we're trying to utilize in a lot of ways right now, given the pandemic. So I'm just wondering if there's some way, you know, to either otherwise fund that or what the impact would

be if that cut were to remain in the enacted budget.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you for that question.

We think the money is well spent there. I think it's about a million dollars that was reduced. We were able to, taking a small amount of money, apply a pretty robust mental health program to all of our SUNY students. So we would like to see either restoration of that or find a way to underwrite and support that piece so we can continue forward with the telehealth especially.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, thank you. I don't think I have anything else right now.

I will say that I'm with you, with that football behind you, and I -- but I know Chair Glick, you know, likes getting her shots in at the Jets, which is -- we're an easy target sometimes.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Yeah, an easy mark.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: We'll see. So keep

the faith. Thank you, Jim.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we go to the Senate. I think we have an additional Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes, we found another Senator. Or he found us, as the case may be. Elijah Reichlin-Melnick.

SENATOR REICHLIN-MELNICK: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

And thank you, Chancellor.

So I just want to ask quickly about community colleges, which have obviously been hit hard over the past year between this 5 percent withholding and reduction of state support, the impact of the TAP gap, extra costs associated with COVID such as PPE and cleaning costs, testing, classroom reorganization and reduced enrollment numbers due to the pandemic.

Obviously a vibrant community college system is very important to the higher ed community, and it ensures that we've got an

educated workforce. It is the path into the middle class for many of our students. So I'm just very concerned about the impact of the loss of revenue on campus budgets.

Can you tell me a little bit what the impact do you think is likely to be, and what is the plan to ensure that community colleges are able to stay viable without burdening students any further with additional costs?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you for that question.

I think what we have to do is recommit to the community college system. Part of the issue is sometimes folks think that's lesser value, and I would categorically reject that going to a community college is of lesser value and that somehow they are secondary. I think we have phenomenal students in our community college system. I think the pandemic has exacerbated and accelerated the decline. But when you lose a third, basically, of your enrollment over a decade period, that's a real challenge. And

enrollment is our goal.

So I think by what we are doing is focusing on high-demand areas of certification, focusing on workforce areas that really provide value, changing the meaning of what it means to be a college student, micro-credentialing, a longer period of time. Community colleges don't have to be two years. To a working parent, it could be longer than that, and you can build structures and incentives around that individual. I think that is our challenge going forward.

I do think now with the federal partners that we have, I think Dr. Jill Biden is a godsend for the community college system because she understands the community college system. She is a professor of a community college system. She sees the value in the community college system.

And I'm going to spend a lot of my activity focused on community colleges as well as EOCs and other important access areas for New York State. Because the thing is, we

have the people who need education. When you need more education in the workforce, now more than ever, when 70 percent of all new jobs need some credentialing, when you have 5 million New Yorkers who have no post-secondary credentialing at all, when you have 50,000 New Yorkers going outside the State of New York to get educated -- we need to get those folks back. We need to get them engaged. Part of my responsibility as chancellor will be to demystify the process, build things -- solutions around folks.

By the way, the Northern Workforce Training Center in Buffalo is one of those important things we have to do more of, put multiple institutions under one roof and build programs around those folks that need that access, who have never had access before in their life. I think we are going to do that in Syracuse, New York, now with the new workforce Development Center. We should be doing that all across the state.

I think that's what turns some of this stuff around. I think we need additional

investment. I think there's been real strain. But I see an opportunity in this because we can control our own destiny, in many ways, through enrollment. That's what I'm most excited about. But we do need investment as well.

SENATOR REICHLIN-MELNICK: Thank you very much, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblywoman Joyner now.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JOYNER: Okay, thank you, Chancellor. I just want to lend my voice for full support of all of the Opportunity Programs, EOP programs, making sure that we fully invest in those very important programs.

My question for you -- I have two questions for you this morning. The first one is the budget includes an appropriation calling for a cut of $46 million. The appropriation calls on the Board of Trustees and Chancellor to decide on how to implement those cuts. What are some plans to minimize the impact of this?

And then my second question is we have seen how vital essential workers have been during the pandemic and being, you know, the life line to our state. With a looming shortage in both the teaching and healthcare professions, is SUNY prepared to address these areas of concern within the current budget?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: So thank you for those questions.

On the 46 million reduction, we will do -- what we are asking for in the budget is the ability to, if we had to take the reduction, take the reduction in areas that do not impact the core academic mission, student services and other areas. Often what you see in a reduction is an across-the-board reduction. That does then touch on EOP. That does then touch on TAP and other programs. We ask to hold those harmless and then let's focus on nonacademic things, like get rid of administrative costs and other things as much as we can to close that gap.

So that's what we were asking for to

work on. We would of course work with you in the Legislature so you can see how we are presenting and putting together that plan, that everyone is comfortable with that if we are put in that situation.

On essential workers, I think you're -- we have such a great need for more healthcare workers. It's not just nurses, it's respiratory therapists, it's doctors, it's all across the board.

We have the capability to educate more. I do think we need some speeding up of our program review. We have a couple of nursing programs that have been sort of hanging out there, and other healthcare programs that have been hanging out there for too long, when you need 250,000 new nurses, for instance, by 2028, we need to start getting those programs up and running now.

I do think you mentioned -- many of your colleagues mentioned the community colleges. They're doing a phenomenal job on the healthcare training side. But we need

more modern clinical space. For instance, Rockland Community College is a great community college, their nurses are phenomenal students, but they're not dealing with the state-of-the-art clinical space that they should be in order to meet the workforce demand.

So I think if you put some of those pieces together that we've asked for, we can meet all of the workforce demand on that area in healthcare, especially because there is a growing demand, including the "BSN in 10" program, where all of our nurses currently in the system have to get their bachelor's within 10 years. That's another demand. So we're creating partnerships within the SUNY system in order to make that happen.

So the demand is there, our pieces are there all across the state. We need some help on the clinical side, and we need some help on the program approval side so we can get more of this ramped up faster.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JOYNER: Okay, thank you for your comment.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblywoman Seawright now.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you, Chairwoman Weinstein.

And good morning, Chancellor. Congratulations on your appointment.

I just have a couple of questions. I'm a proud SUNY parent, a child at SUNY Albany and at SUNY New Paltz, so we definitely have SUNY in the house.

Recently there -- in the Executive Budget there was a reference made to priority admissions for the nursing students. Are there any programs or support that's planned to help these students succeed?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Well, that's a very good question. Yes, you do have two proud SUNY students in your system. I don't pick sides on the best, but you have an aggressive advocate from SUNY New Paltz, of course, which I was just down and visited, and of course University at Albany, my alma mater. So two good choices.

I would have to see what we're doing

on the support side. We are doing more on the academic support side in order to make sure folks are completing and not feeling abandoned in a program. So we're doing more support coaches and things like that.

But I'll check specifically in the nursing and other healthcare programs. I don't know off the top of my head, but I will double-check on that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: And then another quick question, thank you.

Many of the students at the community colleges are eligible for TAP and Pell grants and other financial aid programs. How much would it cost to implement President Biden's pledge for free tuition at SUNY's community colleges?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Well, I don't have that off the top of my head, but I will get that to the committee.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Okay. And then lastly, my district has a lot of senior citizens, and they love auditing classes. Is SUNY -- what provisions is SUNY making to

allow senior citizens to audit classes online?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: So we -- I think we should open up more of our courses. I think the concept of -- the Open SUNY concept of allowing people to come in -- when I was president of Empire State College, we had the Center for Lifelong Learning actually on our campuses, taking class with our faculty -- language courses, other courses. I think we can replicate that across the system.

I think you could use the online modality, but I think you could also use the in-person modality. We have beautiful space all across the state. I would work with you on a more robust program. But at Empire State College, we had a really close partnership with the Center for Lifelong Learning, who came, took our classes and things like that. It was great. It was great to have them on our campus, interacting with our other students and participating with our colleagues.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Terrific. Thank you very much for your leadership, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblywoman Forrest.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you.

Good morning, Chancellor Mala -- Malata -- Malatras. I want to make sure I got it right.

So as a SUNY Geneseo graduate, I'm really excited to speak on SUNY issues. One of the issues that we brought up -- that was brought up to me from constituents is that graduate students at SUNY pay astronomical fees compared to CUNY grad students. This is specifically in the case where -- in terms of fees. So -- and it could amount to a couple of thousand dollars.

And so they can't get employment as graduate employees until these particular fees are paid. So I guess the question that I have is, do you support efforts to eliminate pay-to-work fees for New York State graduate employees?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I will definitely look into that. As a graduate student at the State University of New York who did take on student loans and ate a lot of ramen noodles, I have a great soft spot for graduate students and the plight that they have to go through in their studies and economically.

But I will definitely work on that with you. I don't -- I don't know enough yet about those different fee structures for the current student. I was a grad student a long time ago. But I will definitely work on that with you. However we can make it easier for our graduate students to thrive, I think we should do it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Especially when we know that students are usually working -- or cannot work, are barred from work while they're pursuing their graduate studies, and so we should eliminate as many barriers as possible.

Thank you, Chancellor.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblywoman Griffin.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Good morning, Chancellor. Thank you, Chairs.

I wanted to ask a couple of questions. I appreciate the $20 million investment in offshore wind training at Farmingdale and Stony Brook. And I just was curious -- I talk to a lot of college graduates that may have went to other schools, private schools, non-SUNY. And now they're interested in possibly going back to school for renewable energy and sustainability.

And I was wondering, is there any plan at SUNY to expand graduate programs where students could get a master's in any of these -- in this field?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: We're looking. We have a couple right now, and we're actually looking -- that's one of the areas on the program that we'd actually like to speed up a little bit. We have a couple of programs right now that have been hanging out there for a while, but I think if we

could get those approved, that would give great opportunities.

And I think the academy concept that we've talking about, the clean energy, clean jobs academy, there's different access points all across the system where we're kind of aggregating those different programs for folks to understand.

And then marrying different concepts -- I was at the Capital District EOC yesterday. Their welding program is phenomenal. But how do you marry the traditional welding program with the turbine program and creation, right? There's a different skill set that you have to marry together.

There's 400,000 open welding jobs in the entire country. The average salary I think is like $80,000 a year. That's no insignificant salary, and lots of jobs. But you can -- have to combine those certifications. So I would do more of that. I think the academy could solve a lot of those issues.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay, thank you. Another question is a lot of parents in my district search for colleges that have a dedicated special ed program. And often they wind up going to another college, a private college, an independent college, because they don't feel there is a dedicated enough program at the SUNY schools.

And I just wondered, have you recently done anything to expand any programs, even if you focused on one SUNY school? Or, you know, is there any program that's really dedicated so a special ed student could go there and know that they're really going to get the attention that they really need?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: On the individual student themself or the training for the teacher going into special ed?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: No, I mean for the student themselves. A student with special ed issues.

So often they -- SUNY would be a -- you know, great schools for New Yorkers but often there isn't -- a family doesn't have

confidence in the SUNY -- any of the SUNY -- some of the SUNY schools to give that education to their special ed student, so sometimes they wind up going to a private school instead.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I will look more into that. I have not dove really deeply into this issue yet.

The one area I have was on the autism spectrum side. I think we have not provided enough opportunities for those students who need a lot more individualized learning. We created the first Center for Autism Inclusivity, which I talked about at the beginning. Which isn't just about training the workforce for folks who want to provide direct services, but actually providing best practices and training our faculty and staff to better educate those students and make it more acceptable for them to feel welcome and part of the SUNY community.

That's starting at Empire State College, but I'd like to see that go systemwide, because I think there's a real

need and demand there, and I think they could be highly successful. We have to adapt to their needs, not them adapting to our needs. There's more work to be done in this space, but that's a good first step.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay, thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblyman Englebright now. Steve, are you there?

ASSEMBLYMAN ENGLEBRIGHT: Yes. Can you hear me?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, we can.

ASSEMBLYMAN ENGLEBRIGHT: Ah, good. Thank you very much.

Congratulations, Chancellor, on your recent appointment. And it's wonderful to listen to you talk about the directions that you're taking our great institution.

I have really one primary issue that I wanted to ask you about, and it deals with the operating needs of Stony Brook and the other University Centers, and specifically the need for flexible tuition. I just

wondered if you could speak to the possibility of having flexible tuition for the University Centers and what your thoughts might be on that topic.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you for that question, Assemblyman. And thank you for the kind words about being chancellor.

I think this is the time. I mean, we forwarded it in our budget submission to allow our University Centers, which are research-heavy. Research institutions are often higher-cost institutions because of lab capacity and other investment capacity that goes into that.

We asked to rationalize the policy because in many ways there already is a differential among our University Centers versus our other colleges. It's done in a way that is not as transparent, I don't think. But I think a program like this, we can keep the cost still affordable. I think we are something like still the -- we're in the bottom 10 in a good way, in the lowest

tuition in the country, which I think is a good thing for us even where we've been with our predictable tuition program. That's something to be proud of, because that's an investment by the state.

But also recognize that our University Centers do need additional resources to improve their research capacity. As long as they're taking a portion of what they're raising in addition, in supporting those students who don't have the means in order to go to college, which they've been very good stewards of, at Stony Brook University in particular. University of Buffalo, Binghamton and Albany have put considerable dollars into additional scholarships and other programs to close some of those gaps.

And that would be something, as the Board of Trustees and I work on a plan -- if we are to get this authority -- which we will share with you, that is protecting both access but then institutional research quality by the flexible tuition as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN ENGLEBRIGHT: Thank you

for your very thoughtful response.

You know, and the other thing I want to say is I very much appreciate the focus and emphasis that you have placed on bringing the SUNY system into compliance and indeed exceeding minimum expectations of the CLCPA. Well done. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblymember Gandolfo, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GANDOLFO: Thank you, Chairs.

And thank you, Chancellor, for being here today.

First I want to say I'm happy that we share an alma mater. I'm a SUNY Albany graduate myself, and I have great memories there, especially since when I was there, the Jets were making runs to the AFC championship. So those were great years, and I wish we could go back to them.

And I'll start and say I appreciate the comments you made about providing more opportunities for students with autism. I

think that's a great initiative and that's a great priority to have.

And I just want to loop back to something one of my colleagues in the Senate mentioned earlier, about providing, you know, free speech protections on our campuses. And I appreciate that you mentioned that it is a little bit of a priority for you.

You know, it hasn't been too much of a problem on SUNY campuses. We did have the one incident at Binghamton with Art Laffer, which was disappointing.

I just wanted to know, are there any plans to issue some kind of directive from the top in terms of providing security for speakers coming to campuses or for, you know, student groups who are tabling, to make sure that they don't kind of get intimidated by groups of protestors and mobs and that they can feel safe on the campus?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you for the question. What we're trying to do is set the tone and provide the opportunities for the free expression of ideas without

saying you need -- I don't think we're at the point where as a SUNY institution we need to provide extra protection and support. I think that on some levels -- if we have to get there, maybe. But I think what we're trying to say is let's have an open and honest dialogue. That is the academy.

And by the way, it's been happening at our campuses over the past couple of months. There's been many issues of real import -- social justice issues, economic justice issues -- that campuses are working through. One of your colleagues mentioned SUNY Geneseo. SUNY Geneseo is one of the most beautiful sunsets you'll ever see in the world, and they have a tree that can be painted with whatever by students. And there was a BLM painting, and then there was a veterans replacement. And that spurred a dialogue and debate, and I think they were able to handle -- students almost handle it in a better way than we have as adults in society in many ways. And we think they should be the model for that.

What I would like, though, is to keep that free expression of ideas going. That's what makes the academy great. That's what spurs change and ideas. Often social change comes from higher education. I think the social justice movement -- we all saw the terrible video at the end of May of what happened to Mr. Floyd. But those conversations were happening on our college campuses in real and meaningful ways. I think the pandemic turned it on its head a little bit.

But I would rather set the tone as opposed to say we need to put extra protections in place. Because we'll get there if we have to, but I think coming from the top in a different way is the best way of doing it for now. And if we have to adjust it, we will.

ASSEMBLYMAN GANDOLFO: All right, thank you, Chancellor. And thank you, Chairs.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblyman Palmesano, three

minutes.

SENATOR RIVERA: Actually, there's a Senate -- it's Senator Rivera. I just wanted to see if I could get --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Oh, okay. I didn't see his hand.

So why don't we go to Senator Rivera.

SENATOR RIVERA: Thank you.

I just wanted to thank you, Chancellor, for being here and for all the information you've given. I just wanted to make a quick point regarding that last conversation. We've had different versions of the conversation during the morning related to speakers on campus, et cetera. I just wanted to state something just as a -- just make a statement and certainly get your input if you'd like.

But as somebody who's been a college professor for most of my time in New York State -- I started teaching college in 1999 -- I certainly welcome and believe that open discussion is something that is important in the academy.

However, it must be stated as a fact that if somebody is a conservative speaker is one thing. If somebody is a fascist, that person should not be allowed on campus. It is my view that if your difference with me is based on your difference on your belief of my humanity, or if you believe that it is -- you strictly -- anybody who is defending fascist talking points, I do not believe it is an equal -- there's -- we should get over this whole equalness of like -- we could have a debate about taxation all day and all night. We can have debates about the -- you know, in education whether you believe in charter schools or you believe in public schools. We can have that conversation all day and all night. We can debate all sorts of policy.

However, many -- some of the speakers that we've been -- that have been referenced here and some of the speakers that had this issue across the nation have been folks who are not there to express a different opinion, they're there to express fascist viewpoints.

And so I just wanted to kind of state

that for the record. Having distinctions -- and I'm very glad to say that most of my -- the overwhelming majority of the Republican colleagues that I've had over the time that I've been in the Senate have been those type of folks, have been folks who understand that having differences of opinion is important and is good for governance as well as for the academy.

But I just wanted to make that point. There's a difference between a difference of opinion and people who defend fascist talking points or who take those positions. And those are folks that I don't necessarily believe should be allowed in the academy, so just -- or anywhere else, for that matter. Just wanted to make that as a statement.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you for that, Senator.

And just on that point, we have been very strong on that. I think there's a difference in what the different actions are when there was the events of January 6th. I, with the Board of Trustees, came out very

strongly in opposition to those events, because that wasn't speech, that was clearly counter to the democratic ideals of our society.

Or when we disagreed with certain executive orders that banned, quote, unquote, divisive topics when they themselves were a way to stifle the free expression of ideas, especially when it comes to racial inequities and structural racism in our society, we call that out as well.

I do think you're right, there's a difference I think -- Professor Laffer, he and I disagree economically on I think the approach to economics. But, you know, I think he has a valued voice in the academy. But you're right, there's a difference in some levels that we have to be very mindful of, or is a different sort of activity that we're talking about (inaudible).

SENATOR RIVERA: Not that one speaker, but other folks. So I just wanted to make that point. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman

Palmesano now, for three.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Thank you, Chancellor, for being here. I appreciate your time.

I really just have one area. I don't know if necessarily you can answer this question, but wondering if you can provide this information back to myself and probably members of the Legislature, specifically regarding Clean Energy Funds. As Energy ranker, I'm always very concerned about the impact a number of these programs have on our ratepayers and our taxpayers.

So I was wondering, Chancellor, if you might be able to provide to us in a timely fashion a list of all the monies that SUNY uses from all the state clean energy funds, programs like RGGI, the NYSERDA monies, the REV campus challenge. And also details on what this money is being used for, the current status of these projects, what's been worked on, what still needs to be worked on, how much money you have in your coffers to do these projects.

I just think that's an important thing for us to have as we move forward, again, to -- as you can recognize, these funds are a tremendous commitment and investment that are paid for through taxpayer dollars and ratepayer dollars on their energy bills.

And I just wonder if that's something you can look at and share with us, because I think -- you know, get back to us in a timely manner, because I think as we analyze the budget to see if some of these funds -- what they're being used for, if they're not being used, maybe they should be repurposed for other -- if possible, repurposed for other programs, whether within SUNY or other important programs, to help other important state priorities like helping our nursing home residents or other important state priorities.

So I'm just wondering if you could -- you and your team would be able to provide to us a list of those monies that, again, that SUNY has through all these clean energy funds like RGGI, NYSERDA, REV Campus Challenge.

Because again, this is a significant amount of dollars that is paid for and subsidized by taxpayers and ratepayers on their bills.

So I was wondering if that's something you could provide to the committee. I'd really appreciate that if you could do that in a timely manner so we can evaluate that and analyze that as we move forward, if that's possible.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Certainly. We'll talk to my finance staff and we'll get you whatever the spending is on the SUNY side, on what we spend.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALMESANO: Yeah, that would be great to have that breakdown as far as what is spent on, what the status is, how much money you actually have in these programs, specific dollars. So like really a detailed breakdown would be really helpful to us as we move forward with these programs and as we analyze moving forward in the budget and see the overall impact this has on our ratepayers and our taxpayers.

Thank you, Chancellor, again for what

you're doing.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I believe we go to the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator John Liu has a question or two. Three minutes.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm wondering if we can have Assemblymember Bichotte go first.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Helene, is that all right with you?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: That's fine. Okay, Assemblywoman Bichotte Hermelyn, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Thank you so much, Senator Liu, my brother.

Thank you, Chancellor, for being here, and congratulations on your appointment.

I am a SUNY grad from Buffalo State College as well as University of Buffalo. And I also have the best CUNY college in my district, Brooklyn College.

I do have a few questions that I will

ask, and then if you can answer all of them. And some of them you already touched on.

So one of them is while students have been learning remotely now for almost a year, we know that there's a proposal to raise tuition. And this is, you know, virtual learning in the CUNY and SUNY system. But knowing that there's no one in the building, I just don't understand how we can justify raising costs during the high unemployment in the very industries like restaurants that a lot of our students rely on to make ends meet -- and all of this while we're not necessarily using the facility and it's virtual. That's my first question.

In addition to that, we are -- I see that there's an investment of $75 million in dormitory facilities. Again, these very institutions are closed. I know the one in my district, they are not leasing anymore -- Brooklyn College was leasing a building for the dormitory; they're not doing that anymore. Can that cost be shifted to, you know, subsidize or help not increase tuition?

And as we talk about tuition, I want to talk about the TAP gap. I see that in the Executive Budget is like a 13.1 million deep freeze -- again, due to the enrollment declines that says, you know, it's prior year over year. The program continues to support the DREAM Act. Has that been cut at all?

And why would we want to cut the TAP funding when we already have a TAP gap? We need to kind of look at that.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Can we leave a few seconds for the chancellor to respond.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Yes.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Well, thank you for that, and thank you for going to Buff State and UB. Buff State, I was at Buff State and UB on Sunday. The Bengals are great, and the Bison.

On the tuition question, we did not raise tuition this year. We're asking for the authorization to continue the predictable tuition -- not that we're going to raise it every year, but to have the ability to make those considerations when doing budgeting.

But just for clarity, we did not raise tuition this year because of the issues that you raise. That's important to us.

We are a little different than CUNY. We have students on our campus. We have about 150,000 students on campus currently. So we have a hybrid model in many ways. But we didn't raise tuition anyway. And in fact we've reduced some of our fees because we're not providing those services, so we've reduced some of our fees.

So the dormitory, for instance, investment, we're using our facilities. We have folks in our dormitories. Many of our dormitories have been used for isolation and quarantine space as well. So SUNY at least -- it may be different than CUNY -- we have different costs associated with it, because we've borne real costs this year, almost in a weirder way because of the pandemic. But we do have students on our campus, although much reduced. But we have campuses open, it's not all online.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN:

Okay, thank you.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Just one quick question?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We -- we go to the Senate. Senator Liu, I believe, had a question?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes.

Senator John Liu. Turn your mute off.

SENATOR LIU: Yeah, thank you very much.

Well, I want to thank the chancellor and his team for taking on the additional challenge of running our -- really our, you know, star school system in New York State.

My question has to do with an earlier question about the cost of tuition for community colleges, given what we're seeing nationally, which is a good trend, and the new administration, the Biden administration, looking at community colleges, continuing off what President Obama had envisioned.

What -- we should have, at this point,

some kind of cost impact or cost -- what's it take to make tuition free at the community colleges? And furthermore, I'm wondering what the cost impact would be of making SUNY tuition free for all. I assume you have readily available the amount of revenues that are derived by tuition.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: We can definitely provide that to you, Senator. Thank you for -- I agree, SUNY is one of the best systems ever created in the history of the world. I think it has provided access. And I'm not just saying that because I'm the chancellor; I'm also a graduate several times over.

The community college piece we'll put together is just numbers. Right? Our community college tuition is set at the local level. So our tuition for our community colleges ranges -- it varies from 4900 all the way up to 50-something hundred dollars a semester. So we'll provide that to you, I just don't have it off the top of my head, so I don't want to give you a joint round number

that may not be right. But we'll provide it to the committees for sure, what the total cost of our tuition revenue across the system is for you.

SENATOR LIU: Okay. But, you know, just broadly speaking, we should have readily available how much of the SUNY budget is relying upon tuition payments. I'm not pressing you on that right now, I'm just saying it's got to be a number, I'm guessing, maybe a billion and a half to 2 billion. But I don't know. That's just off the top of my head.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: You're the numbers guy. I'm not --

SENATOR LIU: Listen, just because I'm Asian doesn't mean I'm just a numbers guy.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: No, comptroller, you got the whole --

SENATOR LIU: Before my time runs out, since so many mentions were made of your alma mater, Albany, and Stony Brook and Farmingdale, Geneseo and others, I've got to make sure that Binghamton is in the mix as

well. So a shout out to SUNY Binghamton, my alma mater.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: By the way, Stanley Whittingham -- I thought someone would mention the lithium ion battery. These state-of-the-art batteries are being developed in Binghamton, New York. Actually students worked together to put up start-up companies that will have a giga factory built there. They are doing amazing things in that space. It's remarkable. Binghamton -- I love Binghamton.

SENATOR LIU: Good to hear. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Yes, we go to Assemblyman Smith, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMITH: Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you to our new SUNY chancellor. Welcome. It's so good to have you here. Exciting times we're in.

I wasn't going to speak but I do feel compelled to just note something two of my colleagues -- actually, three of my colleagues mentioned the idea of protecting student voices on campus. Now, last year I was the ranker of Higher Ed, and at the budget hearing this time I did not bring up the incident that actually happened in November of 2019, because I felt that it was kind of a settled issue.

But I do feel, as the incoming chancellor, to bring up this issue. In November of 2019 an economist, Art Laffer, that was referenced, did attempt to make a speech and presentation at SUNY Binghamton. And a few days before his speech, there was a group of students who were conservative-leaning students tabling on campus, and it was widely reported, video, shocking video, of them being completely shut down in their ability to share their thoughts.

Now, they did have a poster that was promoting the Second Amendment, something

maybe a little controversial. But again, it's a college campus and promoting discussion about controversial ideas is something that we routinely encourage. They were completely shut down. Physically, their table was disheveled, the campus police at SUNY Binghamton had to come and respond to protect the students and break up the situation.

Following that -- and I mention this because I was the only Assemblymember to actually directly engage with Binghamton's president -- I said, What the heck happened here? They did a review, and I said, Okay, well, we have this economist coming to speak at your campus, somebody who the students had I believe raised about $90,000 in private funds to get him to come and speak, including travel and hotel. And I said to the campus president, I would suggest you call in the State Police, because this is something that if this speaker is not allowed to engage students -- and again, it's Art Laffer. I mean, with all due respect to him, not

exactly the most controversial -- Reagan economist, but he was advising Trump at the time, so I think students were -- you know, maybe tempers were a little bit high.

So the gentleman, Art Laffer, shows up to give his speech. Within 10 minutes, and it's all caught on video, students shouted him down. Police, local police had to arrest two individuals. There were some people that were not campus students, but from around the surrounding community that came to disrupt the speech.

So when my colleagues bring up this issue, it is a legitimate concern, as we're talking about diversity of thought and diversity of ideas. And while I can respect, you know, we don't want -- you know, we wouldn't want a dictator from another country coming to speak or someone who is provoking or promoting violence, I can agree with that.

I do think when we have basic Republican or conservative-leaning speakers, the least we can do is make sure that they're allowed to freely express their ideas.

So again, my time is about to expire. I really do hope, because this has been an issue, that this is something that can be addressed. We really do want to protect the ability.

Thank you, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

And I just have, before we go to -- before we go for seconds, I just had two quick things to say.

First, on behalf of one of my colleagues who wanted to ask about publicly available charging stations on all SUNY campuses, I'm wondering if they are available for students and faculty.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you, Chair. Many of our campuses do in fact have charging stations. We built them at Empire State College. If you go to many of our college campuses today, you'll have charging stations at the campuses.

I don't know if we've mandated that as a matter of SUNY policy, but that is something that many of our campuses -- mainly

because it's been student-driven, actually, the students want that infrastructure on our campuses. So if you go to many of our campuses, they have the charging stations.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: That's great. And even though Downstate isn't in my district, I'm glad we're calling it Downstate again.

Even though Downstate is not in my district, a lot of my constituents both work there and use the hospital. So I know that Dr. Riley has really appreciated the working relationship. He came to visit the campus and that's -- you know, we in our delegation feel very strongly about the importance of the medical school and the hospital to our community and to all of Brooklyn.

You noted how it was a COVID-only hospital and people really went the extra mile. So that is near and dear to all of us in Brooklyn, both constituents and our delegation.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: May I give one pitch to Downstate? Not only was it a

COVID-only hospital, they were among the fastest to vaccinate, use all their vaccinations distributed to them in that way. And I looked at that vaccination process, it was phenomenal.

Not only are they providing access to students from communities of color that normally would not have access to medical schools, they are providing critical access to medical students. They are doing innovative research. We don't often look at Downstate as research -- they are mapping the brain right now, using big data in ways that no other institution is. And that faculty member is from the PRODiG program.

So they've got a lot of good stuff going on at Downstate right now that we want to just keep rising up and applauding. It's phenomenal.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: That's great. And perhaps once we get some money, we can figure out a garage space for them. When I have gone to meetings there, it takes forever to try and find a place to park and --

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: All the medical students, that's their number-one complaint, is parking at SUNY Downstate.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And just on a personal note, Jim, it's -- I very much enjoy seeing you in this new role. Having survived our late colleague, Assemblyman Brodsky, you're certainly ready for this job. And your testimony today has shown that.

I'm going to turn it over to the Senate now. Do you have a --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I thought Deborah Glick might have a second round --

(Overtalk.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Oh, yes. Yes, Deborah has -- okay, we'll go to Deborah Glick for her second round.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: (Inaudible.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Okay, Deborah? Five minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I'm going to try to keep my video on, but if it starts to freeze, I'm going to kick it off.

Thank you, Jim. I have only five

minutes, so -- and I have 10 questions.

So let me just say for the record I've gone back to my notes and SED approves programs, 84 percent happen in 60 days, 95 percent within 90 days. Now, there certainly are outliers, and I think you've enumerated some of them. But we can talk more about that.

A couple of quick questions. Are there going to be any limits -- as you distribute cuts across the system, will there be a benchmark, like no more than 5 percent or no more than 10 percent to any particular campus?

What is the situation with bandwidth for remote colleges? Despite the 98 percent coverage alleged by the Executive, there are lots of places where that just is not true.

What are you doing to build an alumni base? I really feel like there are millions of New Yorkers who have come out of SUNY. And, you know, I get a solicitation from CUNY; I'm not sure what you're doing about SUNY.

And if you could give us a list of what you see as the high-demand certificates. We don't have to go into it now, but it would be helpful to have a list of what that actually means.

And where are you -- I mean, the one thing that has been a longstanding annoyance, the requirements for postgraduate for Excelsior is really you have to stay in the state for five years. You could sit at home with mom and do flower arranging.

But if you have gotten a STEM scholarship, which requires you to be in the top 10 percent of your high school and to complete a STEM program at any of our SUNY or CUNY schools, you then have to have five years working in a STEM field, which may or may not be available to you if you are, you know, wanting to live in certain parts of the state. And then it becomes a loan. So that seems like an inequity that is very concerning.

And then finally, what are our out-of-state tuitions at our

University Centers?

I know it's a long list, and if we don't have time, you can get those to us. But a few of them are just kind of throwaways -- not throwaways, but, you know, should be quick.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Sure. There's a lot there, so if I miss something, Chair, you will let me know.

On the tuition side, the out-of-states I can get you. It's -- it's, you know, more. It's in the $18,000 average range, or something like that. But I'll get you that list. It's actually still lower than many of our border states competition-wise. I think New Jersey and Connecticut's out-of-state tuition rate is still higher. So it's an affordable option, which is very good.

On the side of the broadband, we did a lot of good work setting up stopgap measures like WiFi. I partner with Adirondack -- Adirondack Community College is one of those perfect examples that you've mentioned. They're a more rural community. Access is an

issue. It's not always -- it's not -- it's affordability and access. There's two component pieces to that.

We set up WiFi banks for our students so at least they had opportunities to connect remotely.

We're also partnering with something called Eduroam to allow free WiFi throughout the different colleges no matter where you're a student of. So if you go somewhere else, you have the same privileges and access to the broadband capacity among our SUNY campuses. We haven't fully built that out yet, but I think going forward that is a really important thing for us.

And then there was a couple of other things you threw in there, but I --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Building an alumni --

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: We'll get you the high-demand certificate areas that we're thinking of. In fact, we'll even convene -- we have a working group of several of our community college representatives,

presidents, who have been helping me with that. Which we'll just -- we should just convene a meeting to talk through some of those areas that they've been looking at on that.

And on the alumni base, that --I think that is something we should do a heck of a lot more on. I'm relatively new, I'm trying to get through COVID and all this other stuff first. But we have an untapped database of fellow alums. We've got to get them jazzed and reengaged in the mission and direction of the system. There's so many great pieces behind that.

I mean, I know Oswego, Al Roker is like their prime guy. But we've got lots of Al Rokers out there that we want to support. And by the way, 62 members of the Legislature now are alums of SUNY. I think it's the highest number of SUNY alums we've ever had in the Legislature. So that's great. So like we want to use you guys too, you know, and trumpet all the good work that SUNY has produced.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: And the last thing is the different treatment between certain scholarships for post -- in the postgraduate period.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: The STEM one I remember, that was a scholarship that was done earlier on. And I think that was to get people in the STEM field. So we'd have to revisit that one. I don't know how well that program's going.

On the Excelsior side, I believe 80 or 85 percent of all graduates stay in New York anyway, of SUNY graduates. So we are good that most of our students stay in New York.

I know there is an exemption process of -- for the Excelsior Scholarship, so if you do have a circumstance where you need to leave the state, I think there are those exemptions made.

But I agree, we should look at the -- I think this goes back to the lifelong learning process of a -- maybe a full-time worker or a parent who wants to go back to community college who needs more than two

years, and how do you build incentive structures around them. I think we should have that larger conversation. Because if you're going to adapt and modernize the public university system, you have to meet the needs of the modern student, which is often older, often workers, often going through a transitional economy, pieces that we're not really geared to do yet. But I think there's a lot of opportunity for us there.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate, I think for our last questioner.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes, Senator Toby Stavisky, second round, five minutes.

Toby, are you there?

THE MODERATOR: Senator, you are muted.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay, sorry. Very hard to -- I can only mute myself.

Chancellor, I'm delighted that you

mentioned SUNY Binghamton, because it's my recollection that Professor Whittingham won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry a couple of years ago.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Yeah, SUNY's.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Absolutely.

Real quick, you've mentioned the importance of the nursing programs. I have heard from quite a number of people who are saying that they're having difficulties because they don't have the patient contact that's necessary, you can only do so much remotely. And how would you address that issue?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you, Senator, for that. There have been some issues specifically now with clinical opportunities in hospitals to complete their clinical work because of COVID. And that has limited the number of spaces on some levels.

And the other challenge has been some of our programs have actually run into problems because of COVID, they've actually

tested positive in the clinical setting in hospitals.

So we're hopeful, past this year, it frees up some more of that space.

I think there's an important role for an online clinical component, but I do think you need to be in the actual direct healthcare provision of services while you're being trained. So we want to grow that opportunity.

And just my final point on all nursing and everything, because Senator Liu and others have raised it. We're really proud that the state, including the Legislature, invests so much in us. It's something like $7 billion a year. And we just hope that we can turn that investment into more opportunities for our students, nursing being one of those primary areas for sure. There's a lot of need right now.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes. And I think it requires additional work and perhaps even partnerships with the nonpublic institutions.

Last question. You've been talking

about online and out-of-state. How do you deal with the higher education institutions that are out of state advertising extensively on television, such as Phoenix or Southern New Hampshire? And I'm sure they are drawing students away from SUNY and CUNY.

How would you address that issue?

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: I think we have to demonstrate what we are to students in New York State. The fact that we have 50,000 New Yorkers right now going to those programs is something that we have to do a better job of communicating. It's not just, here's a great advertising campaign. What kind of education are you getting beyond that?

We have all the same things that those schools do. And not to be a little provocative, I think we're better than Southern New Hampshire. I think we're better than Phoenix Online. I think we do it all. We don't have $90 million in advertising.

One of those schools that you mentioned advertises $90 million worth of

revenue a year. That triples, quadruples what some of our state support for our campuses are, in their total budgets. We can't compete with that.

But I think, getting back to Assemblymember Glick's point of we have a fantastic alumni base, how do we build in those lines of communication? What resonates with prospective students to not go to those schools, but go to these schools because who do they resonate with? Alumni. Targeted advertising. Reaching into high schools, like Chair Mayer said, and others.

I think there's lots of opportunities, but it's my job as chancellor, I'm going to spend a lot of time coming out of COVID focusing on just that. Project 50,000 is getting all 50,000 of those students back, increasing our enrollment and stopping them from going to those for-profit privateers that don't give as much educational quality as we can.

SENATOR STAVISKY: And many of these students {inaudible; microphone cut out}

New York {inaudible; microphone cut out}. That's another base to perhaps bring them back.

Thank you very much, Chancellor.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So quickly, seeing no hands raised, thank you so much for being here today. And we look forward to some of the follow-up -- follow-ups to some of the questions that were asked. Thank you.

SUNY CHANCELLOR MALATRAS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We're going to be moving on to the CUNY chancellor, Félix Rodríguez.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So, Chancellor, we are -- I see you're in the Zoom. We are ready to begin.

You get up to 10 minutes to make your presentation, then I know there are -- members will have questions. So you want to begin?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So thank you, and good morning to Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky and Glick, and the members of the Senate Finance, Assembly Ways and Means, and Senate and Assembly Higher Education Committees and their staff and their guests. I am Félix Matos Rodríguez, chancellor of the City University of New York.

(Zoom interruption.)

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you so much for this opportunity to testify this morning. It is quite the understatement to say that a lot has changed since the last time I appeared before you a year ago, but I am proud to share today how the City University of New York stood strong against a relentless pandemic and outline our priorities, plans, and goals for the coming fiscal year and beyond.

On behalf of the entire CUNY community, I want to thank Governor Cuomo, the State Senate, and the State Assembly for your past and sustained support, which has

enabled CUNY to deliver strong results for our half a million students and the citizens of New York.

2020 was a year that both demanded and inspired great fortitude and resourcefulness from our students, faculty, staff and leaders. The coronavirus was largely a remote concern when the year began, but it soon gained a foothold in New York that forced CUNY to all but shut down its 25 campuses on March 12th and quickly pivot to distance education. When classes resumed after a week-long academic recess, 95 percent of the university's 50,000 course sections had transitioned to online instruction.

We quickly realized that thousands of students lacked the tools to participate in distance learning, and with support from the Governor, we purchased 33,000 laptops and tablets and made sure they were safely distributed to students in need, as well as provided 4,000 personal hotspots for those students who required enhanced WiFi capability.

I want to emphasize that these efforts will not stop when the pandemic is over. We enthusiastically support the Governor's proposal to require all internet providers in the state to offer affordable broadband service to low-income households.

Early in the COVID-19 crisis, we established the Chancellor's Emergency Relief Fund. With $1 million from the Petrie Foundation and another million from the James and Judith Dimon Foundation, we started, and by the fall, support from additional donors grew the fund to more than $8 million and allowed us to distribute emergency grants to more than 10,000 students. Individual colleges and schools raised more than $8.6 million in addition, enabling them to help thousands of students more, for a total of nearly $17 million in emergency relief funds across the university.

We were also among the first systems in the nation to disburse the $118 million in student emergency grants that were funded by the federal CARES Act. In the end, we

distributed grants to about 200,000 students, averaging $600 each.

The perseverance and accomplishments came amid a backdrop of widespread grief. CUNY campuses and the central office have been deeply saddened by the loss to COVID-19 of many dear members of our community, including 22 staff members, 16 faculty, four students, and countless CUNY retirees and alumni. Among them you might remember -- because he was here with me last year -- was Allen Lew, who was our senior vice chancellor for facilities, planning and construction -- the first Asian-American chancellor in CUNY's history -- that we lost to the pandemic.

The university has a website now in honor of all those that we lost; it's a page called "In Memoriam" in tribute to those that we have lost.

Through it all, we stayed the course and the students pressed on. This past academic year, CUNY conferred 56,527 degrees, the second-highest total in our history and just shy of the record high awarded the year

before.

Looking ahead to life after COVID, we redoubled our efforts to help our students succeed, graduate on time and find sustainable career paths. Among the most important developments were a plan to expand mental health services on campuses and a new partnership, the New York Jobs CEO Council, which is working with the CEOs from 27 of the largest employers in the New York area to create a pipeline to job opportunities for 25,000 CUNY students.

We also focused our professional development training to help 3,400 faculty become better online teachers, part of a larger, longer-range initiative to improve pedagogy and teaching at CUNY.

These efforts will be greatly aided by a pair of $10 million gifts from foundations that are great CUNY partners. One of the investments, from Bank of New York Mellon, will support innovative educational programs and workplace initiatives that will help train 40,000 underserved students for

high-demand jobs, closing equity gaps and supporting the region's post-pandemic economic recovery.

The other grant, from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, will advance CUNY programs in Black and ethnic studies and the humanities, and expand a program that provides a pathway to careers in the arts for students from underrepresented communities. The gift also contributed $2.5 million to the student emergency relief fund. This $10 million award is the largest gift the Mellon Foundation has ever made to CUNY in their 45 years of support.

Since I was appointed chancellor a year and a half ago, we have continued to assemble a cabinet and college presidents of unprecedented expertise and diversity who reflect the city we live in and the students that we serve. The Board of Trustees has appointed nine new presidents during my tenure, the last two this past Monday, at Lehman and Guttman Community College. They include the first two Asian-Americans to ever

serve as presidents of CUNY, three women, and three African-Americans.

Now let me turn to the Governor's Executive Budget proposal. We fully understand the large fiscal challenge that the state is facing in the upcoming fiscal year, and commit to being good partners by continuing our responsible fiscal stewardship of this university. We also appreciate, despite the enormous fiscal challenge, the Governor's plan maintaining close to $2.4 billion in support for CUNY, including full funding for financial aid and opportunity programs that support our neediest students.

We also recognize the generous support we receive from the state -- for debt service, fringe benefits and other campus operating expenses -- that will enable us to protect our core academic mission in tough fiscal times.

We are pleased that the Governor's plan continues stability for our critical opportunity programs, SEEK and College

Discovery, as well as continues to include $4 million for Open Educational Resources, OER for short. The OER program, originally started by Governor Cuomo, is funding that we have leveraged to significantly reduce the costs of textbooks to our students. Our students saved over $50 million in textbook costs over the last four years, which amounts to students saving $12 for every $1 invested by the State of New York.

I would like to take a few minutes to address the issue of tuition. The capacity to adapt and plan ahead is critical to effective leadership, and we welcome the flexibility that the Governor's proposal to extend the Predictable Tuition policy through 2025 gives us. Students who are in the most need continue to have any additional out-of-pocket tuition costs significantly or completely covered by New York's generous financial aid programs -- TAP, Excelsior, SEEK, College Discovery, and the Peralta DREAM Act -- along with federal Pell grants.

We are also appreciative of the

proposal to establish lower tuition rates for high-demand certificate programs.

CUNY's budget request takes into account our needs as well as the current fiscal environment. Our focus is on responding to the pandemic and jump-starting New York's economic resurgence. Some of the initiatives for which we are seeking support include prioritizing student mental health, creating a nursing pipeline program, forging connections with private industry partners to create career pathways for our students, expanding the successful CUNY Corps internship program, and enhancing diversity within our full-time faculty ranks.

We are also seeking crucial capital budget support to enhance our IT systems, the needs of which have come to the forefront due to our transition to online learning.

I would be remiss if I did not add that our budget request and our future outlook is predicated upon the assumption that there will be significant additional financial support from the federal government

to New York State and New York City. If this assistance is not forthcoming, our outlook would change significantly.

Capital construction is known to be a strong engine to restart the economy. CUNY has been a major part of that process in our recovery for the state. And for every $100 million in construction spending, nearly 1,000 direct and indirect jobs are created in the local economy. And with our continued commitment to supplier diversity, we continue to support state-certified MWBE vendors, which we have done at the rate of 30 percent.

I know my time has expired; this was an abridged version of my full testimony, which I will submit for the record, and hope that all of you will have the chance to read.

Thank you again for your support. Happy to take any questions. And I also want to introduce four members of my team that are joining me here today: Our university provost, José Luis Cruz; our chief operating officer, Héctor Batista; and our chief financial officer, Matt Sapienza.

So thank you so much for your support, and happy to take any questions that you might have.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We do have questions. And just want you to know that your testimony was distributed to all members of the -- who are here, and even those who haven't joined us today.

I go to our Higher Ed chair for 10 minutes, Deborah Glick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you. I don't think it's letting me turn on my video -- which is okay, because that saves the bandwidth.

It's good to see you, even if you can't see me.

I have several questions. I have 10 minutes. So I'm going to give you a few of those questions up front and then if you don't have them immediately, you can get them to the committee.

One is, what is the current dimension of the TAP gap? And how much do you have in accounts receivable from students who,

because of their inability to pay certain fees, might have the withholding of transcripts or the inability to re-register? So those two numbers would be helpful.

And what your current faculty-student ratio is and whether that's full-time faculty.

On your enrollment numbers, I'm wondering how much you're down, if you are down, and if so, I've heard that there are less students applying for college, which would make sense from three points of view: One, their families may have lost income, so they're uncomfortable about making the commitment to college.

But I also think that they are more disconnected from school and any counseling, and I'm wondering if you've had discussions with Chancellor Carranza on what support students are getting in terms of being able to understand that they could apply, that they have both TAP, they may be eligible for Pell, there may be some other scholarships that they could access that would make it

possible for them to actually begin their college careers.

One of the issues that has been raised has been in the course of the online learning, some of the -- there are differences in the use of platforms, so that certain professors may be using a Zoom-type platform, but some others are using Blackboard, and students are complaining about the fact that they're having trouble, even though they've been given laptops or tablets, moving between these different platforms in order to -- {mic dropout}.

So if you could begin responding with those myriad questions, I would appreciate it.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Well again, thank you so much. And I'm happy that Queens College is sending you alumni requests for donations, and I hope that you are being generous in responding back. And thank you for your support. And as usual, I bring you greetings on behalf of the 606 students who go to CUNY schools who are part of your

district. So thank you for your support.

Let me take several of the things that you asked me, and then maybe some of the others we can send you the information to your team.

The amount of money on receivables is around $66 million. I do want to stress that even though there's been a lot of conversation out there about bursar holds, in the past two semesters our campuses have been incredibly flexible in allowing students that might have some level of debt to register for the classes, to keep the academic momentum, and are working with them in finding alternate ways to be able to secure funding and do payment plans and do different kinds of things to be able to support them, in addition to the fact that we have fundraised dollars to support the students.

Part of that Mellon grant I mentioned to you put about $2 million exclusively to support these kinds of students moving forward. The first million we used for the fall; the next million we're using now for

the spring. And a lot, also, of the individual fundraising that we have done, either from the Chancellor's Emergency Fund or the funds on the campuses, has gone to be able to assist some of the students that might have small amounts of debts so they can register and continue their education.

So things have been very, very sensible, given what we're facing with the pandemic and what the students are facing. And also redirecting students who might have lost a job or in their family lost -- a family member lost their job, to reapply for financial aid, to look at the new package to see if they qualify for additional assistance. So that's the status of that information.

I'll have Matt Sapienza send you the numbers for the TAP gap.

You asked me about the ratio of faculty to students. That ratio has been, for the past five years, consistent between 21 and 22. Right now it's at 22. It grew just a little bit last year; a couple of

years before it was at 22. So there's been incredible consistency in that ratio all through the system for the past -- for the past five years.

And we follow -- we look at that ratio very, very closely. That ratio is systemwide, and I don't believe that is broken down by part-time and full-time faculty, so I can try to get you that breakdown. So that number that I'm providing talks about instruction overall across the system.

You talked about enrollment loss, and we're very, very concerned about that, particularly at the community college level. It's a national trend, we know that, and it's a trend that started before the pandemic and got accelerated by the pandemic.

But again, our team has been tapping on all doors to be able to bring students back. The university provost and his team has been working with the DOE, identifying about 800 students that we thought were going to come from graduation from the New York

City public schools in May, did not show up in the fall, and we're following up aggressively to see why they didn't show up.

So again, we're doing -- because we have such a good collaboration with the DOE, we're really looking at their students to make sure that we didn't lose any students in this COVID transition.

We also put about a million dollars over the summer, with money that came from the Petrie Foundation and the Bloomberg Foundation, for a "summer melt" program that actually paid our CUNY students to serve as mentors to students that were coming from the DOE, to avoid the summer melt. So we kept the momentum of the students coming, and we put money in the pockets of our students over the summer and created mentorships.

So we've been really working very hard to make sure that we bring all the students into our system. And we have a strike force just working on the enrollment issue for the spring.

The issue of the platforms is

something that we're thinking to get a lot more uniformity. When we moved last spring from being I guess normal, if you want to use the term, and we had to turn 50,000 courses to distance-learning education, obviously there was a lot of mismatch, because we were just in an emergency mode trying to transition, protect the semester, and get everybody going.

By our investment in the professional development of our faculty, we have tried to standardize the numbers of platforms that our students use, because I know that it's an issue. I have a first-year freshman at home learning online who's equally complaining about the fact that one teacher uses this and the other uses a different thing. So we're working through that so we can have the maximum level of flexibility for the faculty to use the tools they think are the best to teach, but to make that experience more even for our students.

Did I miss any other of your questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: No, but I have one follow-up. In terms of the enrollment numbers, some of it is new students and some of it might be retention. Do you have that separated?

And do you have students who just couldn't relate to the online learning and have taken a gap year? Do you have a sense of whether they are going to come back, either for the semester or hopefully targeting the fall?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So, you know, I can send you sort of the breakdown of our numbers.

Most of -- like I said, the enrollment at the four-year schools has been fairly flat, maybe with a little increase in some of the campuses. Most of that has been new students. And there's been an increase on the graduate programs, that has been the one sector that has showed an increase. And it's been the community colleges and the comprehensives where we've lost some of the students, and I can give you the breakdown in

terms of new students and transfers.

We have been working very hard with the students who we feel, either because of not adapting well to distance learning or other issues that they might have faced due to COVID, might have been losing academic momentum. So we -- that was part of giving them flexibility with the credit/no credit policy. Right? Pushing down the date to withdraw from a course, to give them the maximum level of flexibility.

And our campuses have kept in touch with those students to either try to bring them back in the summer, and explore other alternatives of sort of support while we continue on this mostly online mode for the fall.

So there's been a lot of attention to the students that maybe have not adapted well because of that, and we're hoping that, you know, that in the fall we'll have a lot more sort of face-to-face activity or a better mix of hybrid courses that have some face-to-face and online, and we're able to recuperate

those students.

But I can give you some of the breakdowns --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Great. Thank you, Chancellor.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: -- for enrollment.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Now we go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Toby Stavisky, 10 minutes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Chancellor, first let me thank you for the really quality appointments that you made at the Queens institutions, the community colleges and Queens College. And Queensborough is also in my district, as well as Queens College. And I've met with all of the new presidents, and I think those were terrific appointments.

I listened to your testimony, and you were appreciative of the fact that there were

many programs, opportunity programs, that were not cut. But ASAP is one that was cut to the tune of about $2.5 million.

How are you going to -- hopefully the Legislature, you know, will add it on, depending upon what the table amount is at final budget discussions. But what effect will that loss have on student programs? Because that's a really successful program.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So again, thank you, Senator Stavisky, for that. And I'm happy that you're pleased with Dr. Mangino at Queensborough and Dr. Wu at Queens. Dr. Wu has an easier job at Queens because the previous president was not as good.

(Laughter.)

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: But I'm delighted that you have them with you.

And also, thank you for your support on behalf of the 9,182 CUNY students that you have in your district.

So ASAP is very important to us. I mean, it has been -- it is a national model

now. Seven states replicate the work that we've been doing at ASAP. The Kennedy School gave us an award on innovation last year because of the results that ASAP has provided.

So we hope that we can get that funding back at the state level. The ASAP program has also been targeted for cuts at the city level, and we'll be trying to have conversations to restore those, because they target one of our most successful programs that has an impact on enrollment. A lot of the students are attracted for the benefits that the ASAP provides and the effectiveness of ASAP -- so we lose enrollment.

So it's a cut that cuts a program and cuts our enrollment base. It hits us twice. And then it hits us a third time when that student, right, that is going to finish at a faster rate than others, does not transfer to a four-year school. Right? So for us ASAP is an investment in student success, but it's also a key investment in our overall sort of enrollment trends in the system. So thank

you for bringing that up to our attention.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes. And in fact we're going to be paying more in state income tax when they -- after they graduate and they have a better-paying job, so it's a hit on everybody.

Let me go to one area that hasn't been discussed, and that is the campus safety issue in terms of reopening. To me, that's the most important aspect, to keep everybody safe -- students, faculty, anybody who works at any of the campuses.

What have you been doing in terms of meeting with all of the stakeholders, talking to them, testing -- which I think is really the key to a successful academic year, where people are tested repeatedly, inspections are made by qualified, licensed industrial experts. Because some of those buildings are really old. I went to Hunter and Queens, both of them for graduate school. Those buildings are still standing, and this was quite a while ago.

So how are the reopening plans going?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So thank you for your question. And obviously for us, safety -- actually, part of my testimony that I didn't get to read addresses some of those points, so thank you for bringing that point.

Safety has been our key concern. That's why we decided to have a semester that was mostly online. Our students come from different parts of the city, they require -- our students, our faculty and staff come from different parts of the city and require public transportation to be moving. So we felt that as long as the numbers were high and there was a lot of -- the possibility of, you know, contagiousness, that we wanted to protect our faculty, students and staff.

And actually if you look at the numbers that we've had, the numbers of cases for our community have been quite low and very low instances of something happening on the campus because of the measures that we have taken.

We've put in -- and I directed my team to do this -- we put in about 17 million of

the critical maintenance capital funds directly into some of those old buildings that you're mentioning so that in the fall we're in the best possible conditions to reopen. I mean, we still don't know exactly how the state of public health will be at that time, but we agree with you that additional testing, the social distancing, the masks -- all those things are going to be part of the menu for our successful reopening in the fall.

We've also -- all our campuses have very direct reopening plans that were created in consultation with faculty, staff, labor, students, other stakeholders. And they very clearly say if you are at 25 percent capacity, if you want to move to 50, here's a checklist of the things that you need to do. And all this is based on the best guidance from the state and the city.

So we're going to be following those reopening plans, which is our map to a safe recovery. We're working with our campuses to get ready for different scenarios in the

fall. We hope that with the vaccines, with new developments in cheaper, faster testing, we can provide a safer environment in the fall.

I think that you're aware that we created a partnership with the Health + Hospitals of the City of New York and our faculty, students and staff have priority testing in all those facilities. We've also began to do testing in our dorms. We do not have the large dorm -- we have about 850 students in our dorms. But we began doing testing of those students periodically to sort of keep that contained.

So all those strategies will continue to -- and anything that we learn in the process we'll take to have a safe environment in the fall, because we're not going to let anyone be in facilities that do not have the proper social distance, that do not have the required health that we want for all our stakeholders. And we take that very, very seriously.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

I see there are only two minutes left, but I think -- the CARES Act, is there any money left that hasn't been spent? I know it's split between the students and the institutions in the university. Does the money go to the CUNY or to the -- {mic dropout}.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So I couldn't hear you right, but I thought the question was about the CARES Act and where the money went or is going.

So $118 million of the money that was directly going to the students, we sent that out right away in May, prioritizing the students that had the largest need, and student parents. And about -- the average amount that each student got was about 600. And every CUNY student that was eligible according to the CARES Act got some portion of the money. We used the Chancellor's Fund to support undocumented and international students that unfortunately were not included in the CARES Act.

Of the money going to the campuses,

that money goes to the campuses. There's no money there that is allocated towards the central office. Of that money going to the campuses, we took 5 million and we invested that in support programs directly going to mental health support.

Some money went to purchase systemwide licenses -- they'd be cheaper, right, and we get better terms -- that provide all kinds of tele-mental health support to the students. And then we gave money to the campuses and we said, this part of the money has to go to hiring more counselors, hiring more licenses, and 41 million was given to the campuses and the rest of the money is going to be allocated in the budget for this spring semester.

SENATOR STAVISKY: I think I lost my video. But what I'm asking also is how much money is left.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: It will be -- of the one allocated for the spring? It would be 118 minus 41.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay. And the

video's back. Thank you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Hyndman, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you very much. Chair Weinstein, my question was asked.

I would just like to say we're really -- it's always good to see you, Chancellor, and your staff.

It is -- we're really excited in Southeast Queens with the prospect of the Queensborough FC coming, Football Club. We have a huge Caribbean population in Southeast Queens, and a growing African population. So if you could -- you know, this is just a plug to make sure that we get everything we need. I heard progress was made and an announcement will be forthcoming. I'm not going to say what it is. But we're really excited that it's coming.

And my question was already asked, so

that's all. Thank you, Chair Weinstein.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Okay, we're going to go to the Senate, then.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much --

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Can I give a shout-out to the 3,816 CUNY students that live in the district of Assemblywoman Hyndman?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I guess you can.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And you did. And we appreciate it.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, I just want to double-check. Does our ranker, Senator Boyle, have any questions? I don't see him with his hand up, I just didn't want to jump over him.

So the next Senator online is Senator Robert Jackson, three minutes.

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, thank you -- let's see. Thank you, Chancellor and your staff, for being here. I only have three minutes, though, if you can try to be as succinct as possible in answering.

So the -- first of all, I understand that you've hired back about a thousand adjunct professors, but there are 2,000 that still have not been hired back and do not have, when they were let go, health insurance and all of the things that employees are entitled to.

And so is there -- what's the game plan on bringing them back? Is it all about money? And if so, how much do you need?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So the -- thank you for your question, Senator Jackson. And again, on behalf of 6,709 CUNY students in your district, thank you for your support.

We hired a number of adjuncts back. And we actually raised some money from the Mellon Foundation to be able to hire adjuncts back, that's how important it is to us to try to get as many of those adjuncts back to us.

Enrollment is an issue, so it's not just money. If you have less students attending, particularly at the community college, it's going to have an impact on the number of sessions that you have. And that

is something that varies from year to year, so it's not necessarily just exactly about the funding.

We prioritized, in an agreement that we had with the PSC, the -- some of the adjuncts that if not receiving one or two courses will be affected with healthcare, and we were able to bring about 80 percent of those.

So again, that's something that they're vital members of our community and we hope to have a fiscal environment and an enrollment environment that allows us to provide them opportunities and also hopefully the opportunity to some of them to be ones who are on the path to be full professors, right -- because many of those adjuncts also just teach a class or two --

SENATOR JACKSON: I'm sorry, Chancellor -- Chancellor --

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: -- so getting a full-time job.

SENATOR JACKSON: I appreciate the full response, but I only have a minute. So

I've got two more quick questions.

Can you tell me what is the faculty to student ratio at this point in time? That's one. And how are we going to deal with the 5 percent proposed cut? And I hope that it's not a proposed cut, I hope that we increase the amount of money for fiscal '21-'22.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So the faculty-student ratio is about 22 students per section. It's between 21 and 22 for the past two years, so it's fairly stable.

And again, in terms of navigating the 5 percent, we've taken a number of measures. We had a hiring freeze that has allowed us to sort of, you know, contain some of the personnel costs, that we began this year some efficiencies that we're targeting across the systems to avoid redundancies that we hope that --

SENATOR JACKSON: Chancellor, my apologies. I got five seconds, I got two questions that I quickly want to ask you. And that is about the Murphy Institute, CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies, they're

increasing in their numbers, and my understanding is that there's a commitment to expand, and that has not been done to meet the needs.

And then finally -- I'm sorry, Madam Chairs, I just have to get this one in -- I understand that PSC, the Professional Staff Congress, has asked to be involved in negotiations about reopening, and that has not -- that request has been refused.

So I would like to have an answer in writing to those. But if you can just answer those quickly, I would appreciate it. And thank you, Madam Chairs, for indulging me.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You're indulged, but you're done.

SENATOR JACKSON: I know.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay.

SENATOR JACKSON: Chancellor?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Do you want me -- do you want me to answer them --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes, if you can quickly answer.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So the PSC

has been involved in conversations of reopening two ways. One, in each campus, as each campus's reopening plan, they consulted with faculty, staff, students, labor in the case. So that's one layer of consultation. The PSC also has two quarterly meetings, two meetings a semester with the senior management, and we've been discussing reopening plans and safety in those meetings too. So they've had a forum there, aside from the, you know, more indirect contact.

The first question was?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, we're not going back. You're going to be able to answer him offline.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Oh, Murphy, committed to the Murphy Institute. And we actually gave them 12 percent more space to meet their needs in the past year.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Chancellor.

Assembly -- we apologize for the time.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Bichotte Hermelyn.

Rodneyse, are you there?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Yes, I am. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Chancellor, so good to see you. How are you?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Good to see you too.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Thank you for being here.

I have two short questions. One, wanted to know how responsive is CUNY to students who, while remote learning, still have complaints regarding sexual harassment? You know, statistics show that there's an increase in domestic violence since the beginning of the COVID-19, and wanted to know how responsive is CUNY to that. That's my first question.

And my second question is, very happy to hear about the construction, 30 percent MWBEs is being dedicated to the $100 million construction initiative. I wanted to know, you know, what is the spend percentage? Is it also 30 percent, or is 30 percent just a

goal right now?

Those are my two questions.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Yes. So let me begin with the last one.

We hit the -- we hit 31 percent this year. The state goal is 30. So we've been increasing those numbers every year. It's one of the -- it's a big priority for our Board of Trustees. I have to say that I have a very -- you know, Chairman Thompson and the entire board is very, very committed to this goal. You have some champions there -- Sandra Wilkin, Trustee Ferrer, many people have fought for this historically -- Una Clarke -- and my team is committed to that too.

We changed some procurement rules to provide additional flexibility last year, so keep encouraging that. We added parts of our capital funding that were not included in the MWBE programming, also to expand that pie.

We're also looking forward to working with our small business campus centers that we have in the campuses to also be able to be

more supportive of our women- and minority-owned business. So that's a big, big goal of ours.

And again, any additional feedback and thoughts from you and the members of the Assembly and the Senate on this front will be gladly received, because it is an important commitment on our part.

The sexual harassment investigations and claims continue to be processed in our campuses. Now it's mostly done virtually, as most of our student services are done virtually, to avoid our students and faculty potentially getting exposed to the virus.

If you have particular concerns about some of the campuses, please let me know, because these things are very, very important to us. We want to make sure that no matter the environment, virtual or real, we take those things into account.

So if you have any signs that things are not being done well, please let me know so that we can correct them.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN:

Thank you. Thank you so much, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Diane Savino.

SENATOR SAVINO: Thank you, Senator Krueger.

Good to see you, Chancellor.

So I'm going to pick up where Senator Jackson left off with respect to the School of Labor and Urban Studies. It used to be the Murphy Institute.

But first I want to thank you, Chancellor, for your commitment to it. It is the culmination of more than a decade of us trying to get CUNY to create it as a separate, self-standing school.

And it has shown tremendous growth. Enrollment is up 12 percent during the pandemic. I know you've hired a lot of new faculty and staff. But they're kind of stuck right now, because they need space. So I have just a few questions, and hopefully you can answer them.

Since we know that in-person classes are likely to start up again this fall, you were recently in negotiations with a landlord to increase capacity. Will you begin to resume those negotiations?

I know that many of the unions have signed contracts to enroll new students -- DC 37 just signed an MOU to enroll and pay for 100 new students. TWU Local 100 is signing a new contract, 1199 also. And you're also attracting students that are not union-affiliated.

So the question is, where are you going to put them? The library has been closed for the past five years, and students don't have a library. So you're bursting at the seams at the School of Labor and Urban Studies. And what can you do to make sure that students have a place to actually attend and learn?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So thank you for your question and for your support of the Murphy Institute. And not to leave anybody out or behind, you know, greetings

from the 10,475 CUNY students that are in your district. And also thank you for your support of the Calandra Institute, which I know is very dear to your heart also.

We began and we actually got the School of Labor additional space. They increased their space about by about 12 percent. So we came in, we knew that they had their spacing, so we took care of that. They need additional space, and we are trying to negotiate that with the landlord. A lot of real estate conversations have been sort of affected by COVID, so that has not been particularly helpful.

We've also been in conversations with the dean to see if we can maximize space. Many of the courses provided, for example, in the School of Labor Studies occur in the evening. We have some campuses that most of the classes happen during the day and are nearby, and we're trying to see if we can more effectively use the space.

Long term, right, we're also thinking about where the school could be housed.

Right? There's a couple of other possibilities in the Manhattan area we're looking at, and that might be a possibility to meet all their needs and maybe also create some shared space. For example, if they're with another combined twin facility, things like the library could be a joint facility that would be better for the students there and for everybody around.

So we're trying to work very hard to meet their needs. And thank you for bringing that to my attention.

SENATOR SAVINO: Well, whatever we can do to help. You know, it's been a commitment of the Legislature for years now, and we're happy that it's finally there. Now we need to make sure the money is there as well.

Thank you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Epstein, three minutes.

Harvey?

Let's go instead to Assemblywoman --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I got my mike, but not my camera.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, Harvey, please go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Yeah, if they can get my camera, I'll do it.

Hi, Chancellor. Oh, there you go.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Good to see you.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Now you see me. There you go. How are you? Thank you for being here.

Do you support increased funding for CUNY, Chancellor?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Do I support --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Increased funding for CUNY.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: All the resources that can help our students succeed, we're always behind.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So you don't support cuts in childcare or telehealth, is

that right?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: We've been increasing telehealth support for the students with money from the CARES Act.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So you want more money, right, Chancellor?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: And actually our request talks about additional mental health support too.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great. And childcare support for students who need childcare?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Very important.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Very important. Students with disabilities who need more support, they should get more funding, right, Chancellor?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Actually it's -- we're investing some money from the Chancellor's Emergency Fund to provide support for those students, so -- and I know they're very dear to our heart and to your heart too.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great. And then we don't want cuts in -- we don't want to increase the TAP gap, right, Chancellor? We don't want more TAP gap problems, right?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Again, this is the -- the -- we need the resources that are available to us to be able to provide the best services to the students.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great. So that's what we want. We want more revenue to make CUNY as affordable as possible so people like me and my father and our kids can go to affordable schools for generations to come, right? Fabulous. I'm glad we agree. I really appreciate it.

I'm wondering, just on the cuts that we're seeing, you know, how do you think we can avoid it? Is it just raising additional revenue to avoid those cuts?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So, I mean, you and I have talked about this. So I see my responsibility as coming and sharing with all of you the things that we're doing, the things that we need, the great return on

investment that the state and city gets from supporting CUNY. The state and the city have been very generous with that support.

How the revenue gets allocated is something that is part of the budget process, and it's really a purview of the legislators and the Executive to determine.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you. And I appreciate you standing up for CUNY every single day. It was great to see you at the Baruch opening that we had, I think last week.

I want to encourage you to look to us for support for CUNY, because you want to continue to make CUNY strong. We know your an ally in that fight. And the hope is when these issues come up, that you will stand with us to ensure that there's more funding in capital and operation money for CUNY, because that's what we all need to make CUNY successful.

I really appreciate your leadership and look forward to collaborating to make CUNY stronger every single day.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Same here. And always, thank you for your feedback. Some of your feedback on the food pantry policy, we put it into effect. So we listen. Thank you so much for the support.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Go to the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Andrew Gounardes, three minutes.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Great. Thank you, Senator Krueger.

Hi, Chancellor. How are you? Good to see you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Good to see you.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: So -- and I want to just thank Harvey, because he kind of -- you know, he has the spirit of all the questions that I wanted to be asking. So thanks for setting the stage there, Harvey.

Chancellor, can you give us an

update -- you know, I know at one point the state had withheld funding throughout the past year for the CUNY system. Can you give us an update as to where that funding currently is? I think it was like 20 percent. What's the status of that funding?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So the -- thank you for your question.

And again, greetings from 10,575 CUNY students who are in your district. And thank you for being such a great ally of the system and our students.

The state, with the uncertainty that was being faced, withheld temporarily 20 percent of the state appropriations and the money that came from the state for TAP and student support services. That money is being restored and -- with the -- for the current fiscal year.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: And that will all be restored, all 20 percent? Or will there still be a portion withheld, to your knowledge?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So let me turn to Matt, because I -- I don't know if the 5 percent applies to this year or next year. Can I turn to Matt Sapienza just for a lifesaver?

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Phone a friend, there you go.

CUNY CFO SAPIENZA: Hi, Senator Gounardes. And good afternoon, everyone.

So the 20 percent withholding has been removed, as the chancellor says, and has been replaced with a 5 percent reductions in current fiscal year, fiscal year '21, and that 5 percent reduction continues into next year, into fiscal '22.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Got it. So we're looking at a 5 percent reduction this year and a 5 percent reduction next year.

Can you tell us, either Chancellor or Matt, what percent funding decrease has CUNY experienced over the last, I don't know, five years in state operating support?

CUNY CFO SAPIENZA: State operating

support has actually -- overall, has gone up over the last five years. I don't have the actual number, but we can certainly get that to you.

A lot of our mandatory needs have been historically funded over the years -- fringe benefit costs and the like. So overall, it's gone up. I don't have the number or the percents with me, but certainly a knowable number that we can get to you very quickly.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: So you're saying that state spending on the university has actually increased overall and that the state's share of support for the system has increased, not decreased, correct?

CUNY CFO SAPIENZA: Overall state support has gone up, correct.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Okay, thank you.

And how are the colleges able to -- or let's say the 15 percent that's going to come back to them now, will that be the entire amount that was withheld, or will that be prorated for the remainder of the year to them? In other words, is everyone getting a

lump sum of payment back, or is the system going to kind of get, on a prorated basis, whatever is left to spend for this year? Obviously it's going to take time and whatever --

CUNY CFO SAPIENZA: Yeah, we are going to be presenting to our Board of Trustees Fiscal Committee at their next meeting on March 1st the budget for each college for the rest of the year. And so yes, that 5 percent cut will have to be proportioned to each college.

We have other challenges as well. And the chancellor mentioned earlier we have city budget reductions too that our community colleges are facing.

But yes, the 5 percent will be prorated against every college's budget, and we'll be presenting that at the March 1st meeting of the board fiscal committee.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you. I'll just close by saying I think it's crazy that this -- and this is not a condemnation of you all, but it's crazy that in, you know, one of

the world's largest urban public universities, we're left to kind of figure out on a month-by-month basis what the budget's going to be like with a 5 percent cut this year and next year. And it is completely absurd and something that I'm very, very concerned about. That's not your fault --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: -- it's other people's faults, but I want that on the record.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You're over time, so I'm cutting you off. Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Go for it.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Forrest.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you so much, Chancellor Matos, for being here. Chancellor Matos, you were at CUNY Queens. I'm a graduate of both City Tech and the School of Professional Studies. So I love CUNY.

And you are the steward of an education system that serves 500,000. And as you're a steward, I'm sure you know it is your duty to propose a budget that serves that 500,000 people, right? So my question to you, the 30,000 members of the Professional Staff Congress were -- they were owed a contractual 2 percent pay increase in November 2020. We have not seen that in the budget, and I don't see it anywhere else. How do we address this? Because it seems like, you know, the system is now in violation of the union contract and the law by delaying contractually negotiated raises.

That's one question. Do you want me to wait for your answer or ask the other ones?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: However you wish.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: All right, go ahead, answer the question.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Okay, thank you. Again, thank you for your support, and great to have a CUNY twofer with

us. And greetings also from the 2,255 CUNY students that are in your district.

And so this was a very, very difficult fiscal year. And this was a year also in which we're dealing with a lot of unprecedented changes coming our way -- the budget scenario at the state city and federal level; enrollment issues that also affect our tuition. So we had to take a number of decisions that -- to protect the overall university. And to do that, members of the senior management took a five-day furlough to do that. We created a Vacancy Review Board to provide good use of our hires and personnel in a way that was, you know, consistent with fiscally trying times that we are facing.

So unfortunately, the -- and, you know, that's a contract that I signed when I started as chancellor, my first couple of months, because it is so important. But in a way that is consistent with the SUNY system and the state employees, we decided to delay that. We hope to be able to provide that

back when we have more budget certainty. And it's a priority for us.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Yes. But then we have $455 million in federal funds. Do you have no control over where that goes in terms of class sizes, keeping your professional staff?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So the money comes with very specific spending categories. It is not free money that we get to spend on anything that we want. The CARES Act, for example, was very specific in paying for things that were associated with costs for the pandemic, that we had about $68 million in added costs, and to be able to replace things associated with distance learning. So some of those funds do not have the flexibility that some folks think that they do.

We again, we're going to use every flexibility to support the students, to support the mission. So that's going to be more classroom sections, that's going to be more advisors, more mental health, all the

things that the students need -- to the extent that the federal funding allows us to.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator John Liu.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Felo, what's my number?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Great to see you. 9,443.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you. I want to thank you, Chancellor, for the great appointment of Frank Wu to Queens College. I do not appreciate you casting aspersions on his predecessor, former Queens College President Felix Matos Rodriguez. He was a great Queens College president also.

As Senator Savino and Senator Jackson already mentioned -- and I will throw my voice into it as well -- the School of Labor and Urban Studies is a very important part of CUNY. I did have the pleasure of teaching

there a few years ago and saw firsthand the contributions that it makes to our city. So please uphold the commitment that you've already articulated. I know you've already increased the space that they have available, but they need more. And if we can get those lease negotiations back on track that were thrown off by COVID, but now it looks like at some point students will return, so we need that space for the School of Labor and Urban Studies. All right?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: {Inaudible.}.

SENATOR LIU: Maybe you can have my old friend Hector Battista work on that project, because he'll definitely get things done. And I call him old because I've known him since we were young men.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: And he's been -- the guiding force in getting that increase is Hector and his team. So it's a commitment. And I didn't know -- I knew that you had taught at Baruch and Queens, but I didn't know you had taught there. So --

SENATOR LIU: Yes. And I used to be one of those adjunct professors that Senator Jackson mentioned.

We do need to get them back, because they -- the classes that they teach are vital to CUNY students in providing them the options and array of coursework.

Let me get to my main question today, which is I know every year we do this, whether with you or your predecessors, and it's always about the budget shortfalls and the challenges that CUNY has balancing the budgets. And even in today's discussion that's been the main focus.

My question for you is, we've been faced with years and years of austerity. CUNY has faced a lot of the brunt of that austerity. Beyond just trying to figure out how you're going to do more with less, what is the vision? At some point, you know, I'm looking to you and the trustees to articulate a broad, long-term vision for CUNY. That broad, long-term vision has to take us out of austerity, has to start reducing the amount

of the costs that are borne by tuition -- preferably, one day, down to zero, when we can resume free tuition for CUNY students once again.

And a great expansion of the offerings that CUNY has to offer. This has happened in previous recessionary periods, where new CUNY campuses were actually built, where offerings were greatly expanded to take advantage of the greater demand for CUNY services.

So what's the vision for that, apart from, you know, having to deal with these budget crises all the time? And my point-blank question is, if you had more money, if you had like a few billion dollars more -- because we're trying to raise revenue to get us out of this austerity -- what would you do with that? What would CUNY do with, say, $4 billion more each year?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So from your lips to God's ears, right?

And thank you, thank you for the questions. A couple of things, right? We have focused this budget request at a very

difficult time on things that are key to our mission, which are COVID response and recovery, right? To make sure that everybody can come back --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Chancellor, if you could just be kind of concise. We've gone over more than a minute.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So let me then send him a vision independently.

But again, you know, for us -- and we always will provide a budget with the context of where we are. We are at a difficult budget time. We take that into account in the budget request. If we are in a scenario where there's additional dollars, then we'll make a budget request that is consistent with that. If the federal government and Biden gets the things that he's hoping for, that will change things too. And then we'll adapt the request to that.

But happy to take that -- I mean, I don't have time, but to take your question and talk in private.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Any follow-up

questions -- follow-up answers to questions, please also send to the respective chairs so that we can circulate with all of the members. I'm sure they'll be curious.

Now we go to Assemblyman Pichardo, three minutes.

Victor, you need to unmute yourself, please. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: It's only taken me a year to figure this out, Madam Chairwoman, I apologize.

So Felo, nice to see you. To my colleagues at CUCF, it's nice to see many of you here. I'll be brief because time is short.

A couple of things I wanted to ask. First of all, regarding opportunity programs distributed by the Office of Special Programs, I kind of want to have a sense of what really is the breakdown in terms of dollars. Is it -- is most of the majority of the money going towards students? Is it to cover overhead? What's sort of the breakdown there, Mr. Chancellor?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So I don't have -- great to see you, Assemblyman Pichardo. And not to leave your constituents behind, you know, greetings also from 3,887 CUNY students that live in your district.

And I don't have a breakdown of the -- how the different budget categories are used in the opportunity programs. We can get those to your office both from SEEK and the College Discovery.

But I mean, in general, based on having been on the campuses, they pay for faculty to teach specialized courses to the students, they pay for advisors for the students, they provide some stipends -- sometimes the students serve as mentors to other SEEK students -- and then for some other programmatic needs. But I can get you the precise breakdown too.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: I would appreciate that, Chancellor.

And two more questions, sir. I mentioned CUCF. Obviously I represent the campus of Bronx Community College in my

district. We've been trying to work on trying to upgrade the ventilation systems and the air-conditioning systems. Is there money in your proposal right now to help deal with that specific issue on campus for Bronx Community College?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So thank you for that question, because one of the parts in my oral testimony that I didn't get to is a request on capital dollars. And we have put the request for this year really focusing on those key areas that are important all the time, but are particularly important as we get ready to move to the new normal in the fall and other things associated with COVID.

So the budget request that we have right now accentuates funding for those kinds of repairs all across the system. And obviously a campus like Bronx Community, because of its size and its age, you know, has been prioritized and will continue to be prioritized. So that's a key part of what we're asking in this budget request. So

thank you for allowing me to make that comment to the panel today.

ASSEMBLYMAN PICHARDO: And one last thing before I close, as my time runs short. I've been hearing some push-back from some of the CUNY students regarding class sizes, especially around remote learning. Some classes have been sort of canceled a week before if they have 20 or less. It's been shown that there's a benefit to doing classes with smaller class sizes. If you can answer that, and I'll leave it at that.

And Mr. Chancellor, again, my condolences to you and your family on your recent loss as well, sir.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: {In Spanish} Victor, thank you so much for that. And actually I'm coming live from my mother's house, right, because we're still dealing with that.

To your question about class size, as I mentioned before, the data that we have systemwide doesn't show that the class sizes have sort of grown. They're about 22, and

they used to be -- they've been between 22 and 21 for the past five, six years.

That doesn't mean that there might not be specific examples in a campus here or there, but I don't think there's a widespread issue with that.

And actually, at the community colleges, to your case in the Bronx, the number of classes between one and 10 students has actually increased. So again, we are trying to be responsive to the student needs, so the sections that they need available for them, to be good stewards, right, in the sense of maximizing the sections that we have.

But I -- I -- I -- there might be some specific examples here and there. Right? I'm sure that in a big system there is. But I think that that idea of a widespread issue with class size is -- doesn't hold bare to the data.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblywoman Seawright now, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you, Chairwoman Weinstein. And good afternoon. Thank you, Chancellor, and to your team, Hector and Matt and José and Mary Kay and Maureen and Grace. I also want to extend my deepest sympathy on the loss of your father.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: So I just have a couple of quick questions.

With many students at the community colleges eligible for TAP and Pell and other financial programs, what would it cost to implement free tuition, as President Biden has pledged, at the community colleges?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So let me -- I can get that number for you. And I had it in -- we have some estimates.

The one thing that I want to say about this question, too, is that folks need to define what "free" means. Is it first dollar or last dollar? There's a lot of nuances as to how free college and free community colleges can be done. And I think it's important that as we go into this debate,

right, even these of us who are supportive of things like this, that we get into the nuances. Because, you know, that can mean what we want is the most affordable quality community college and four-year college experience. Right?

But we can give you -- I mean, we've done some projections, and we would be happy to share them with you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

And back during election season, 118,000 people were sent in my district to early vote at Wagner Middle School. And I know that CUNY has some of its campuses available for early voting.

But what would it take or require for additional campuses of CUNY to be available? I know the Board of Elections is examining right now different areas -- Marymount Manhattan College, in my district, has offered again to be an early voting site. So what would it require of CUNY for more of your campuses to be sites?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So we --

thank you for that. We want to be the best partner to the Board of Elections. And, you know, part of our public education is passing the knowledge of civic engagement to our students. Right? So what better way than to pass that and to be supportive of such an important thing.

The challenge that we have faced in the past is that that requires sort of substantial space, right, and it's particularly challenging when you are running classes. And when we go back to more face-to-face classes, that scheduling becomes, you know, sort of complicated. Right? In terms of the space that is needed.

It was a little bit easier this year, right, because by being mostly virtual, we have more flexibility in our campuses. But that's some of the tensions that we've seen in the past. But we're happy to be very flexible to help the Board of Elections.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Great, terrific. Thank you. My district has a lot of senior citizens, and they love to --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Rebecca -- Assemblywoman, we've gone over the time. So perhaps you can send a question, we'll ask it later.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senator Krueger, we go to you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: There we go, I got myself unmuted. I apologize.

Good afternoon. Thank you for being here, and condolences for your family's loss.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I have a series of questions that you're just going to write down and get back to us on. Okay? Because I need it in written form.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Okay.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. So we know that CUNY got $300 million plus 186 million from the feds this year. I would like a chart breaking down how you spent the money. And then I would also like a chart I guess projecting how you're spending -- I think you're scheduled to get over 500 million from

the CARES Act for the coming fiscal year, so I want to see how that money is being spent.

And interestingly, Senator Pichardo -- Senator? Hello -- Assemblymember Pichardo raised a ventilation issue, and you said that would have to fall into some state capital funds. But I would think that's the kind of money that could be spent from the federal for making sure your buildings and classrooms are safe for students to return to, because you need a modern COVID-protected ventilation system.

So I would also suggest you just double-check the wording of the federal dollars on that, because maybe we can be helpful to broaden the interpretation of the federal language.

So now we get to -- and everybody is talking about this, so I'm trying to just ask for a chart and we'll be able to look at it together. For the last 10 years, one column that shows your number of students in CUNY -- you can do it senior and community colleges separated. Next column, number of faculty.

You can do it full-time and then adjunct, or whatever you -- right? And then number of other CUNY employees. I think you put them under "administrative."

Because there are a lot of people out there saying we keep reducing the number of people teaching our students, but we keep increasing the total number of people who work for CUNY. I don't know if that's true. I want to see it in chart format so we can all take a look and see if that's the case. And then we can ask questions about why, if that is the case. All right?

I don't even know whether your population went down or stayed the same during COVID, because obviously you went from in-class to online, and a number of people have asked about that. But I also heard there's a lot of students who decided the online really wasn't going to work for them and they're not going to spend their TAP year money on a year that they don't think makes any sense for them, which I empathize with. I think that's perhaps a rational decision.

But we really need to understand your total money, state and federal, and how they're being spent and how life is changing. Okay? So you'll be able to get us those charts?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: No -- no problem.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great, I appreciate that.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Can I -- can I -- can I just -- since this goes -- you know, people can watch this -- just so that the -- the total number of CARES Act money was 251 million. You provided a number that was slightly higher; I just want to make sure. And the projected amount from the second stimulus is 455 million. You said over five --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I read SUNY numbers when I meant to read CUNY. So my numbers go --

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: You know, just -- you know.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, I appreciate

that. Good, good, good. My -- I correct myself.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: But we'll get you the breakdown. We'll get you the breakdown. I just wanted to make sure that for --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good. So my numbers show 287 million institutional aid from the feds, 158 million for student aid from the feds in the year that is ending, and then close to 500 million in the year coming up. And you said four hundred and fifty --

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: -- 55.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- 55 million, okay, thank you for that.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Can I just quickly comment on the enrollment number?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yeah.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: The -- the -- your commentary about particularly the community college students. Because like I said, the enrollment at the four-year colleges remained mostly flat. In some cases, it even went up. And the graduate

programs went up. It is the community colleges.

And consistent with some service that we have done and some data that we also have seen at the national level, many students that either were facing financial hardships or concerned about how safe it was to be even in an online learning environment, or who had situations in their family dealing with COVID, might have decided to sit out. Right? And many of those students would have been mostly students in the community college sector, right, that maybe because of the tighter dollars are making more precise calculations, going back to your point about using TAP or didn't feel as comfortable with an online environment.

So we're getting ready to -- and we're tapping to try to get those students back, you know, beginning in the fall, hopefully.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

So you and I once had a conversation about this, but I've been asking around, and so -- and it's been bugging me.

So we have a system in CUNY where we put all the Ph.D. students in something called The Graduate Center. Then The Graduate Center made a decision that if they couldn't afford to give every single student there a stipend, they couldn't be a student there and they would turn them down from our Ph.D. programs.

First off, every other college says, send them to us, we'd love to have Ph.D. students that can afford to pay full freight, we have no problem with that.

So again, I don't understand, for the record, why CUNY turns away quality students because they don't have or need the stipend money. But then because you've limited to a very small number how many new Ph.D. students come in any given year to any given program, you don't actually have enough of them to fill classrooms under your mandate for larger classes, and so you don't even have professors teaching the classes they need, which also discourages Ph.D. students from coming to CUNY.

So again, you can wait and write it up to me, that's fine, because we have very little time today. I'm just saying I think CUNY is intentionally stopping and closing Ph.D. programs. And maybe that's your decision and your policy decision. But I would love to know why CUNY actually is making the decision to not want to have Ph.D. programs. Because that's where you're heading.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So the -- briefly, I will get you that. The change to mostly -- almost exclusively stipend students is a change that happened before my time. Right? And I understand that the rationale had to do that they wanted to be competitive with other programs nationally.

There's -- there's very few people that pay out-of-pocket for Ph.D. programs. Right? It might be -- it might seem that there's a lot of people out there; that is not the case. So in a lot of the mostly competitive programs, the students come in with a stipend. And I believe that the

rationale, back when that was changed, was to be able to be competitive to those students.

We have new leadership at The Graduate Center. Let me revisit the issue with our new president, President Garrell, who's wonderful.

And actually one of the other things is that I have mentioned to her that at CUNY -- and COVID has sort of taken, you know, most of the oxygen in the work that we do. But that we are due for a comprehensive look systemwide at how we do graduate education. I think it's important that we do that. We have some models that work very well. They might need some tweaking, they might need to be -- to look at them. And I think that we need to have that conversation systemwide.

And I was waiting to have the new president of The Graduate Center to be leading that effort, and we're going to get going on that now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good. I would argue that there's also reasons to reevaluate

master's programs, because it is good for the City and State of New York and for the students who live in our city and state who depend on the CUNY system to have options for higher ed as well as the community colleges and the four-year programs. So thank you for that.

And then in my last minute or so -- I don't remember whether we talked about this, but I had talked about it with Chancellor Malatras at SUNY, and he followed up. Is CUNY following up sort of internally and systemically about assuring that your students who are now eligible for SNAP -- simply because they are students and meet the income guidelines -- are getting signed up? Because he seems to have figured out a way to do it sort of centrally for 10,000 students in one day. And CUNY's student population is even more likely to be eligible for SNAP and more in need of the food resources.

So are you doing anything parallel with CUNY?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Happy to

report that since the Governor adjusted his eligibility, we have -- so far 7,000 students have already been referred. So we are -- we moved ahead on this in part because we already had -- when the Governor made the announcement, we already had in our central CUNYfirst system, a way to identify the students based on the information that they're giving us and say, You might be eligible, and make a connection to HRA.

So we had been working on that even before the Governor made the very good announcement of the added flexibility.

As a former SNAP administrator for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, I am fully behind this and we are pushing this since day one. It was already in our system, so we're just following up to doing that, and we're actually looking for additional private resources to get somebody centrally to help us even be more aggressive in getting to those students.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great. Glad to hear it. Thank you very much, Chancellor.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go now to Assemblywoman Dickens, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: Good afternoon. And thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you, Chancellor, for your testimony. And I too join in giving my deepest condolences on the loss of your father.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: First, I just want to acknowledge City College, because it's in my district. And they have opened the campus during this very bad time of pandemic for testing, food distribution to the students as well as to the community, and they have offered the campus for vaccine distribution once it becomes available. So I just wanted to say thank you for that.

But now I want to go on and ask a question about the remote learning. Many of the students have told me that remote learning -- many of the educators are not

good at it.

Are you providing a class or would you be willing to provide a class in order for the professors -- and including the adjunct professors -- that might want to continue with remote learning, and we shouldn't turn them away because they may be excellent, but not on-site, that they can learn how to do teaching remotely?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Well, thank you, Assemblywoman Dickens, for your question. And a couple of things.

First, we are -- CUNY is ready to do even more, and we've been in conversation with the Governor's team to open up more vaccination sites. As more of the vaccine becomes available, we are ready to be supportive of that effort, which we think also, given our presence and a student body of communities of color, right, would also begin addressing this issue about the inequities of who gets the vaccine. So happy to be part of that effort, and ready for it.

To your question, we actually have

provided -- over 3,400 faculty members, full-time and part-time, have done professional development for online teaching. It's something that we have really invested -- our School of Professional Studies won an award for the work that they did in getting more of our teachers ready precisely to address the point that you make.

And I'll add one more thing, is that we also have a couple of additional courses online -- they're not an official course -- that we have for our students that we have developed to help them be better online learners too. So it's not just the teachers, we want our students to be better.

So we hope that when we go back to normal, right, we have more of a mix --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: Thank you, Chancellor. Madam Finance Chair in the Senate, Liz Krueger, had asked for -- to receive some charts. I'm asking her permission, can that be broken down by campus site, if that's acceptable to her?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: And that

will be the information about faculty and students and hired, right, by campus.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: It's acceptable to break it down farther if you can do that, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: Thank you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Yeah, we do that already, so it's no issue, Ms. Dickens. Happy to do that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DICKENS: Thank you.

And the last thing is just the Colin Powell School of Labor and Urban Studies is important, very important. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Now we go to Assemblywoman Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you. Thank you. And let me also share any condolences, Chancellor.

I have a couple of questions that I wanted to follow up with you on about resources for our students with disabilities, and the -- because there's still an issue with having enough financing to provide those

support services. And I wanted to know what efforts you have made to rectify that, to increase those services.

And I also want to talk to you about remote learning and some of the difficulties I know students have experienced, and also the way we're doing remote learning, how it's affecting the learning of our students as well as teaching of reading.

And so one is about -- A, it's access, but also I think when it comes to remote learning, we need to be looking at actually the cognitive processes, that the students are now having to rely on different ways of learning, that their brains are doing something different. And I don't know how much we have looked at that.

And I'm curious whether your faculty, for example, have looked at it. You have a number of professionals there that are familiar with those kinds of issues. And I don't know whether that's being looked at, and I'd love to know what if anything you've learned and how we can support that.

And then the other issue is the teaching of reading and how many schools within the CUNY system are -- seem to be rated, as you know, C, D, E -- or C, D, F from the National Center of Teacher Quality in the teaching of early reading.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So let me begin with that last one. I'll have to get the information about that. That's something that I'm not sort of aware of, so happy to get you additional information. And also if there's things from your end that you want me specifically to tackle on, I'll be happy to look at that.

We have -- one of the main areas of concern when we moved to mostly distance learning, first in the emergency mode back in last spring, right, when we were dealing with the first COVID wave, that we were all sort of learning how to adapt.

But then afterwards, when we sort of knew that it was going to be the best way to move forward to keep people safe, has always been instructing my team about making sure

that students with disabilities, right, get the services and the support that they get because it's easy for them to get lost in the shuffle, particularly as we move to -- and I'm particularly concerned about the services they get. Right? Because I know that they work very closely with the Disability Centers on the campuses. And we've been keeping an eye on those services and trying to be proactive in giving them support. Because we know that we -- you know, CUNY is probably the institution of choice for many students with disabilities, and we want to continue to earn that trust and to do more.

And actually, we wanted to do something to support those students and using some of the funding from the Chancellor's Emergency Fund, which was the more flexible money that we have access to, that we fundraise for, we made several of the emergency grant allocations to support those students directly. Because, you know, they didn't seem to be part of any CARES Act category or things like that.

On the learning side, it's been interesting. As somebody who's been saying that we need to focus on pedagogy, I've enjoyed that people are interested in how we're learning more. And I hope that we continue that interest when we go back to the new normal.

The provost and his team has partnered with research entities to do some research on how well the learning process has gone with our students. So we're going to have some data on that, because it's something that we're also very concerned about. I'll be happy to share those results with you when we get them.

We had some work also done in the spring, so there's data that we have that we'll be happy to share. We've been working with the added resources on mental health to support the students who have had issues in adapting to the distance learning modality and to find ways to be supportive of them. And some of the training that we've done of the faculty has gone to some of the issues

that you address, in making faculty that are fabulous, but have never taught online, more aware of many of these issues.

And I'd be happy to, you know, discuss it in more depth if you want with more specific questions.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you, Chancellor.

So now we're going to move on to Assemblymember Mitaynes.

Marcela, are you there?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Yes, just give me one second. My internet is a bit unstable, so I needed to call in, get the video going.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: No problem.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Thank you so much.

{In Spanish.} I'm sorry for your loss.

{In Spanish.} My question has to do particularly with the 30,000 -- where the members of the professional staff were contractually mandated for a 2 percent pay

increase in November of 2020. And is there a violation with the union contract and the law by delaying the contractual negotiated raises?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you for your question and your condolences. And thank you for your support.

The issue of the contractual raises in November -- again, it is something that for us was a measure that we had to take that we were not, you know, happy to make. It went with a lot of other decisions that we made, like furloughing some of the administrative staff members. And we hope that it's something that when we have more budget certainty, we can sort of respond to. We intend, right, to be able to give those dollars back to the PSC members.

My understanding is that there's an arbitration hearing about that, so I would like to sort of keep my comments limited, given that we have that forum coming up.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MITAYNES: Okay. So the next question is about the CARES Act money.

There's all this federal relief and we're still making cuts. The layoffs of adjunct faculty in the middle of the pandemic, where research shows that there's, you know, a benefit in having smaller class sizes. The staffing is essential, and so is the funding. So if classes need to be small, spending needs to be the priority. What is happening with the CARES money?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So thank you for your question.

So the CARES Act money in the first place, right, went -- had very strict guidelines of how it could be used, even though some folks have a misunderstanding of how that money could be used. Right? And we litigated that misunderstanding with the PSC.

It's money that has to go towards costs that we lost in COVID. Right? And the money that came from the CARES Act, for example, was 118. Right? We had 68 alone in added expenses of cleaning, PPE and things associated with COVID.

So the money was to pay for those

things, to pay for the cost of moving to distance learning, the laptops that we got for the students, some of that infrastructure, they paid for that. So that's where the bulk of that money -- it reimbursed some campuses that have dorms for their losses. They're very, very strict guidelines.

Luckily, the next stimulus provides more flexibility. And we're going to put those resources, to the extent that we're allowed to by the Department of Education, into, you know, things that are mission-critical. Teaching and classes for students, support services for the students, mental health, advising -- all those things is how we're going to prioritizing that funding, always consistent with the guidelines that we get from the Department of Education, which has yet to clearly say exactly what is permissible and what's not. And we're waiting for that clarity before we make decisions on the investments. But they're going to be, to the extent that we

have the flexibility, focused on the student success.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you, Chancellor. We now go to -- and thank you, Assemblywoman. We now go to Assemblywoman Glick for her second round of five minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Five minutes on the clock, please.

Go ahead, Deborah. We'll deal with it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: They asked me to start my video, and I'll just see if it starts to freeze; I'm going to knock it off.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Five minutes on the clock, please. Five minutes on the clock. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Not 10. I could have used the 10.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Let me join others in offering condolences on your family's loss and also on the CUNY family's

loss.

We face a teacher shortage which I think is going to get worse as a result of the pandemic. And I think a lot of teachers are going to just say they're close to retirement, they've had it, whatever.

Does the state requirement for a 3.0 GPA to enter a graduate teaching program interfere with the ability of CUNY to admit students into their master's programs? And does this have an impact on diversity?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So I'll have to go back to our dean of education and get a better sense of the data to sort of look at that. I'm sure that people have looked at the impact of that and other admission standards. And I think that you're absolutely correct, that we need to be ready to have that next wave of teachers, because I think that it doesn't require a crystal ball to know that that's going to be happening all across a number of sectors of the economy, teaching being one.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Yeah, yeah, I

think nursing as well.

Now, where are you on capital improvements? Many facilities are older, some are rentals. But what do you need to do to make facilities more energy efficient? Clearly the city is moving in a -- to have a requirement for a lot of buildings. And I'm just wondering where you stand on that.

And one other question while I have time. There were plans some time ago for an annex, a CUNY annex in the Rockaways. And I think it fell off the table, probably financial constraints. And I'm just wondering -- I've been asked by members -- if that is, you know, projected at some point.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So I am not familiar with the conversation of the Rockaways, although from my previous life at Queens College, in conversations with the councilmember who represents that district, I know that there's transportation issues for students there to come to the system.

So let me go back and do a little bit of history on that. And I -- you know, so

let me do some homework on that issue.

The other thing also is that we'll be happy to share. You know, we have an entire sustainability effort that is looking at all this work in our campuses existing and in the investments that we're making, either in repairs and new buildings that we have, as part of the capital of the five-year capital plan.

Let me then also share that with you, because that might have some of the specifics that you're looking for in terms of sustainability and investment in those areas.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I'm just wondering where you are -- and this is something that you can get to us. Again, nursing programs tend to be more expensive, and I know that some of the campuses have that. There's been a question asked about whether or not we could use more simulators for the clinical part, because it -- certainly with COVID, the placement in hospitals dropped to zero.

And there is a concern that that will

continue, and yet students need the clinical work in order to be -- for the purpose of their licensure.

So I'm wondering whether there have been discussions at your end -- and again, you can get back to us about this -- around the issue of using simulators to actually stand in for clinical placements.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Quickly, I will get that. Very much so. I mean, part of our budget request asks for additional investments in nursing, because we feel that we have to meet the challenge of the growing demand that is there, and that we can do it maximizing our facilities, investing in some of the facilities on the capital side.

But to your point, we learned some things as a result of this transition to mostly online. Let's use them. But on our end -- and kudos to my University Provost Cruz, who's been looking at this thing too -- a lot of the clinical internships, we leave the campuses to broker those relationships. Right? We feel that if the central office

took more of a centralized approach, we could really maximize a lot more of those opportunities in ways that created more opportunities for all our students, and they didn't leave the negotiations to be done program by program and campus by campus.

That's something that we're looking for, because we do want to expand our footprint in nursing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Back to the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And our chair of Higher Ed, Toby Stavisky, to close. Five minutes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. Thank you, Senator, Assemblywoman.

Chancellor, incidentally, I offer my condolences also --

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: -- on your ex-boss, and to the rest of the CUNY family.

Let me follow up on just two areas

where you testified. And I'm going to ask both questions together so that if I run out of time, you'll give me the written answer.

First, you talked about students who graduated from high school and never showed up. That number was 600?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Let me --

SENATOR STAVISKY: Whatever. You can get back to me. Because I'm going to ask you -- I think Senator Krueger had a great idea, a chart. Go -- not only the students who graduated from high school, but I suspect there are students who took a gap year in high school, so to speak.

So if you and the chancellor of the city schools, the DOE, could get together, that would be a very interesting study of the students who didn't show up, where did they go, where are they.

And also, I think it ought to be compared to the 2020 high school graduates, so that we have a comparison.

And the second question -- I asked you about the CARES Act and how much was left in

the account, and it was $77 million, I think you testified. What's happened to that money? I'm just curious. Is it just sitting in an interest-bearing account or something? The interest is obviously very low. What's happening to that money? Just curious.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So that -- that -- so I'll have Provost Cruz speak to the number of the DOE students that we're trying to reach out, because they're working on that effort, in a sec.

But the CARES Act money is going to be part of the budget that is going to be presented to complete this year, in the fiscal year '21, and in some ways the fact that that allocation was -- you know, comes at this time is going to be beneficial for us. Because with the new rules approved with the second set of stimulus funding, which is more flexible, we're going to be able to use those rules and not the previous rules, that were particularly restrictive and actually was making difficult the spending in some of the community colleges because they have so

many restrictions.

So we're going to be able to take advantage of more flexibility coming from the new set of rules.

And Provost Cruz, you want to talk about this?

CUNY PROVOST CRUZ: Sure. Thank you, Chancellor. And --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: {Inaudible.}

SENATOR STAVISKY: And also, I also should have jumped in when you talked about the previous Queens College president. I too think he was one of the best.

And we appreciated your service in Queens, and we were sorry to lose you, but obviously now you can help everybody, the rest of the campuses, the way you helped Queens College --

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Too kind too kind. Thank you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: -- as somebody who went to graduate school. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Toby.

Assembly, I think we're closed out.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. And so are we.

Chancellor, I want to also offer my condolences to you, your family, and just thank you for being here today and also for how CUNY has stepped up during this pandemic to make sure that as many of our constituents that want to continue with their education under these difficult circumstances have been able to.

So thank you for being here.

And we're going to go on to our next witness, the New York State Education Department Interim Commissioner Betty Rosa.

Welcome back. And we'll be able to go right into your testimony with us today. Thank you.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Thank you so much.

Good afternoon, Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky, and Glick, and members of the Senate and Assembly here today. I'm Dr. Betty Rosa, the Interim Commissioner of Education.

I am joined today by Chief Financial Officer Phyllis Morris, Deputy Commissioners Sarah Benson, Dr. Bill Murphy and Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, as well as Assistant Commissioner Dr. Anael Alston.

I also want to thank Chancellor Young and our cochairs of Higher Ed, both Regents Cashin and Collins, and all the Regents who are watching today.

As you know, during 2020 -- this has been a year like no other, with the Governor ordering institutions of higher education to stop in-person instruction this past spring due to the pandemic. This mandatory closure forced colleges and universities across New York State to undertake an unprecedented transformation, forcing faculty and our students to shift from in-person instruction to all-remote learning.

I want to thank and commend our students, their families, administration, faculty, and support staff across New York State for their efforts in making this important and necessary shift.

The pandemic and the changes it has brought about have been especially challenging for foster care youth, students in opportunity programs, and students with disabilities. We need to support our postsecondary students, as their needs and challenges have only increased during this time. In addition, we need to ensure supports are in place for postsecondary education for students that are at the highest risk of either not attending college or not completing a degree.

As you can see on Slides 3 through 7, our opportunity programs provide access and are designed to help these students. As such, we were pleased to see that the Executive Budget proposal did not cut any of these critical programs. Over 40,000 students are served by these opportunity programs.

However, we do ask for needed investments, on Slides 8 and 9, to support our students with disabilities. The department has been engaged in collaborative

efforts with our higher-education sectors to establish a legislative framework advocating for critical new funding. This funding would supplement, not supplant, any other funding in existence for support and accommodations of students with disabilities, and in terms of summer college preparation programs, training, and data collection.

We need to start this critical conversation of how, as a state, we can better support our students with disabilities to be successful in college. A $7 million grant program would be allocated, in a proportional manner by each identified student with a disability, to eligible degree-granting colleges.

Moving on to the Executive Budget's proposed Article VII provisions, I need to note our opposition to their program approval proposal. This proposal would permit any new curriculum or program of study offered by certain not-for-profit colleges to be deemed approved by the governing body of such college or university. As written, this

proposal would eliminate the department's role in reviewing the majority of program proposals for almost all independent colleges and universities, as well as SUNY and CUNY institutions.

The department's independent review of these program proposals provides an important level of consumer and student protection. Currently, the majority of these reviews and approvals occur within 30 days of receipt of any application by our staff. The Board of Regents and the Department does not want to stand in the way of innovation, but we do want to ensure that our students, their time and money are invested in quality higher education programs. This important independent review process protects our students.

Now I'd like to turn to Slides 11 through 15, where we provide you with updates on the work of our Office of the Professions.

We're happy to see that the Executive Budget included $7.85 million in capital spending authority to continue our systems

modernization efforts for the Office of the Professions. OP's modernization plan is underway already to replace our antiquated mainframe system with a custom-built online licensing platform. This platform, that will handle all licensing and renewal activities in one system, will improve customer experience and back-office processes.

The first phase of the OP modernization program, the launch of online applications, is now available for all professions. Coming later this year, an enhanced self-service FAQ database and updated, fully accessible website will be released. However, current hiring and staffing constraints hinder licensing and registering health professionals in a timely manner at a time when this is even more critical than ever.

Our Office of Professions is funded by a revenue account that is solely funded by fees paid by licensees and applicants. These fees bring in approximately $55 million in annual revenue, and these funds cannot be

spent without an authorization in the enacted State Budget. For years, OP was held to appropriation and spending levels that were significantly below its revenue intake.

With executive and legislative support, which the department was thankful for, OP's spending and appropriation levels were increased in the 2019-2020 budget, which provided OP with the ability to begin to rebuild their staffing. However, the rebuilding process had only just begun when the pandemic hit and spending and staffing controls were put in place by the Division of Budget. Since DOB instituted a hiring freeze in April 2020, OP has experienced a rapid loss of staff in critical areas.

While OP received DOB approval on eight waivers early this week, priority waivers continue to pend at DOB, despite OP's critical role in overseeing professionals on the front lines of the current pandemic.

OP staffing today stands at only 296 employees, which is far short of our target of 348. As we all know, this loss of staff

affects OP's ability to process license applications and educational programs in a timely manner, resulting in review cycle times of 12 weeks or more in nursing programs at a time when nurses, we all know, are critically needed. Staffing losses have also negatively impacted on the time to resolve professional misconduct complaints.

These delays result in avoidable risks to public health and safety. This could be addressed if OP were exempt from the state hiring and spending restrictions consistent with revenue generated for its account. However, if these drastic hiring freeze constraints continue, the ability of OP to meet its full array of responsibilities will continue to deteriorate to dangerous levels. We would like to work with you to address this important public health and safety issue.

Before I end my testimony, I would be remiss not to thank our staff who work so very hard on behalf of students, institutions of higher education, and licensed

professionals across New York.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you, Commissioner.

And we'll go to our Higher Ed chair, Assemblywoman Deborah Glick, 10 minutes. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I warn everybody that the video will go off if it starts to freeze.

Good to see you, Commissioner. I'm wondering, you made reference to having open positions at -- in OP. I'm wondering what your head count is down across SED. And I know that there have been some retirements. When it comes to program review, et cetera, how many openings do you have?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: I'm going to turn to Phyllis, but I know we did -- thank you for the question, because we actually last week began to do a deep dive into not only our total numbers, but also with the freeze and the fact that, you know,

we've been obviously having to deal with the pandemic and the new projection, which is close to another 50 positions.

So Phyllis, please?

NYSED CFO MORRIS: Hi. Yes, so a couple of concerns.

One is that our full-time equivalent target was taken down in the Executive Budget by -- I believe it was 42 positions. So that will actually keep us from being able to backfill all of our current vacancies. I believe we have about 80 vacancies that are pending at the Division of Budget for approval. And we have additional vacancies because there are strict requirements on what we're allowed to submit -- they have to meet like health and safety or COVID response. So we haven't been able to submit all of the currently vacant positions.

So we can get you more specific numbers, but the FTE reduction target will prevent us, when we are able to submit waivers that have expanded submission criteria, from being able to fully backfill

all of our current positions. So we can provide you with more specifics.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Yeah, I'm interested in the area of program review and obviously in the Office of Professions, because those are the two areas that impact my committee. And those are concerns.

Certainly we hear longstanding complaints about the delays in program approval, even though it's my understanding that, you know, 84 percent of them get done within a 60-day period. I think there are probably -- you know, it gets delayed when you have questions. You have to get responses. That comes off of your clock, but is not necessarily within your control if people haven't submitted everything that's required.

Going back to the commissioner, I'm wondering, on the opportunity programs, there was -- there isn't any current withholding, and there isn't a current cut, but there was a period during this past year where you were -- the Division of Budget was holding

back or delaying the approval for various STEP, CSTEP programs, and obviously that had an impact down the line.

Do you have a backlog of requests at DOB for processing any of those requests from the individual programs?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Sure. So once again, we have been pretty diligent in really focusing on making sure that through this pandemic we realize that our programs and our support systems for our students is critical. And so we have been constantly engaging with DOB.

And Phyllis will tell you, you know, as you indicated, in some cases we've had the 20 percent, right, cuts. We'll call them withheld. And so those have had an impact.

But we also have, and we will share with you, we did an analysis, we did a really deep analysis of looking at each program and the dollar amount in terms of the impact of these. And we're more than glad to share that with you as well.

Phyllis, I don't know if you want to

add anything else to that.

NYSED CFO MORRIS: I think just to answer the question, I mean, across. So for Liberty Partnerships, HEOP, STEP, CSTEP, foster youth, we do have 20 percent withholdings that we have not yet received approval as to the date we can make those repayments.

We have been told by Division of Budget that we will be able to, by the end of the state fiscal year, repay all of the amounts that are in the millions that we're currently holding pursuant to DOB direction.

But without a payment date we can't schedule the payment or send the vouchers over to OSC or make the processing -- finalize the processing in the statewide financial system. So we're waiting for that approval.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Well, obviously when schools are waiting, they submit to you. So from their perspective, you haven't gotten the money approved. So -- but that's actually a DOB function, and you're just sort

of caught in the middle.

When it comes to the foster youth initiative, there's a little bit more of a step involved in order to get the certification of who is a foster youth and who isn't. Has SED had discussions with OCFS about what we might do to make that run more smoothly? Obviously there are privacy concerns; that's the real -- real issue.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Sure. I'm going to turn to Bill Murphy, because these discussions have in fact been taking place. So we're happy to share that with you.

Bill?

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MURPHY: Yes, thank you, Commissioner. And thank you, Assemblywoman Glick.

Yes, we actually -- last year we were able to get together with OCFS, and we had successive meetings with our folks in our Opportunity and Access offices, and we actually turned around that process. And the numbers are much better this year.

We streamlined a lot of the processes

with, you know, trying to get the names certified. And I will say, you know, it was the first year we would really be able to say with OCFS that, you know, for -- I think it's over a thousand students now in our Foster Youth Skills Initiative program. So the numbers are even higher, but we were able to turn around that process much quicker.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Well, that's great.

We -- right now it's flat funding. We're hopeful that if there is in fact additional federal dollars, that we could actually advance that number -- maybe not to the usual full cohort, but at least to add maybe a million dollars. And then all of that, you know, like so much of our lives, is dependent on what happens at the federal level.

If we were able to expand that, do you have the capacity to move that through?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: We will obviously, with -- you know, as we said earlier with the staffing situation. But

this is such an important issue that we will make a commitment to absolutely work on doing so.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay. Well, I appreciate that. Obviously these are the neediest students, students who have no intact, stable family. And frequently -- you know, we have concerns about -- let me just raise one last thing. Enrollments are down. You know, applications are down at colleges. And some of that may be -- I don't know, did I lose everything? Maybe not. So we're just concerned that students may not be getting the kind of counseling that they normally would get, even though it's frequently insufficient.

Have you had conversations about ensuring that students who want to go understand that there's financial aid, and the rest of it? Maybe it's some of them feeling that the pandemic has hurt their families so much that they can't go.

What are you doing with interacting with the chancellors and the heads of

state -- around the state, the education leaders?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Well, I will tell you that I know, particularly with New York City, with CUNY, we've had some of the conversations around the support systems.

We've also -- you know, one of the things, particularly with our special education population, we actually have had forums to really actually hear the voices of our students and really capture the areas -- whether it's counseling or feeling a sense of isolation, not feeling that we've got different mechanisms in place to support them as they continue in terms of their studies. We even had conversations about some of the students that are struggling with family issues as well as trying to do their studying.

And, you know, all of these conversations have helped us in terms of some of the forums that we're having. And we have been able to also take those conversations and clearly begin to have conversations of

sharing those.

And Bill, I think you may want to add to some of the other work that we're doing in that area.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Very briefly, please.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MURPHY: Yes, very briefly.

You may remember we had some regional reopening meetings before the fall semester started, Assemblywoman Glick, and we had all the sectors there. And that was one of the topics that definitely came up, even before the semester started in 2020, the fall semester.

And as the commissioner said, we've been engaged with this, our cochairs for higher ed. And I've been hearing actually in the past few weeks from a number of -- on the Board of Regents that, you know, they want us to actually really keep this at the fore and make sure that we're, you know, working with the stakeholders, you know, with all the sectors with this issue. Because just like

in P-12, this has become, you know, a P-20 issue, obviously.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Yeah, we can follow up on this later. And thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Toby Stavisky, 10 minutes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. And thank you, Commissioner, for your testimony.

The Executive Budget gave you a lot more work to do. There is a shift from -- some of the agenda items in the DOH have been shifted to SED, and with the staffing programs you've had at the Office of the Professions.

And I particularly want to mention the OPMC, the Office of Professional Medical Conduct. They gave you some oversight functions for you to take a look at. Secondly, the expansion of the scope of practice of the pharmacists, especially on the collaborative drug therapy management

program.

How do -- do you see any problems with SED assuming these additional responsibilities?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Well, I'm going to start by saying some of these are concerns which of course are issues of the staffing. Having the staffing, as you mentioned, is critical in a time when there have been so many demands on the -- you know, OP and the department. I think it's -- also some of it is programmatic, you know, to have the pharmacists, the scope of the pharmacy issue in terms of diagnosing and determining medical treatments.

Which I'm going to turn to Sarah, because it's been more than just staffing. It's been staffing and also some of the ways and requirements -- and we are always concerned about the integrity and the standards of our programs and making sure that we are, you know, keeping in mind the health and safety of our communities. And with that, I'm going to turn to Sarah Benson.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. BENSON: {Distorted audio.} Thank you, Commissioner. And thank you, Senator. Absolutely, and we appreciate the question. And obviously the details of the question, we're happy to engage with you in conversations offline to get the --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: There seems to be something wrong with your audio. Can you just --

SENATOR STAVISKY: Maybe switch to audio?

NYSED DEP. COMMR. BENSON: {Distorted audio.} Hold on. Is that better?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: No.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No.

SENATOR STAVISKY: No. We need a pharmacist, I think, to fix this.

(Laughter.)

NYSED DEP. COMMR. BENSON: {Distorted audio.} I don't know how to make it better. Any suggestions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Turn off the video.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Go to

audio instead of --

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, that's what I meant.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Turn off your video.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. BENSON: {Distorted audio.} Is that better?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: No, I think, Sarah, it's still --

SENATOR STAVISKY: Can I make a suggestion?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Sure.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Why don't you submit it in writing to us?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Absolutely. Because we have looked at, as you suggested, the pharmacists and the scope of the work, and we have several concerns with it. So we will definitely submit that in writing.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay. I was going to ask -- it's like a football game -- to reset the clock, but I don't think it's going to be necessary.

You talked at great length about the Office of the Professions. Is there anything besides the staffing level where you're having a problem?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Sure. We do have problems in terms of the telehealth area. We have various concerns there in terms of standards and the continuous issue and implementing the recommendation by March 31, 2022, which is just right around the corner. So when we -- (microphone muted).

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You've gone on mute. You accidentally hit mute.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Okay, I'm back.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: There you go, you're back.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Okay. So with the -- we have various concerns, for example, in the area of telehealth. We have concerns about the standards, the continuous work with other states, the fact that we have also -- we are -- it's giving us the date of March 31, 2022, which is right around the

corner. And so all of that planning, knowing that -- you know, the whole telehealth issue is a good thing, but we really have to do it in a way that it's appropriate, it supports obviously communities and individuals.

And so this takes time. It's not something that, you know, we -- we'd love to share with you. Because as I said, we did analyze this and love to share with you what our specific concerns are around that area, as well as the scope of the pharmacists. I mean, they are now being looked at to do -- to diagnose and to --

SENATOR STAVISKY: I caught that, yes.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Yeah. And so with all of that, you know, we're also concerned about the checks and balances in some of these issues. So we will definitely get a written response to you in several of our concerns in this -- in these areas.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah. Also there's a change, major change in the OPMC, the fingerprinting and the removal of the names if they don't respond after two years. How

do you feel about that?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, licensing, you know, as we know it has been a -- you know, a permanent situation. And so for us, it's -- you know, the idea that we have never asked for, you know, the fingerprinting and we have -- you know, we really have to take a -- again, take a look at this, because it's got implications. If somehow something happens and people don't respond the first time or the second time, it's really an unfair situation.

So we -- again, this is one that we will definitely, as Sarah is not on, we will get you a written response as well.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. Particularly on the scope on the pharmacists.

And I might add, on the fingerprinting, when I became a teacher a long time ago at the old Board of Education, I was fingerprinted even then. It happens in many states, from what I understand.

Lastly, I appreciated your comments

about the addition of new programs. To me, it's very similar to almost a self-certification process, which I think is -- can be damaging in many ways. So I thank you and -- oh, yeah, have there been any problems with the opportunity programs? I know you only administer some of them.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Bill, I --

SENATOR STAVISKY: Because there's been no cut in funding, which is good.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MURPHY: Yeah. As you know, Senator Stavisky, the issues we had were when the 20 percent withholding was in effect and we were -- you know, we obviously were getting a lot of, you know, issues related to they might have had to furlough staff and, you know, deal with a lot of the 20 percent withholding.

But since that, you know, is not in effect right now, or it's -- we seem to have had them stabilize a bit.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Good. Thank you very much. And thank you for taking on the position.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Thank you.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MURPHY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: All right, Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the ranker in Higher Ed, Assemblymember Walczyk.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Thanks so much, Chairwoman.

A couple of questions here. The SUNY chancellor brought up today that it takes 200 days-plus for a program review, and that SED is a good chunk of that timeline. As SUNY continues to need to be flexible for new programs, I was wondering if you could just answer a couple of questions about how it works on your end for me, Commissioner.

How long does it take for SED to review any programmatic additions or changes, usually?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: And if you notice we -- and we also -- and again, we'll share this with you -- we really took a deep dive into the analysis.

Now, keep in mind that SUNY submits

the proposal -- and sometimes we have questions, right, as you well know. And we go back and forth, and it could take -- you know, we've had situations -- and we're going to share with you some of these specifics where it could be sitting in terms of SUNY's responding to our questions for a period of time. And then therefore the clock is still ticking. And it comes back to us, SUNY can then send revised proposals to -- you know, to us.

And at the same time, we basically have been saying that, you know, in looking at our time frame we really see the importance of this and try to turn this around as quickly as possible.

Bill?

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MURPHY: Yes, thank you.

Quickly, what we did was we just did a quick analysis of what 2020 looked like for our program proposals. And the numbers we had were we finished 60 percent of the proposals within 30 days or less.

And we know that there's definitely proposals out there, though, that go longer than that. Many of them, you know, could be --

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: What -- is that because 60 percent -- sorry to cut you off, Bill.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MURPHY: That's okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Is that because 60 percent of the proposals are just simple changes and it takes you 30 days to stamp them, essentially?

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MURPHY: It could be a combination of that, or that the proposal came in and it was just very well done, there were no issues with faculty, resources, it was not a master plan amendment, it did not have, you know, say different professional licensure clinical experiences associated with it.

You know, so it could be a combination of, you know, that it was a simple proposal or change or that, you know, it truly was a

proposal that did not have any issues that we saw when we overlaid it on the standards.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: I appreciate that.

Has SED ever denied a program outright that SUNY has requested? Have you ever said no, that's a bad idea, we're not doing it?

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MURPHY: Typically the way it works is that those proposals, in many cases, just like with accreditation bodies, we go through an iterative process and we try our best to get to that point where it gets registered.

But there have been proposals where, you know, they've not been able to, say, get the specialized accreditation body approval. And in many cases those proposals just kind of, you know, die on the vine as it is, because you cannot -- you can't launch certain programs without accreditation. So --

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: So is -- yeah, and SUNY has accreditation. This is probably a question to bounce back to the

commissioner. Because I'm just trying to understand this from a higher level.

It seems like, you know, if they're talking about 200 days-plus of bureaucracy, for us to turn to any institution -- think about it as policymakers -- or back to our constituents who have questions about these programs, that we're in dire need when we're talking about certain professions that have shortages. The Governor is talking about new windmill programs and developing technologies where you need to expedite things programmatically.

Would it make more sense, because SUNY already has accreditation and has access to those same institutions that you do, to just cut SED out of the process? I know -- I'm always impressed by how large your building is and how much SED does in the State of New York. I think it's underappreciated how much you're involved in. My office in the Legislative Office Building looks just at the SED building downtown, and I often think about how much your hands are involved in.

Is this one thing that us as policymakers should be looking to take off of your plate and let SUNY handle?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: I would really have reservations, because it's a program review. It's back to reviewing yourself, in some ways. And, you know, by design we want to ensure the integrity and the alignment with standards.

And so at a time when colleges, as you know, are facing particularly critical issues, that we want to make sure that we maintain program authority and oversight.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Thanks, Commissioner. I appreciate it. I'm out of time.

I just want to make one last pitch on that, and also to our legislative leaders. On Bundy Aid, I fully support restoring the $35.1 million cut in this budget.

Thanks very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Now to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I

think I'm the next Senator.

So thank you, Commissioner. And again, nice to see you twice, recently. And thank you for agreeing to take on this job. And hopefully you're getting the sense that we hope you don't run away anytime soon.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So the Comptroller's office recently released an audit that's -- I guess the headline was "SED Missed Red Flags of Proprietary Schools' Financial Trouble." And it goes into details about some of these schools closing down and leaving the students high and dry, so to speak. That potentially the tuition reimbursements account, which is funded through assessments on these schools, unless there was better oversight, that that would be empty of the funds needed to repay the students. It gave quite a few statistics.

And I'm curious, based on this audit, what do you think you're going to be able to do to fix the problem? Problems plural, I guess.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Sure. Sure. So first and foremost, as soon as we received the audit, obviously we went through it. But even prior to that, there was some work that was being done, acknowledging and knowing that we had some systems issues that needed to be addressed.

And with that, we responded. And we've put certain -- certain, I would say, systems key points in place in order to make sure that not only are we responding to the audit, we're responding to the issue of -- in terms of proprietary. And I'm going to turn it to Ceylane, because she's done a great deal of work with our internal staff to respond and to really create opportunities to make sure that there is a better situation.

Ceylane?

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: Hi. Hi, Senator.

So I think there's a couple of things. One, actually only one school closed. So there weren't a number of schools that closed. And we have a pretty strong tuition

reimbursement account.

But to the Commissioner's point, we were able to bring in some new staff and they've done an analysis. And the Comptroller's report really reinforces the things that we found in our own analysis.

And so our next steps now, there's a series of regulatory solutions and policies and procedures that we'll be working on over the next couple of months that really build on the strong foundation that we already have.

But we definitely recognize that in the area of the financial viability, the collection and use of data, and also as it relates to inspection reporting, there's more that we can be doing. And we plan to.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So we'll keep looking. Because I -- you know, I've gotten myself in trouble by saying proprietary schools -- and some of them are very good, and I have no problems with them. And some of them are not very good. And then I do have a problem.

So interestingly, Chancellor Malatras earlier today talked about certificate proprietary programs, quote, unquote, competing with SUNY community college certificate programs, where he stated definitively that they knew the community college programs were much better, but they might actually be losing out to the proprietary certificate programs.

And I am just wondering whether you also share that view and where we would go to look for evidence of that and what we might do it about it if in fact our students are being directed into lesser-quality programs that often cost more money than the public universities.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: Do you want me to take that?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Sure.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: So I think it's an interesting analysis, because if you talk to the proprietary colleges, they would say that money is being spent on college tuition and there isn't always a

guarantee of employment. And the role of the proprietary schools is to lead to a job and a career.

So -- and I think there's also some distinctions as it relates to where we're at in the state. Clearly, downstate and New York City, there's a lot more competition, there's a lot of proprietary schools, there's a lot of colleges. The number of proprietary schools begins to decrease as you go west and north in the state. So I think it kind of varies. So I would say that SED probably has a different perspective than SUNY on this.

But I think what's important is that we have quality options for New Yorkers. We want to make sure that whatever option they have that it's a quality option that leads to a career path.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And I don't want to misspeak the chancellor from earlier, because he was specific to certificate programs, which I think is a subuniverse of the entire proprietary model.

So would you take the same position if

it was -- if the question is only the certificate programs?

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: Yes, my response would be the same.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, thank you. That's all the time I need to take today. Thank you very much.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Then we'll go to Assemblyman Ra, ranker, for five minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chairwoman.

Commissioner, good afternoon. Good to see you again.

So I have a question in an area that relates to licensure. It does kind of get into the healthcare area, but there's overlap because of the licensure issue. And that's the proposal with regard to telehealth and licensure of people from, I guess, surrounding states and the like.

Just in terms of -- obviously, it's asking that the department would have to

promulgate regulations. But one of the concerns that has been raised to me by some doctors in the area is making sure that as that happens, that there are scope of practice rules that, you know, reflect -- New York scope of practice rules for -- for similar professions.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Right. And that was a statement that I made earlier that we have various concerns as well in terms of the standards. You know, in the contiguous states.

And we also have, you know, a concern I think I mentioned about the implementation date that is in the proposal, which is the March 31, 2022. And I think Sarah was also joining us at the time to add to that conversation.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. BENSON: Thank you. Can you hear me better now?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Yes.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. BENSON: Oh, that's good news.

Then I will say, with apologies, I

missed whatever you said before, Commissioner, so I apologize if I'm repeating things you've already mentioned.

But Assemblyman, one of the comments you made is very astute, in that certainly among professions there's a real concern that the scope of practice is not necessarily identical from state to state. In some cases it is, but in other cases the New York scope is slightly different. And any time you're talking about bringing folks in to do similar work, you want to make sure that they're properly qualified to do so.

Obviously our primary goal is to protect New Yorkers' health and safety and wanting to make sure that those folks have met all the same standards but also are practicing within the scope the same as New York licensees.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Well, thank you for that.

And then the other piece of it would be what about the, you know, in-state licensed professionals in New York State and

perhaps their ability to provide a telehealth service to, say, a New Yorker who spends their winter in Florida or South Carolina or someplace like that.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. BENSON: You want me to keep going, Commissioner?

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Sure.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. BENSON: So I think the proposal in the Executive Budget is a little light on details in terms of exactly what's contemplated. You know, we certainly would welcome additional conversation, and we're happy to provide whatever technical assistance we can to that.

Telehealth is something that was widely used before the pandemic. Obviously the pandemic, you know, put a spotlight on it, and there's a lot of great advantage to it. It is something that, you know, I think as professions evolve, it's important to provide alternatives to how people receive their care. But it's got to be done in a thoughtful and very, you know, methodical way to ensure that they're getting the services

that they deserve.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Well, thank you. I'm glad these are things you're talking about and contemplating as maybe getting more detail into this and addressing some of those issues, as well as stuff that I think is somewhat outside out of your purview in terms of, you know, audio-only services and, you know, some sort of payment parity for these services.

I've certainly seen -- my grandmother is getting ready to get a hip replacement, and my aunt who lives with her, thankfully, has been trying to help her do the preliminary appointments via telehealth, which is a very foreign thing to her. She is not a computer-savvy person by any extent.

So all of these things that maybe we weren't even thinking about a year ago have now become very important to providing equity in services to people.

So thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Robert Jackson, three minutes.

SENATOR JACKSON: Wow. Three minutes.

Hey, everyone. Good afternoon, Commissioner. My pleasure, always good to see you.

I just have a couple of little things. One, you know, I am really concerned about the education budget and higher education budget overall. And I don't think that there's enough money in there. And so obviously we're going to be looking at -- when I say "we," both the Assembly and Senate, and even the Governor mentioned that he is willing to consider raising taxes -- an increase in taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers. So I'm hoping that we have enough money from the federal government and the State of New York in order to make sure that everyone has an opportunity to get an education, whether it's elementary or higher education. That's extremely important. Education is the key to uplift all families, and we know that.

But obviously this is Black History Month, and there are a couple of bills that were passed in the Senate regarding diversity and the lack of diversity. Can you tell me what's happening overall in order to increase diversity overall in the system as far as the public school system and in higher education? And more specifically, can you touch base as far as the My Brother's Keeper program and where are we at with that.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Well, so let me start, since you started with the budget, I just want to make it known that eliminating programs such as, for example, Teachers of Tomorrow, or even a program like the Teacher Mentor Internship Program, has an effect. Any elimination of really having teachers that, given what we know about the pipeline -- and also leadership, but particularly teachers -- if we're saying on the one hand that we're having difficulty creating a pipeline, creating a pipeline in terms of diversity and then eliminating programs that financially support increasing

the footprint, then that in itself is a mixed message.

I think it's important when we look at Teachers of Tomorrow that serve low-performing districts, as you well know, then these financial decisions are more beyond financial, they're moral decisions that have an impact.

The second question, you talked about diversity. As we're looking at this, our department has assigned and we're working with various stakeholders and institutions knowing the importance of our children having the kind of a diverse workforce that reflects -- you know, that they can look and they can see staff in many cases that look like them.

So diversity is critical. I mean, as a matter of fact, this February we're going to have a diversity discussion around medical, which Sarah Benson has put together along with the two cochairs in the medical field.

And so it's not just the educational

field, but it's also the need to grow, the need to have a much more accessible -- and have opportunities. And when we financially impede this growth, it clearly has an effect and it reflects not only in the individuals that will go into the profession, but also it has an overarching effect.

I think eliminating these two key programs, Teachers of Tomorrow, Teacher Mentor Internship Program, is a concern that we have voiced. And we continue to advocate for the funding of these two programs, along with other programs in terms of our special-need students.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Madam Commissioner. I just want to say to you I'll be working with you and your staff on that. I put forward, you know, the Amistad Commission and others as far as, you know, increasing diversity as far as educators are concerned.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Well, I want you to know that the Amistad, we have already -- along with our chancellor, we have

already started. I know that Jen Trowbridge and others, Kim Wilkins and many of our staff, Sharon Cates-Williams, we are already looking at -- we actually did a -- had a conversation with New Jersey in terms of how they have advanced an internal conversation around this issue.

We really clearly see the importance of diversity as an equity issue for our department, so --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, Senator Jackson.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Hyndman. Reset the clock to three minutes, please.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I need all my minutes. Thank you. Thank you, Chair Weinstein. I was hoping we could bank minutes for those members who didn't use all their minutes, but --

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you very much. I have a couple of questions here,

Commissioner -- I was about to call you chancellor. Commissioner, if someone could tell me how long, on average, does it take to fill a position within SED, is my first question.

The second question is of the vacancies that you listed, how many of them are Grade 18s, 22s, you know, 26s?

My third question is about the BPSS -- which you know is dear to me, I used to work there -- audit. How many auditors are in the investigations and audit unit of BPSS? Which I think would have helped with that report because you're not talking about people who are -- love my colleagues. I'm just saying if we had auditors, the report might have been different.

And my last -- I think my last points are in OQ, how many staff members are in OQ and at different grade levels of OQ employees, because of the time it takes to evaluate -- receive programs, evaluate programs? And what are the technology hindrances in OQ to speed up the evaluations

of programs?

And the last thing, I just wanted to comment on the pharmacists, the change of practice. We just passed a bill that would change -- allow pharmacists to administer the COVID-19 vaccinations. When I know that predominantly in my communities, communities of color, sometimes a lot of people, their pharmacists are the person they speak to and so forth.

We're not asking pharmacists to diagnose whether someone -- obviously, with the COVID virus, they're giving vaccinations to prevent.

I would really like us to explore -- this is probably the one area of the Article VII language I actually agree with, in that allowing pharmacists to give vaccinations for adults.

I know we don't have enough time. I would really appreciate the follow-up, Commissioner, as I do in other hearings, please. And congratulations, Ms. Meyers-Ruff, on your appointment to

ACCESS.

Thank you.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Okay. Well, thank you. We will get all of your questions -- we jotted them down, we will get answers to that.

On the pharmacist issue, the objection is not about the vaccination. So we just want to be clear that it's in the other -- it's in the other statements that are part of that. And we will definitely set up a follow-up and make sure you have the responses to all the requests and questions around these staffing issues.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you. I look forward to the follow-up.

Thank you, Chair Weinstein. I'm done!

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: You got in under the clock.

Assemblyman Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Good afternoon, Commissioner. Thank you for being here, thank you for your time.

I have really just a simple question.

We've seen a lot of people who are looking at colleges and really not being able to compare apples to apples, really wanting more information on disclosures, you know, for-profit, nonprofit, public schools.

I'm wondering, why don't we have an across-the-board disclosure that allows them to compare all schools against each other. So, you know, why is not every school on their website saying, you know, in relationship to costs, this is what they have compared to -- why are we not making it easier for the consumer or for the student to be able to get that information?

Because people make choices all the time -- like I go to a restaurant that's an A because it's an A. I don't go to a C, you know? We make it easy for consumers, but we don't do that in the college arena.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Okay, so I'm going to turn it to Bill, but I will say that there are -- that this information obviously, as you know, resides -- there are parents -- and I know, for example, as a

parent with my son, when we were looking at colleges, obviously there are materials and -- you know, and the difficulty, as you said, is the accessibility for some communities. Right? So that is -- that is a concern that we share.

Bill, I'm going to turn that to you because there are things that are available, and we're more than glad to share with you what they are.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So I'd be happy to turn it over to Bill, but I'll also say there are things that are available but are very difficult for people to follow. And so we're educated, we have advanced degrees, and we can figure it out for our kids. But not every parent has that experience, or every child has. So we've seen a lot of people going to for-profit schools because they're local, but that's not the best economic choice. We've seen people make financial aid decisions that aren't the best because they didn't really understand their options.

And we -- I would love to see a really

simple way of providing information across schools to students that doesn't require them to go through 15 different pages on some federal website to figure it all out. Why are we not, New York State, being a leader and making it easy for people?

Go ahead, Bill.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Go ahead Bill.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MURPHY: Thank you. Thank you, Assemblyman. And I would love to have conversations with your staff on that, because we've already started to work with folks in our information resources department who collect all the data in our HED system, our higher ed data system, and we have been looking at updated technology.

Right now, you know, a lot of our data -- you know, like you said, like we'll have spreadsheets on there and we'll have the basic numbers with enrollment and, you know, outcomes with graduation. And I know that there are some models at the federal level where you can do a little bit of what you're

talking about, you know, to look at like a report card that shows --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I've only got 5 seconds. So I would love to do that. I have a bill that I'd love to sit down and talk to you about. I know we've talked before about it, and I'd love to kind of continue this conversation.

NYSED DEP. COMMR. MURPHY: Excellent. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. I don't believe we have any other Assemblymembers or Senators who have questions. So I want to thank you, Commissioner Rosa, for being here with us today.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes, thank you and your team for all your work.

NYSED INTERIM COMMR. ROSA: Thank you. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. And now we're going to go to the New York Higher Education Services Corporation, HESC, and

Dr. Linares, president.

Guillermo Linares, are you there?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes, I am here.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Hello, former colleague. So you have 10 minutes to make a presentation, and then there will be questions. Don't feel compelled to use all 10 minutes.

(Laughter.)

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Okay. Good afternoon, Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky, Glick, and to all my former colleagues in the Senate and Assembly. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the Governor's 2021-2022 Executive Budget recommendations that impact the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, HESC.

I am Dr. Guillermo Linares, president of HESC. And I'm joined this afternoon by my executive vice president, Elsa Magee.

Before I begin, I would like to say that at this time last year we had no sense

of the turmoil that was before us as a state and a nation. It is good to see each of you in good health. And while we know that challenges remain, we have reason to be hopeful, as more than 2 million New Yorkers have received a vaccine and we move forward towards getting a majority of New Yorkers fully vaccinated.

Through 2020, New York State continued its steadfast support for higher education programs. HESC continued to administer more than two dozen student financial aid and college access programs that enabled New Yorkers to reach their higher educational goals, including the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), one of the nation's largest need-based student financial aid grant programs, and the Excelsior Scholarship, which enabled nearly 230,000 New York resident SUNY and CUNY students to attend college tuition-free.

HESC annually receives more than a half million applications for grants, scholarships and loan forgiveness programs,

and annually awards more than $1 billion in financial aid to help over 330,000 college-going students and college graduates pay for college. In its 50th Annual Survey Report on State-Sponsored Student Financial Aid, the National Association of State Student Grant Aid Programs, NASSGAP, cites New York State's need-based financial aid expenditures exceeded that of every other state in the nation.

The 2022 Executive Budget preserves access to an affordable college degree and protects this opportunity for students who faced challenges presented by the pandemic. The budget proposes to maintain student financial aid and opportunity programs that serve our neediest students and includes legislation to hold harmless students who were unable to complete academic requirements needed to maintain financial aid eligibility due to the coronavirus pandemic. The budget extends financial aid award duration limits for students who were unable to maintain satisfactory academic progress requirements

due to the pandemic and releases previously withheld payments to colleges.

In closing, under Governor Cuomo's leadership, New York continues to lead the nation in expanding access to a quality and affordable college education. Funding for higher education has increased by $1.5 billion -- that is 25 percent -- since 2012, from $6 billion to $7.5 billion in the fiscal year 2022 Executive Budget.

This investment includes nearly $1.3 billion in fiscal year 2022 for strategic programs to make college more affordable and encourage the best and brightest students to build their future in New York.

The Governor's recommendations for higher education continue to fund programs that enable the neediest of New York's students to pursue their educational goals regardless of financial situation. HESC is pleased to be an integral player in helping New York's students, and our future leaders, attain the economic and social benefits that

accompany a college degree.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to present our testimony today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Thank you, Guillermo.

We go to Assemblywoman Glick for 10 minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much. Very happy to see you again, and hope you and Elsa and everyone on the HESC staff is well.

When you said that there has been some extension for students who couldn't complete their work, could you explain if that is an extension of TAP and whether students are getting one or two extra semesters of coverage?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I want to refer to the impact the pandemic had in the previous year, 2020, on students. The overwhelming majority of students were able to complete both terms, the spring 2020 and

fall 2020 semester, primarily because of the flexibility that was provided by both the federal and the state Departments of Education that allowed virtually all students to be able to complete their requirements that they had to complete their terms.

So that is something that I think we're glad that we were able to accomplish, given the extent of the pandemic.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Well, I guess I'd like to understand, while it may have been the majority of students, I know that there are students who, because of the pandemic, found it impossible or difficult -- there were delays in getting devices to students, they might have been in places where they could not access properly all of their courses due to WiFi limitations.

If they have had to, for example, drop some courses, were they -- are they able to, if they lost, in essence, part of a semester, are they able to get -- instead of eight semesters of GPA, will they be able to get nine?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I can assure you that what we wanted to make sure was that in the context of the pandemic, the awards that we offer all students that were impacted by the pandemic, we wanted to make sure that those would not be an impact on them given the circumstances that came all of a sudden.

So we -- we know that there are multiple circumstances impacting, but we can say that students have -- we've been responsive to students when they have been impacted, and we want to make sure that they're not penalized for any of those circumstances as they relate to the pandemic.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay. Well, I don't know that I actually know whether students have -- I mean, it's a numerical question, and at some point perhaps somebody on your staff can give me a numerical answer.

How many students have had scholarships -- not just during the pandemic, but in general -- each year, how many students have their scholarships converted to loans because they have not met the service

contract arrangements?

For example, in a STEM scholarship -- and this is not about the pandemic, but in a STEM scholarship, the student gets the scholarship if they graduate in the top 10 percent of their class. They pursue STEM in college. They graduate, they want to return to where they resided with their family, for whatever reason, to a part of the state where the STEM disciplines do not have the same level of employment opportunity as some other places or some other states.

How many students, in various categories, including the STEM scholarship, have had those scholarships turn into loans?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We'd be happy to provide you with specific numbers.

But I want to assure you that obviously whenever we invest, you know, in our students, we want them to -- for them to stay. Obviously this has become more challenging with the pandemic now. But, you know, fortunately we have provisions now under the pandemic to address that.

But we are mindful that there will be more difficulties in the labor force moving forward. But we want to be able to provide as much opportunity for our students to stay here when they graduate. And we do -- we are mindful that this is something that would benefit our state moving forward.

Elsa, would you like to add anything to my response?

HESC EXEC. VP MAGEE: I concur with everything that you just shared, Dr. Linares.

I think what we found with the STEM program in particular is that it was established at a time where both I think the federal and state Labor Departments had identified that there was a significant shortage of qualified workers to fill the STEM jobs that were existing and were projected to exist.

So I think, as Dr. Linares said, we can certainly get you the specific numbers. But, you know, again, pre-pandemic at least, what we were finding was that there were not significant numbers of individuals who were

struggling with finding jobs in a STEM field. It was more what we were seeing were students who started off thinking that they were going to pursue STEM while in college, changed majors, as many students do.

But we can certainly get you the numbers, as Dr. Linares said.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I appreciate that. I know that we received at least some calls through other colleagues about students who, particularly upstate, had difficulty and were -- their parents, in fact, were the ones who were shocked to find that something had converted.

And we certainly don't want students to decide, Well, the only -- I don't want it to be a loan, but I can't, you know, get a job here and if it's going to be a loan, then I'm going to have to go, you know, to Boston where I can get a job that's higher-paying in that field. But we lose somebody out of the state.

Do you run -- does HESC run programs for financial aid counselors? I was

especially thinking about like high school guidance counselors, who have a lot on their plate. And I know that things may be available on your website, but sometimes it's easier for people to get that information in a webinar-type thing. Are you running those?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes, we are. As a matter of fact, we just had a webinar recently with regards to the DREAM Act.

But we are running webinars -- especially now that we have to work remotely, we are utilizing all our efforts, whether through the Department of Education to reach high schools directly, and guidance counselors, or the different districts that we have across the state.

So it's a modality that we're using now aggressively to do aggressive outreach, and, you know, continue to be in contact with our partners at the school level but also with students and families.

Elsa, you want to add --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I'm not sure if I have any time left, because I can't see the

time on --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: 46 seconds.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay. Well, I'll come back at the end. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You're welcome, Deborah.

Next is Senate Higher Education Chair Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you, Dr. Linares and Ms. Magee, for your insights. And thank you for the job that you've been doing. I know it's been difficult at times.

How has -- my first question concerns the DREAM Act. How has the implementation gone? And what kind of outreach are you doing, with the privacy concerns and other issues -- but how has it been going? Would you discuss that?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Absolutely, with pleasure.

As you know, the DREAM Act was approved by the Legislature in April of 2019.

We hit the ground running. We engaged Dreamers and the networks of organizations that work closely with them and with immigrant communities across the state. By July, we had the application open.

We wanted to make sure that we could protect our Dreamers as well, so we worked closely with the Department of Education on that.

We had a great response. We worked with both SUNY, CUNY, and private schools across the state to do this. We had a great response, and it's been a great rollout. It's been highly successful.

And as I said earlier, as recently as last -- December, we had a webinar with a network of organizations that work closely with Dreamers and immigrant communities to make sure that we continue our efforts to do outreach and engage Dreamers to participate and take advantage of all the offerings that we have.

So it's been very successful, the rollout and the response that we've had and

the Dreamers that have been benefited from this program so far.

You want to add anything, Elsa?

HESC EXEC. VP MAGEE: I don't want to take up any additional time. But yeah, the support that we've gotten from the community-based organizations -- and we have a team of people within the agency who are really committed to the program and to assisting the students -- has been great.

And then we also want to thank the State Education Department, who we have partnered with to ensure that Dreamers don't have to provide as much documentation. Beginning this past fall, SED is confirming for us their high school status and, once they've graduated from high school, that they've graduated, so we don't really have to ask them to upload documents any longer. And we know that was an issue for students, particularly in New York City during the pandemic, trying to get some of the credentials.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

And I think that's especially important, because as you know, I represent a large immigrant community in Queens. And I noticed a lot of the Asian-American kids are leaving the state. And I said repeatedly that I'd love to have them stay in New York. Because I'm afraid when they go to California or wherever they go, we're not going to get them back so readily. So I appreciate that.

I was curious if you could provide us with the demographics of who was receiving the TAP awards, the Excelsior, the Enhanced Tuition and the other programs that you -- I'm not asking for now, but if you would get that to me, I think that would be interesting question. Do you have such information?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Sure. We'll be glad to provide you information that we have beyond what we have in Open New York and also in our website with our annual reports.

We have it, we'll gladly share it with you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. And I'm thinking about it in terms of how we can do

additional outreach to attract the underrepresented in these categories.

Let me ask you one last question. On the awards that you administer, TAP and Excelsior and ETA, I understand that the students will reply -- or apply, rather, and many of them do not submit all of the information and therefore they don't receive the award.

What are the reasons? What are they missing? Where are the deficiencies?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, I want to share with you that when it comes to applications, particularly this year, we've seen somewhat of a decline we attributed to the pandemic. But this is not just here in the State of New York, it's across the country. So I wanted to convey that.

But we fully expect that once we get from under this pandemic we will see the number of applications to come back as they are.

But Elsa, would you want to add anything?

HESC EXEC. VP MAGEE: Yeah. Thank you, Senator.

We would not just deny somebody for failing to provide supporting documentation that's required to determine their eligibility. We do, for most of our newer programs, the -- I would say since 2014, definitely -- the programs, as they're developed, they're automated. So once a student submits an application, they typically get an email that tells them the documentation that they need to provide.

Sometimes they may think that they've uploaded it, but we will send reminders. We tend to wait months before we might think that someone -- and they would have gotten several reminders. They do have to make sure that the email that they're providing is the email that they're going to use going forward. I think we're trying to work through to do texting to probably help with some of this.

When you're applying as a high school student, you may have a Gmail address that

you use, but then when you go to college you have to use your college email address, and they may not be thinking about going back to their Gmail address, but that's where we're sending them notifications because that's all that we had.

But we know that the students -- now, especially, you keep your cellphone number. So we're really actively looking now at texting to try to address some of those issues, because it does lengthen the process to be able to determine their eligibility.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. Thank you.

(Overtalk.)

SENATOR STAVISKY: Is there anything you would like to add or -- because I have no more questions.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we'll go to the Assembly, to Assemblyman Walczyk, ranker on Higher Ed for five minutes. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Thanks so much. I don't need the five minutes.

I'm just curious to know if you think

we should eliminate the Excelsior Scholarship.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, I believe that the Excelsior Scholarship has been a resounding success. I think just looking at the 2019-2020 year, 32,000 students benefited from this program, meaning that middle-class families did not have to pay out-of-pocket or take a loan in order for them to meet the tuition fees that students have to pay.

So this has been also a program that really sends a clear message that when you attend school full-time, you save money and you save time, which is very, very powerful as a message. And you avoid having to borrow money when you exhaust the financial aid that you have.

So this is one of the big benefits that I think a program like this offers. And it's successful across the country whenever it has been implemented.

So I'd say, if anything, we're looking to expand the program moving forward so that

it benefits more students and more families across the state.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Wouldn't it just be easier or we could -- I mean, we could create an entirely new program to talk about whatever other people that you want to serve. And I can understand the merits of the program, and you outlined some of them very well, sir. Wouldn't it be easier to just expand TAP instead of creating new programs with new titles?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, the difference between TAP and this Excelsior is again that TAP, you can exhaust the funding that TAP offers and not fulfill the completion that you have within the four years. And then you're left having to either borrow money or drop out, which is worse.

And this program sends a very clear and strong message for students whose families are unable to cover that money unless they get it out-of-pocket or borrow it. And the in-time completion is really key. That's a big, big difference that I

see.

But, you know, the Legislature is open to look and revisit TAP, which was established 50 years ago. But this program has already made a tremendous impact and increased the benefits for students that would otherwise not have it.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: I appreciate your time, sir. And I think it did send a strong message. The message that was received mostly in the phone calls to my office were from higher education institutions that were frustrated with an entirely new program that they had to learn and had, you know, changing rules, and with middle-class families who were confused about many of those rules that were changing by the day.

But I think I've said my piece, and I will yield back the extra minute and a half of my time to the good chairwoman.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Appreciate it. We can go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. And I

will pass along not the extra time but the microphone to Robert Jackson, three minutes.

Are you there, Robert?

SENATOR JACKSON: I'll take the minutes and the time.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Nope, you just get the three minutes. You always go over. I'm going to be strict this time.

SENATOR JACKSON: Oh, boy, don't be so strict. I'm just trying to change my video. Can you hear me, though?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We can hear you.

SENATOR JACKSON: Yes, okay. So Dr. Guillermo Linares, let me thank you for your leadership as the president of the Higher Education Services Corp. Guillermo and I go way back, and it's my pleasure and honor to see him in the capacity that he's in.

But I have concerns about the negative impact this pandemic has had on the people that we represent overall. And so can you tell me, as far as -- you mentioned the number of students that are part of the

Excelsior program. But can you -- if you don't have it now, is it possible you can get it down later, as far as can you break it down by geographical areas and also the diversity of the students that are enrolled in the program, so that I can get a full picture of who is it serving?

And I know it's serving students based on a financial matter, but I would like to see some statistics other than that --

UNIDENTIFIED STAFFER: Arnie's {ph} looking for that, but he's going to send it to me when he gets it.

SENATOR JACKSON: Yeah. So -- but also, I just wanted to say that right now, so you have -- you have more money to give out to students as long as they qualify, is that correct? Have you been negatively impacted by the budget?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I think one of the positive things that we've seen is that, you know, the -- the education, higher education budget has been kept whole, meaning that we wanted to be able that in spite of

the pandemic that we face and also the challenges, financial challenges the state had, we have been able to keep financial aid to students across the board in the state whole.

And this is a commitment the Governor has made and continues to make. And I think that notwithstanding the challenges that we have with being able to make sure that the awards that were made, that have been made are kept regardless of the circumstances of the pandemic, to make sure that students, you know, are able to keep afloat financially. And I think that it's because we've made higher education a top priority and make sure that any impediments that came as a result of the pandemic were being addressed.

And so we support students across the state, and it's based on income --

SENATOR JACKSON: Dr. Linares, I'm sorry, I just have -- I need to get this in so you can then respond in writing.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah, sure.

SENATOR JACKSON: I would like to

know, regarding the pandemic, the negative impact it's had on people that have dropped out of school and now would have to pay back money, or they graduated and they don't have a job, as people said, so they may have to go to another state.

Can you put those stats and send it to us, if you don't mind? My time is up. And I wish that I could give you more opportunity --

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Happy to do so.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairs.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Ways and Means ranker Ed Ra, for five minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chair.

Dr. Linares, always great to see a former colleague before us in these days.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Same here.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I hope you are well.

I just wanted to ask a question -- this is something we had spoken about briefly last year. I know it's a relatively small program, but it's regarding the Child Welfare Workers Incentive Scholarship and the Child Welfare Worker Loan Forgiveness Program.

Just in terms of (A) whether there was any type of delay or withholding that that program had been subject to during the past year as -- you know, as there were these temporary adjustments made to the budget.

And then (B) again, as I asked last year, if you are able to get us information about how many people are actually applying to that program. Because it's something that I would like to see in the long term hopefully expanded. You know, people that work in those settings -- that sector has had a lot of trouble to begin with, and with the pandemic, it's gotten even worse. And trying to recruit people into that sector is very important.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you for the question.

You know, as with all our programs, we have managed to maintain them whole, you know, notwithstanding the challenges of the pandemic. And obviously, going forward, we -- we're able to proceed to address it based on the funding that we receive approved by the Legislature. But we have been able to maintain this particular program, along with all the others, whole during this pandemic.

Elsa, would you like to add anything?

HESC EXEC. VP MAGEE: For the loan forgiveness program, Child Welfare Worker Loan Forgiveness, we do have recipients for five awards. So the program is fully utilized there, as well as for the scholarship.

Again, it's a $50,000 appropriation for the program. It's been fully utilized. But my understanding is that the recipients are attending graduate programs. So I believe the number of recipients were either two or three, to fully exhaust the -- the allocation for the program.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, great. I mean,

that's great to hear that it's fully being utilized.

Again, if it's possible to go back and provide information as to, you know, how many applications the agency does get or maybe has gotten over the last few years. Just that way, those of us in the Legislature, you know, can look at what the demand is there and perhaps consider expanding the number so that there are more slots for people to be awarded awards under that program.

Thank you.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We'll be happy to do that.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, thank you. I think I'm the last Senator, so to speak.

Actually, I think I'm starting where my colleague Senator Jackson ended.

Can you give us a sense -- oh, will you set the clock again, whoever is on clock? I promise not to use my 10 minutes. Oh, well, they'll get to it.

So people who -- probably related to COVID, I would expect we would see an increase in people who had to drop out of their program or decided not to continue in school for this year. But I'm wondering whether you're already seeing an increase in students defaulting on student loans. Or would you expect that another year or two down the line?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: For now, we realize the challenges that the pandemic brings. But we do have built-in flexibility and also the hardship provisions that have been put together and authorized to look at the extent of the pandemic, whether it is job-related or interfering with students not being able to continue their studies.

So we are mindful of the circumstances, and we don't know how long this impact will take. We're still in the midst of it. But we do have those provisions to look and examine the impact of -- that this is having on students, to make sure that they're -- at the end of the day, they're not

penalized for the disruption that the pandemic has brought.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So I know we've done moratoriums on rent payments and utilities and a variety of other things. But if I'm finished with my education but I have a hefty student loan that I'm paying back, is there something that happened at the federal or state level to -- a moratorium on my having to pay back my student loan now?

HESC EXEC. VP MAGEE: So --

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah, go ahead, Elsa.

HESC EXEC. VP MAGEE: So the federal CARES Act provided relief for Federal Direct Loan borrowers. HESC still has guaranties, as do other state guaranty agencies. Pell loan borrowers back -- I think it was in 2010, when all loans disbursed were disbursed under the Federal Direct Loan Program.

But HESC voluntarily for -- on behalf of New York State, we provided that same moratorium for all of our borrowers. So from last March till the end of December, there

were no payments, there were no adverse collections activities, no interest accruing on the balance of their loans, consistent with what the federal government had offered.

We did the same thing -- I think Dr. Linares was referring to students who had scholarships that could have converted to loans. We provided the same relief to those students as well, and as well as anyone who had a NYHELPs loan outstanding.

So as a state, we chose to provide that relief. And we know that we worked with the Department of Financial Services, who works with the lenders when we don't own the loan, to encourage lenders to provide similar supports to students who were not in default as well.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So that's great. But I heard you say past tense that that ended in December. So now are we making people pay? Or have we continued that?

HESC EXEC. VP MAGEE: So what we have done is rather than do this across the board, because we do know that we have -- we know

our borrowers, that we have some borrowers who have state, federal, local government jobs that were not impacted. So what we're doing is offering the same benefits to those who need it. And those who were not impacted healthwise or job wise by the pandemic will be returning back to the payments that they had.

If they're underemployed, again, we are going to be touching each one of them to provide the relief that they need. But -- and again, we're still extending the zero-interest accrual for the first quarter of the year.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great. And you referenced the private loan authorizers, that DFS is working to encourage them to do that. So we can't make them do it. Do we know what happened? Are people responding to our request for them to do this voluntarily?

HESC EXEC. VP MAGEE: I think, again, we've seen fewer purchases than we normally would. So it seems that the lenders -- just anecdotally, from what we're seeing, it seems

that lenders did provide relief. We can, you know, again reach out to DFS to see if they have more specific information.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That would be very helpful, thank you.

And I'm going to cede my time back to the Assembly chair.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We have a few additional members.

Harvey Epstein, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I think -- I'm sorry, am I on video now?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you, Dr. Linares. Good seeing you again.

Just building on Senator Krueger's points, if there -- if people are defaulting, traditionally the Attorney General's been filing cases in Albany, which has been a huge hardship for students who have to challenge defaults. You know, we've talked to legal services programs. Are you open to allowing for people to be able to deal with those cases, especially in the counties that they

live in?

And the Attorney General now is appearing on those cases via Zoom anyway. Would HESC be supportive of making it easier for students to challenge those default cases?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We do have efforts to provide guidance and assistance with regards to default. And this is part of our efforts ongoing.

So any effort that we have to assist those who fall in default or those who may fall in default, and because, you know, of our guidance and assistance do not default, we're more than open to assist. But now with the pandemic, it's even more urgent and important because of the impact that it has on families and economic --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Doctor, I only have three minutes, so I don't want to -- but would HESC support the idea of allowing students to appear in those cases in the jurisdiction that they live? If you live in Brooklyn, the case should be filed in

Brooklyn, not in Albany. Right now all the cases are being filed in Albany.

Would you consider supporting that and get back to me in writing about whether HESC supports that idea?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We'll look into it and get back to you.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: That would be great.

I know there's been -- there's proposals to cut back on TAP. And there's a huge population of people who don't get access to TAP -- inmates. You know, we're improving programs, the federal government has now allowed federal dollars to go to people who are incarcerated to attend school.

Would you consider allowing TAP to go to inmates?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, my understanding is that the federal government is now considering offering TAP to inmates -- Pell, that is. And it's something that has not yet been authorized. I think it will be good to see in the future when they do

authorize it, how they roll it out. And then the Legislature could then proceed to look and approve how we can --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So it would be great to know where HESC is positioned on it. I only have 5 seconds left to ask a quick question. I'd love to see what is your position, in writing.

Finally, is Excelsior -- I've heard the success of it. I would love to expand it for people who are part-time, people who have additional needs. We've seen more students going part-time because of the economic crisis we're in. We'd love to be able to get more students to get college degrees, and Excelsior can help them.

We'd love to know if you'd be supportive of Excelsior for part-time students as well.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Right now it's a full-time program. There is some statutes, so we -- we now see the success that it has, but it's something to look into by the Legislature in the future. But right

now it is an in-time-completion program, and it's a huge success. So it's something that, again, would have to be picked up by the Legislature.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you, Chair. Sorry I went over. Thank you, Doctor.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Sure. Then we go to Assemblywoman Hyndman.

Alicia, are you --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I'm here. I'm just waiting for the prompts to come up on my screen. Okay, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: There you go. Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I'm here. Thank you, Dr. Linares. It's always good to see you and Ms. Magee. Thank you very much.

In regards to the Enhanced Tuition Assistance Program, I know the Governor does increase it, a $1.50 million increase. But how many students have been able to take advantage of the ETA, have gotten access to it?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We can provide you the specific numbers. But we know that a good number of students have been able to benefit from the program, attending private colleges and universities. So we can could give you the specific numbers that we have.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Yes, please, I'd like that very much.

I don't believe -- you all don't administer or have anything to do with Bundy Aid; right?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: No.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: No, okay. All right. Okay, thank you.

I yield back the balance of my time.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Very quick, Alicia.

We go to Assemblywoman Glick for her seconds.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

Dr. Linares, I know when Dr. Malatras was on, he referred to the Excelsior program,

and you just did, as a completion program. And I would suggest that when TAP was created, it too was envisioned as a completion program, in that the notion was that you needed eight semesters in order to complete your four years of school.

Life has changed, people have changed. The top TAP income eligibility is 80 --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Deborah, I think it would be helpful if you shut off your video, because your voice is off a bit, breaking up.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay. I will do that. Is that a little better?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Much better.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay. Sorry.

So the top income eligibility for TAP is $80,000. The top Excelsior is $125,000. So in my humble opinion, it was intended to reach a population that was more affluent, where students would have perhaps more family support and thereby be able to go full-time.

Whereas TAP students, who have a moderate family income and have to work, are

getting maybe $4,000 worth of support, but these other families are getting a full tuition remission of $6500.

Is that just extending the income inequality that we see in the state?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, as you are aware, TAP was started 50 years ago. It was a different time. And as you said, many things have changed. And, you know, 12 credits a semester when you are at the eight semesters doesn't really get students to the finish line. So it merits taking a harder look, another look at TAP 50 years later.

The idea of having a program like Excelsior is to reinforce the importance of attending full-time to the extent possible, and also reaching students that would otherwise have to go and borrow money or drop out. So I think, again, this is something that the Legislature, you know, could look into and see how we can expand.

All in all, I say that because of TAP, which is a top program for the nation, we

have so many students, especially low income, benefiting from it.

Elsa, would you like to add anything?

HESC EXEC. VP MAGEE: No, thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Well, we can take that up privately later.

I have one other question. I know that you work with students who are in default or on the verge of default and you can work with them. But I'm wondering if there is anything that prevents you from informing students that there are not-for-profits that provide one-on-one counseling around student debt and, frankly, other debt that they might have accrued as they try to maintain their status as students.

So is there anything statutorily that prevents you -- in New York City, the Community Service Society has a free debt reduction program that targets students. But students have more than just student debt, they have other debt, and I think you only focus on the student debt part of it.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I think we look to work collaboratively with any entity or any organizations in the state that provides guidance and assistance to students and New Yorkers. So we look to have collaboration within the parameters with which we operate.

Elsa, would you like to add anything?

HESC EXEC. VP MAGEE: The Department of Financial Services -- I think several years ago there was legislation that created an office within that agency to also assist with the type of student loan debt that HESC does not have a direct relationship. So we work with students whose loans we guaranteed, but the Department of Financial Services, who we do work closely with, has services available to assist all student loan borrowers as well.

There is right now a group where we are working with them, along with other state agencies, for that very purpose, understanding that, you know, someone who's struggling with finding a job and being able

to write a resume may also have student loan debt and need assistance there, or someone who's in a worker training program who's looking to go back to work may be struggling with other types of debt.

And we're in the process now of looking at how we can have a one-stop shop for New Yorkers for that very purpose.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very, very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Senate, right, we are finished?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I think we're done here at the Senate side.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. So thank you, Guillermo.

This is the end of the governmental witness part, and we're going to be going now to our panels. And we will be starting with --

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: -- Panel A.

And just let me announce the order will be, first, New York State United

Teachers, Andrew Pallotta, president. Then Professional Staff Congress of CUNY, Dr. Barbara Bowen, president. And then United University Professions, UUP, Frederick Kowal, Ph.D., president.

So if we can bring that panel up. I think they are all here.

And just a reminder now to both this panel, the panelists to come, and members, that each member of the panel gets three minutes to make a presentation. Please don't read your written remarks, which were previously distributed to all of the members that are here, and those that aren't.

And then for the members, you get three minutes to ask a question of the panel, not each individual panelist. And please leave time for them to respond to the questions.

And with that, we go to Andrew for a presentation.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And just before you start, Andrew -- you know, Helene, I've heard you say it a dozen times, but it's sort

of like speed dating. We're all participating in speed dating this year.

So thank you very much for humoring us with these short time windows.

MR. PALLOTTA: Thank you. Thank you, and good afternoon, almost good evening.

And Chairpersons Krueger and Weinstein and Stavisky and Glick, members of the Legislature, I am Andy Pallotta. I'm the president of New York State United Teachers. We represent over 600,000 members around the state. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on the proposed 2021-'22 budget.

My testimony represents the concerns of over 80,000 faculty and professional staff who work in public colleges and universities across the state as well as the three SUNY teaching hospitals. These include members of the UUP, PSC and the faculty and staff at nearly every community college throughout the state.

I'm joined today by Dr. Fred Kowal and Dr. Barbara Bowen, president of PSC. You

will hear from both of them in a few moments.

I want to talk about, quickly, the financial devastation that has followed the health crisis created by COVID-19. I cannot imagine trying to craft a budget when your starting point is 15 billion negative.

To make matters worse, you also must grapple with an Executive Budget proposal that is woefully inadequate. The proposed 2021-'22 Executive Budget presents many challenges for public higher education.

Budgeting with the hope that we are going to receive $15 billion in federal money is, to me, is like going shopping, on a shopping spree, and holding an unscratched-off scratch-off lottery ticket and hoping for the best. This is really a very difficult time for all of us.

The worst part for higher education is the fact that even if we somehow do receive 15 billion from the federal government, the budget as proposed is still woefully inadequate. Without a significant windfall from the federal government, SUNY and CUNY

stand to lose millions in critical operational dollars -- specifically, SUNY, 46 million, and CUNY, 26.2.

Our community colleges, which have yet to recover from having 20 percent of their TAP dollars and 92 million in base aid withheld in 2021, are left to contend with the full-time equivalent student funding methodology, which fails to insulate the colleges from enrollment fluctuations.

Since COVID-19 has caused enrollment numbers to decrease, these colleges stand to lose an additional $40 million. If we do not address these issues, they will have very difficult times returning when enrollment reverses.

I am watching that clock. I believe that we have other options, and that is raising money from the ultrawealthy in this state.

I want to thank each and every one of you for all the work that you do, and I cannot imagine us having success without this process and the work that each and every

legislator does on our behalf.

So thank you for that, and going -- right now we'll go right to Dr. Kowal, I believe.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I actually had called on Barbara Bowen next, but --

MR. PALLOTTA: Okay.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So Barbara, why don't you go next, so we --

MR. PALLOTTA: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Because that's what the --

DR. BOWEN: I'd be delighted. Great. Thank you. One second, please, just till I get my -- okay, thank you.

Good afternoon, Chairpersons and Honorable Members. Thank you for staying all afternoon and for this opportunity to testify also for your support for public higher education.

I'm privileged to represent the 30,000 members of the PSC, the faculty and staff who have up-ended our lives this year to keep CUNY running for our students and for

New York.

The Governor's two budget scenarios, one with a $15 billion infusion of federal aid and one with 6 billion, position a flat budget as a victory. A flat budget would be a defeat, for CUNY and for New York. For CUNY, it would mean a return to overcrowded classrooms, inadequate staffing, crumbling buildings, layoffs of adjuncts, and dangerously low student support. A return to normal is not enough. Normal was killing CUNY.

The actual Executive Budget, which assumes 6 billion in federal support, would be completely unsustainable. It would cut programs, hurt students, and charge more in tuition. The members of the PSC call on you to reject the false choice between these two scenarios.

There is an alternative, one not envisioned in the Executive Budget or even CUNY's own inadequate budget request. End the tax breaks for the rich. The linchpin of the fiscal year 2022 budget must be increased

revenue through fair taxation.

We urge you to pass the six revenue bills supported by the Invest in Our New York Coalition. You have a once-in-a-generation chance -- and the support of 92 percent of New Yorkers -- to fix this problem. Aim high.

Investment in CUNY cannot wait until a better budget year. CUNY has an unmatched ability to help working-class and poor New Yorkers rebuild their lives. That's exactly the ability that is needed now. Hollowing out the public sector has been literally fatal. Anything less than enacting real revenue increases this year will sabotage economic recovery and reinscribe the inequities of race and class the pandemic laid bare.

The PSC asks you to reject all cuts to CUNY in the Executive Budget. Undo the damage to CUNY's current allocation through silent cuts and wage freezes. Ensure that CUNY uses the federal funds it has already received to protect students and reverse

layoffs. And join us in embracing visionary new legislation that will be introduced tomorrow, the New Deal for CUNY.

The New Deal for CUNY demonstrates that there is a compelling and fiscally sound path to making CUNY tuition-free while at the same time restoring staffing and student support to the level students need. The PSC seeks the initial year's funding in fiscal '22. We ask you, use your position in government as courageously as the original New Deal reformers used theirs. Whether we are in government or not, we get only a few chances in a lifetime to change history, and this may be one of them. The PSC urges you to take it.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Three minutes on the dot.

Dr. Kowal?

DR. KOWAL: Thank you, Chairpersons Weinstein, Krueger, Stavisky and Glick, and distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly. Thank you for inviting United University Professions to testify on the

'21-'22 Executive Budget for higher education.

My name is Dr. Frederick Kowal, and as president of UUP it is my honor to represent more than 37,000 academic and professional faculty at SUNY.

I want to begin by thanking you for your unwavering support for SUNY and the work our members do.

This year's Executive Budget does not offer this kind of support. At best, the budget will be flat. At worst, it will lead to a cut of $46 million. Cutting SUNY is shortsighted and ill-advised, as campuses are already facing this year's 5 percent cut occurring this spring.

You don't cut your way out of an economic depression. You take bold steps to invest in essential public services such as SUNY, a proven economic engine, to bounce back.

And these cuts are compounded by the continued withholding of negotiated salary increases to all state employees, along with

the lack of any hazard pay to the employees of SUNY hospitals, who have spent the last year saving lives. This is unconscionable.

Much has been made about the federal assistance that may well be coming. This assistance is of crucial importance to our state, our university, and our members. However, let us be clear. This assistance will not rescue the state's economy or overcome the decade of austerity funding that has caused great harm to SUNY. The federal assistance is triage. It is not recovery.

For a full recovery, we need progressive taxes fueling massive investments in all institutional infrastructure -- healthcare, education and green energy. The federal support will help us, but true recovery depends on us.

There are a number of untapped revenue streams that, if approved by the Legislature and signed by the Governor, could bring in tens of billions of dollars in new revenue. New York could be placed on solid financial footing with the passage of a combination of

revenue raisers which target the mega-rich, who have added to their fortunes each day during the COVID pandemic. The resources raised would be crucial in carrying out the ambitious agenda that SUNY, our students and our state deserve.

UUP is proposing such an ambitious program in NY HEALS, a wide-ranging legislative proposal that would expand services to address basic healthcare needs as well as the crisis in maternal mortality among African-Americans, provide support to hire diverse, full-time tenure-track faculty and staff, double the funding for opportunity programs, and fund innovative approaches so that SUNY can take the lead in creating a sustainable path forward for the state.

If there was ever a time when we need healing, it is now. We must address the worsening crises we face together, and SUNY can and must lead.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So we're going to go to some

questions. A reminder to members and Senators that it is three minutes to ask questions of the panel, for both the question and the answer.

We go to Assemblymember Glick first.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Yeah, let me ask just a couple of questions.

Obviously I understand that the position of all of the panel is that we need to dramatically increase the number of dollars that we receive. I'm going to set that argument aside and ask a couple of specific questions.

For Barbara, we've gotten mixed information on how many adjuncts have been rehired and then how many are actually needed, based on the fact that there is a lower number of students participating -- I don't know if that's accurate or not.

The second part is that there's been professional development regarding the online teaching, and I'm wondering if that's in fact your experience.

DR. BOWEN: Thank you. Thank you for

asking, and I'll be quick.

On the question about the adjuncts, the best information we have is that initially last spring, before even drops in enrollment -- and that's important -- 2,990 adjuncts were laid off. Before the enrollment for the coming fall was even clear.

Thanks to the efforts of the department chairs, the union, solidarity among full-timers and part-timers, and the pressure that we put on CUNY so that they would use grant money to hire back adjuncts, about a thousand were reinstated.

But even with that, there is still a need for the work they do. All the research shows that online classes, which is what we're in now, need to be smaller than regular classes, because students don't succeed unless they have a small class in the online setting. So there should in fact be more classes, and smaller classes.

Instead, what CUNY has done -- in one department, for example, English at John Jay,

they cut 20 percent of their courses this term. All the department chairs of Brooklyn College were initially told to raise the maximum number needed and therefore cut courses.

These adjuncts are desperately needed, and 422 were put off health insurance.

Professional development, yes, CUNY has been doing that. It's woefully underpaid, and not everybody who's been taking that opportunity has received their proper payment. So it is very inadequate.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: All right. I only have a moment left. And I apologize, just to maintain my bandwidth, I don't have my video on.

Fred, I'm just wondering about the -- with the 5 percent cut this year and, going forward, a $46 million cut, how many job losses do you anticipate? And was this accomplished by encouraging people to retire or just the general attrition? That's for Fred.

DR. KOWAL: For the fall semester,

what we saw was mostly attrition that took place. And also SUNY was using reserve funds.

But we are already hearing for the spring -- for instance, at Cortland College, 50 adjuncts have been informed that they will not be back in the spring. We are hearing similar things at the University at Albany, Binghamton and Stony Brook, at the University Centers, which tend to be in the best financial shape.

So there's no way of projecting what will occur. We're curious about what's happening with the funding, the federal funding that was passed late in the year. We know specifically Cortland got $9 million or is due to get $9 million of that. So we will need to be tracking that federal funding to ensure our workers, our members are protected.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Time is up.

We'll go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

We'll go to Toby Stavisky, Higher Education chair.

You're on mute, Toby. Take your mute off.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Sorry.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's okay.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Sorry, I forget. I need a class in this. But then again, the adjunct -- no.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR STAVISKY: Barbara, I'd like to ask Barbara and Fred each a question.

Barbara, obviously we all notice that the maintenance of effort was not included in the Governor's budget. What's going to happen as a result?

DR. BOWEN: There needs to be a maintenance of effort. And that should be a floor. For the Governor's budget not even to be talking about maintaining past effort, we -- also, to close the TAP gap. We didn't talk about that in our oral testimony, but

there's almost $80 million in TAP gap, which is a structural deficit at CUNY. A similar amount at SUNY. That's not even included.

And CUNY's budget request doesn't even call for the mandatory cost increases for fringe benefits and collectively bargained increases. That's a terrible mistake, because it builds in a deficit which will be taken out elsewhere.

So maintenance of effort should be a beginning, but we need much more than that. I think our point from both of us is that this is a time when we need to step up and do more investment, not just hold the line.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Fred, may I ask you about campus safety and the importance of not only testing but inoculating all of the healthcare workers. And would you -- the third point -- well, those are the three ones. Would you comment on how this has affected your members?

DR. KOWAL: Yes. And as quickly as possible, Senator.

What I will say, in terms of the maintenance of effort, I think the way I see it, and not to be sarcastic, but it's almost been a maintenance of insufficient effort, especially in the proposed budget for this year.

As Barbara was saying, there's no funding to cover the negotiated salary increases. There also, in the case of SUNY, there is not the mission-critical funding for the SUNY hospitals. Which, as you heard the chancellor so eloquently say this morning, have been on the front lines of the pandemic.

We also -- in terms of the security question that you talked about, the safety, not only is it a case where there is a shortage of vaccines at the hospitals, like at Upstate, and so everyone is not getting vaccinated who literally is working with patients.

The other, you know, extremely serious situation is our professional staff working in residential life, working in admissions, working in counseling services, are not

included in Category 1b. They can't get vaccinated, and they are dealing with students on a day in and day out basis.

It's unconscionable. The chancellor and I have argued for their inclusion. But I will tell you, I get emails daily from irate members who are terrified, as they work with students, that they're going to get infected because they can't get vaccinated.

SENATOR STAVISKY: The fact that we have the four medical schools and the three hospitals, has that been helpful in any way?

DR. KOWAL: Yes, it has. It definitely has been helpful, certainly in the development of the testing protocols at Upstate. It has also been helpful in the ways that those members who are working at hospitals have been able really to educate the rest of us about the level of the crisis that we're facing. But they really need to get that hazardous duty pay, because that is an unconscionable situation.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. And please thank your members for what they do --

DR. KOWAL: I will.

SENATOR STAVISKY: -- all of NYSUT.

DR. BOWEN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblyman Epstein, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you, and thank you all. The mantra is tax the rich to fund our schools.

So I want to know the impact of this, like, the killing of CUNY and SUNY. What is the impact going to have to other students who are attending these schools? And do you think that's the reason we've seen a declining enrollment over the last year?

DR. BOWEN: Yes, absolutely. And just to give you one statistic, there's a recent report by the Center for an Urban Future that shows that in New York City 64 percent of white residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, 27 percent of black residents, and 20 percent of Latino residents.

I mean, that gap is a disgrace. And it's there, in part -- I mean, it's systemic

and it will take more, much more than fixing CUNY funding to fix it. But fixing CUNY funding would go a long way, because the most marginal students are the ones who are hurt the most in any kind of cut.

A lot of our students didn't have any devices to take an online class. We've had students who say, in their classroom, Professor, I'm standing here in the closet in my apartment because it's the only quiet place. Or I have to get off this iPad now, because we have one device for everybody and there's five people in this apartment.

I mean, those students were heroic to get to college in the first place. And now there's just obstacle after obstacle. So CUNY should be keeping faculty right there to help them, and providing the resources. And the state needs to do that investment if there's any seriousness at all about an economic recovery that is more than just amplifying the wealth of the rich.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you. And I know I only have a minute left, but I'd

love to hear what people feel is like CUNY and SUNY's role in the green economy and how CUNY and SUNY can play leaders in this -- you know, when we have potentially millions if not billions of dollars going into that. And Andrew or Frederick?

DR. KOWAL: Yeah. What I will say is in -- and you've gotten a copy of our written testimony where we outlined the extensive proposals we're making on SUNY taking the lead on the green transformation.

I was encouraged to hear the chancellor. It sounded like he was endorsing one of our ideas, to have a program across campuses and centralizing the focus on this transformation that needs to occur.

I think it's imperative that SUNY takes the lead -- not just because 40 percent of --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I know we only have 30 seconds left, if Andrew wants to add anything. I'm sorry, we're kind of short on time.

MR. PALLOTTA: Thank you. I can go

back to the enrollment issue, right, that you spoke about. So the fluctuations in how the state funds the community colleges really is going to hurt them.

So right now, yes, there's a decline. But that will go back up, and we want to make sure that those institutions are vital and ready for the students when they come back.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you all. Tax the rich, fund our schools. Thank you.

MR. PALLOTTA: Thank you.

DR. BOWEN: Thanks, Harvey.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the Senate. I believe we have no more Assemblymembers.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh, wow. That's a new --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Oh, now, we do have one, so we'll come back.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- challenging. So I saw Senator John Liu first.

SENATOR LIU: Well, I know I'm unmuted, but I'm just trying to get the video going. There we go.

Hello.

DR. BOWEN: Hello.

SENATOR LIU: It's great, always, to see our professor leaders here in our CUNY.

I asked our CUNY chancellor earlier and, you know, I suppose the chancellors are to some extent under gag order from the big dog, so I didn't press the issue. But I would like to ask all of you -- and I'll direct it to Barbara first, right. Because like every year we're sitting here trying to figure out how to deal with budget cuts, budget deficits, trying to fund the TAP gap, trying not to raise tuition on students, all sorts of preserving programs that cost millions of dollars, when in fact we should be looking at billions. Right? Billions of dollars of investment for CUNY specifically.

There's the story of how in the Great Depression -- well, not the Great Depression, but economic -- the economic recession of the 1970s saw a huge investment in CUNY. A new campus, I believe, right?

DR. BOWEN: In the thirties, in the

Depression.

SENATOR LIU: That was the Great Depression, almost a hundred --

DR. BOWEN: Three new campuses.

SENATOR LIU: Right. That seems to be what we should be doing now, really changing the paradigm for higher education, which I've argued it shouldn't even be higher education, it should just be education, because I don't think college, at least at the undergraduate level, is a -- I don't think it's an optional item anymore for the vast majority of people.

So we are -- there are a number of us, and I know Assemblymember Epstein is certainly part of it, Senator Jackson I'm sure will talk about it as well. We want to change the model, we want to raise a lot of revenue. I tried to ask the chancellor what they would do if we had the revenue, but there was no answer. So to me it seems like, you know, there's a gag order or there's just really no vision other than the day-to-day trying to balance and plug the budget deficits.

What should be the vision? And I would say the vision should be a return to, you know, free tuition, the establishment of a couple of new campuses. And, you know, like funding the faculty fully, which not only includes bringing back adjuncts but also providing funding so that many of those adjuncts can be full-time professors.

So that's the kind of vision that I would have expected to hear about, but I didn't. I'm sure --

DR. BOWEN: Now we only have nine seconds, so -- and it's not nearly enough.

SENATOR LIU: Maybe you can go a little longer, just because there aren't that many --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: No, no, no. You can't use all your time to make a statement and then say, What do you think?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Helene is right. You're going to get a response from them afterwards, either in writing or verbally, however they would like.

DR. BOWEN: Okay. I can't wait.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Thank you, Senator, for understanding.

We're going to go to Assemblywoman Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

Thank you for this panel. You're always people I like to hear from at these hearings, because you make sense and are very direct. So I want to thank you all for your testimony.

And, you know, particularly I think Barbara -- and Fred to a lesser extent, perhaps -- you know, we've seen these cuts that are being supported by declining enrollment. And that declining enrollment in some respects is a factor of COVID and the impacts of COVID. And, you know, I don't believe for a minute that we are going to continue to have those decreased enrollments, which are being used as evidence to support various cuts.

I'm curious whether you guys have estimates of the likelihood of that stabilizing or, you know, increases in

enrollment, number one.

And number two, one of my colleagues has a bill that I'm a sponsor of, and it's a WPA for New York. And I'm curious whether you're familiar with that bill and what your thinking is about having a WPA effort in New York State.

DR. BOWEN: That's great. Fred, you want to start?

DR. KOWAL: You go ahead.

DR. BOWEN: Okay. I love the idea of a WPA for New York State. And in fact a lot of the work of the original WPA was obscured by Robert Moses, who wanted to obscure the role of the federal government. So there needs to be a recovery of that.

But yes. I mean, our proposal, a New Deal for CUNY, which gets launched tomorrow, is in that tradition. Absolutely.

Enrollments will rebound. I mean, enrollments -- they're not down at every college. As we've seen, some -- somewhat of the trend in lower enrollments in community colleges is national, not local. We also

have President Biden with a plan for free community college tuition. And our proposal, New Deal for CUNY, would reinstate free tuition across CUNY at all levels.

Enrollment would definitely go up if that happened, because -- and you know this. I know you've said this. Even with TAP and other support, there are so many other costs that students have and so many other barriers. Free tuition lifts those.

So absolutely, enrollment will rebound. And it will also rebound if the services are there for students. I mean, it's sort of self-reinforcing, if you deplete the ranks of faculty and our counseling staff, mental health staff, then of course students don't stay. Rebuild those ranks, students will stay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

DR. KOWAL: And in terms of SUNY -- I'll use the remaining 18 seconds. In terms of SUNY, we face a slightly different set of circumstances because of demographic shifts. There may be a slight rebound in the next

year, but we know that going forward into the twenties there is going to be a diminished number of students graduating from high school in upstate.

We draw -- in SUNY, 57 percent of the students come from the five boroughs and Long Island, and so there's more and more competition over one geographic area. So that's why we're embracing very aggressive new programs to attract students, including students from out of state, which I think is going to be vitally important.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Robert Jackson, for three minutes and zero seconds.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

Thank you, everyone. So let me just thank you for coming in and presenting what you have to say about the state budget.

I'd like to know how many people have been laid off or not hired, both at NYSUT,

Barbara at PSC, and Fred at UUP. How many people have been laid off in the past year?

DR. BOWEN: I'll start, and then -- at CUNY the net layoff of adjuncts was about 2,000. There was initially about 2,900, and we were able to bring some back. But net, about 2,000. That's a huge number out of the adjuncts. That's a huge workforce laid off.

Less visible, but very important, is that CUNY's also down 500 full-time positions, faculty and staff, because of hiring freezes. So the number of full-time faculty has shrunk, and staff, because of hiring freezes. So we are really being hit hard even before official cuts --

SENATOR JACKSON: I've got to move, because I'm limited in time.

Fred, can you give me what numbers, if you have it, as the president of UUP?

DR. KOWAL: What we've had so far, Senator, is we can track about 1,000 lost lines within SUNY. However, we are not aware -- that is not 1,000 people who were laid off or retrenched. It was a couple of

hundred that were.

But what we're seeing, different from CUNY, is the wave coming this spring and especially this coming fall unless we get the funding we need.

SENATOR JACKSON: Sure. And NYSUT overall, as far as educators?

Pallotta? Oh, you're muted.

MR. PALLOTTA: Barbara got hit the hardest, and then of course Fred spoke of his.

It's a small number in the community colleges, but what they're looking at now is 33 million that they would be reduced by because of the reduction in enrollment. So they're looking at a very difficult future --

SENATOR JACKSON: And I know we're talking about higher education, but as far as teachers overall, around the state, how many?

MR. PALLOTTA: With teachers, we're talking probably, total picture, about 3,000, including the adjuncts from PSC.

SENATOR JACKSON: So if we don't get the money that we need from the feds, which

is at least 15 billion -- and people say that we're going to have to raise taxes ourselves. You would all agree that if that doesn't happen, there's going to be thousands more layoffs around the state?

MR. PALLOTTA: Thousands of layoffs. Just the way we had it back in 2009, where we lost 30,000 educators.

SENATOR JACKSON: I just wanted to paint the picture of what happened and what will happen if we don't get the funds. And obviously I agree with the six bills, Invest in New York. And people -- I've been reading an article by Errol Louis in the New York Daily News saying that tax hikes, that just won't deliver.

I disagree with him. We have to make it work. And I think that we have to be smart about it. So I look forward to working with all of you in trying to make sure that we raise revenues --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Jackson, You're 12 seconds over. Thank you.

And thank you, all you panelists, very

much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We have Assemblywoman --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh, excuse me, one more. Excuse me.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yeah, one more. Assemblywoman Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Yes. Hi, thank you so much, all of you, for being here.

(Inaudible.) -- fans and a great supporter. And I wanted to probably yield my time to John Liu's question. But before that, just quickly, I just want to note that I do support the invest in New York Coalition. I think that's a great way for us to raise revenue.

I also have a bill on free community college, so I hope Biden adopts my bill.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: But as you talk about all of these things that we face every year -- TAP gap, faculties not being fully funded, maintenance of effort,

tuition increase, programs being cut -- what is the plan? Especially when our facilities are not being utilized. And it seems as if we're going to be maintaining a remote learning, how creative can we get with funding, leasing buildings and so forth? But you have two minutes. Please address what Senator John Liu had asked. Thank you.

DR. BOWEN: Okay. Thank you. And thanks for your support for people who need it very badly. So thank you so much.

There's so much. And when you talked about creativity, I want to start there. There is such a lack of imagination in this critical moment about what could be done and what a resource CUNY could be.

I mean, for one thing, the City of New York should hire CUNY students to go door to door and help people get appointments for vaccines, those who are eligible, and then take them there when their time has come. That's just one simple idea.

But in terms of John Liu's question, the New Deal for CUNY is a start on that, and

it's a New Deal that would increase the number of full-time faculty at CUNY by 5,000. It would have a special mandate to increase the diversity, the racial and ethnic diversity of faculty; to make New York a national leader in labor standards -- it's disgraceful the labor standards in higher ed as an industry where we have thousands of people paid unacceptable wages in unacceptable conditions. New York should be a leader and mandate that that can be no more.

It would increase the number of mental health counselors, academic advisors, and make all tuition free. But I would go beyond that. New Deal for CUNY is just a start. With 4 billion from John Liu, we would make the pay competitive for once. We would double the number of faculty. We would have beautiful libraries.

Nothing is too good for our students. They should have beauty everywhere they are. They should have beautiful labs, they should have facilities in every community college.

They should have the kind of attention that I have seen in the private universities where I've taught, where students don't drop out and they don't fail, because they have somebody supporting them 100 percent of the time.

If there were the political will to do that at CUNY, we could do it. We know how to do it. And it's a question of whether New York State wants these students to fail or wants them to thrive. And we want them to thrive. But it's time that we change that agenda, which right now looks like an agenda that wants them to fail.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

I believe we do not have any other members or Senators. So I just want to join my colleagues who have thanked you for being here, but also thank your members for all they've been able to do during -- under very trying circumstances.

So thank you for being here. I'm sure

we look forward to hearing some responses.

And we're going to move on to Panel B, which is two individuals, the CUNY University Student Senate, Jovanine --

MS. PIQUANT: Juvanie Piquant.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Juvanie Piquant, thank you. I should look at the list before I try and read. But after six and a half, approaching seven hours, it's getting a little -- your eyes get a little tired.

MS. PIQUANT: That's why the students should go first.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Maybe next year.

And then the State University of New York Student Assembly, Brad Hershenson, president.

So we will start with CUNY and then go on to SUNY.

MS. PIQUANT: Good afternoon --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Let me just -- before you start, I just want to say we have

your written testimony. It's been distributed to everybody. Use your three minutes to highlight your most important points, and there may be some questions from some members.

Now you can go, please.

MS. PIQUANT: Good afternoon, members of the committee. My name is Juvanie Piquant. I serve as chairperson of the CUNY University Student Senate, which is the student governing body of 500,000 students across all 25 CUNY campuses. I'm a third-year student at New York City of Technology, majoring in law and paralegal studies.

Today we are here because of the constant austerity budgets that we've constantly had in the City University of New York due to the constant disinvestment in public higher education. The Executive Budget that the Governor proposes, proposes an authorization of an extension of predictable tuition hikes. Tuition hikes are not predictable, nor rational. For the next

five years, we cannot be balancing the budgets on the backs of our students.

The majority of our students have a household income of $30,000. The majority of them are facing housing and food insecurity. But it's not just that. Those students are Black and Brown students in the City University of New York who are detrimentally being affected by the constant disinvestment.

How did we get here? We didn't get to this point in CUNY because of the coronavirus. We got here because of years of constant, systematic disinvestment to our university, constant cuts to opportunity programs. And raising tuition on the backs of students is not a form of sustainable revenue, as we can see as it stands.

And how do we go to a more efficient university? We must be able to understand the concept of raising new revenue. And when we raise revenue, what does that mean? That means that we will be able to provide the services and invest in the City University of New York, invest in closing the TAP gap,

invest in not just only stopping tuition hikes but never looking at tuition as a way to increase revenue.

We must expand opportunity programs, and we must expand TAP. We have something called the TAP gap at our institution that is still eating out of our budgets, and we also now have an Excelsior gap. And the Excelsior Scholarship does not necessarily help our students, the majority of our students.

And in the times of crisis, we have seen this nationally, in the federal government, we have seen this in New York State. We must look at a way for us to reimagine higher education in New York. We must set the example to leading forces across the country of what higher education could be. We must think in a concept of a New Deal. We must think in a concept of how do we re-innovate what does education mean for us.

We cannot operate in the concept of education being a luxury, but education and public higher education should be a right.

Not just for one particular student, but it should be a right for all students. Regardless of zip code, socioeconomic status or background, gender or race, higher education should be accessible to all.

And these are the stories of not just me, but many CUNY students. Last week I was diagnosed with the coronavirus, and I also lost my grandfather last week. But it is important to show up to continuously fight for our students, to understand it is up to this Legislature to decide whether they will be investing in public higher education, and be investing in this institution that will give students opportunity and accessibility in New York City and across the world.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. And hopefully you have a speedy recovery, and condolences on your loss.

Brad, you're up.

MR. HERSHENSON: Thank you.

Juvanie, you're a tough act to follow.

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is

Brad Hershenson, and I'm a graduate student at the University at Albany. I am privileged and honored to serve as the president of the Student Assembly, the recognized student government representing the 64 campuses of SUNY.

Right now we must invest in SUNY. Graduates of SUNY are likely to work and live in New York and continue to stimulate local and state economies through employment and taxes. In fact, 80 percent of graduates remain in New York.

With issues such as the TAP gap, it's not a gap anymore that we're talking about. At tens of millions of dollars, we're talking about a canyon. This has forced our institutions to balance their budgets on the backs of their own students.

We need resources to invest in the services and programs -- such as mental health counseling, food pantries, protecting and enhancing EOP, academic advisement, gender and sexuality, and disability resources.

Earlier this morning the chancellor made reference to the Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program, which operates a mental health hotline. This is a program run by my home campus, the University at Albany, and it's advertised to all students in the entire SUNY system. However, the students themselves pick up the slack where the state support falls short. Students, through their student activity fees, put forward hundreds of thousands of dollars to support this program alone.

And the same goes for services such as the offering of kosher and halal meals, and other areas where the campuses just can't afford to do during a pandemic -- in part, based on increased base expenses.

We need to also expand the promise of programs such as the Excelsior Scholarship.

What is needed now are measures to incorporate support for the real costs associated with pursuing a degree -- housing, food, transportation, textbooks, equipment, internet access -- which could maybe be a

capital investment, closing the digital divide. These are all financial stresses of students, otherwise known as backdoor tuition. I know my fellow graduate students who are forced to pay back their wages would concur.

President Biden supports free tuition at our community colleges. We need to stop relying on tuition increases on our campuses. State officials need to stop claiming that New York is a free-tuition advocate while simultaneously proposing that SUNY and CUNY be authorized to raise tuition yet again.

I must put forward the notion of equity for the student voices at SUNY. Our organization has been financially starved for decades, and we only hope to be treated the same as the CUNY students who have been granted stability of funding and representation through their own constituency.

Right now, right in this exact moment, we are truly at a crossroads. We need the Legislature to put the blinking red lights on

tuition increases and move SUNY down a new pathway, one that supports students and does not increase tuition during a pandemic. It's time we recognize our collective responsibility to offer a world-class education at an affordable cost to all.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Thank you so much for being here.

We have a number of members who have some questions, comments. We go first to Assemblymember Glick, our Higher Ed chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Good afternoon. I apologize for not having my video on. I actually like to put it on, but it does seem to interfere. I just want you to know I'm actually a disembodied voice. But it does seem to interfere with my bandwidth connection.

Juvanie, first of all, I hope that you feel better soon, and I'm very sorry for your recent loss.

I don't disagree that we have increased tuition at an unsustainable rate. But I'm wondering whether the students by and

large, if we were to stop increasing tuition, what would be the top things that the students would want us to ensure in terms of -- is it smaller class size, is it expanded services beyond the classroom, is it library hours, technology assistance? What are the things -- because, you know, we're going to have to figure out the money.

So what are the top student needs?

MS. PIQUANT: I would say obviously all that you've mentioned, because those services are the ones that help us get through our collegiate journey. Thus I would say food and housing insecurity, mental health services. Those are fundamental core things that we need for us to be able to carry out our duties as students. If we are hungry, if we don't have stable roofs over our heads, if we don't have anyone to speak to when we're going through times of trauma, we will be unable to perform or even in fact be a student.

A majority of the time, that's what's causing us to drop out and to leave, because

we do not have the support to carry us through. It is not that we cannot handle the academic rigor, because we are CUNY students and we will show up in exemplary measures all the time. But we need the support services to help us sustain ourselves.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

Brad?

MR. HERSHENSON: Sure. Just to echo, I have to echo my colleague's remarks. Mental health services are really key. Disability resources as well are a major point, and food insecurity. I think we really would like to see more investment in these areas, specific training for faculty on the area of disability services and accommodations for students.

But I think it's more than just funding the services that are important to students, it's funding those other ideas such as the TAP gap or the increased base expenses. Because without funding faculty salary contracts, when we have a 3 percent increase, students end up asking questions

like, well, why is the library open at 8 o'clock when last year it was open at midnight?

So we need to fund the increased base expenses that the campuses have to pay; otherwise, we don't have those services.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I'm with you. You know, I went when it was free -- at least I started when it was free. I couldn't finish free.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate, do you have --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I think Toby Stavisky, our Higher Ed chair. I'm trying to see if she does.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes, and I'm unmuted.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: She does, okay.

SENATOR STAVISKY: We've all been unmuted in many ways today.

Juvanie, I'm sorry about your grandfather, and I hope you feel better soon.

Real quick, if you remember a year and a half ago when I held hearings all over the state, I had the president of the college first and I had the students second. Because, quite frankly, you are our clients.

Really, one comment. When they increase the tuition in this irrational tuition -- excuse me, the rational tuition policy was enacted, they did it because they were going to have smaller class sizes and additional faculty. My real question to both of you is how has the online remote learning affected the students?

MS. PIQUANT: It's been very different. And it is no secret we are not receiving the same delivery mode of teaching that we should be. And yes, we have faculty who are doing all that they can to combat these times and to give us our education in the ways that they can, but it is not the same.

And you still have Zoom classes that are extensively in large numbers. And the mechanism, for example, of using the raised

hand option, trying to have classroom dialog, becomes extensively difficult. Now your professor has to click the Zoom screen and click the arrow to make sure did I hear something, do I see you, connection issues -- it all becomes a barrier in us receiving our education virtually.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Brad, would you like to respond?

MR. HERSHENSON: Sure. I think what we've seen is, front and center, the digital divide. And we've seen a greater emphasis and a need for graduate students to be involved in virtual course instruction. In a lot of cases, graduate students are on the back end of course delivery, and we've seen students working many hours to address some of the concerns of students.

We've seen different software programs that make students take a camera and literally walk around their room to make sure they're not cheating or there's no one else in the room with them. So it really shows the digital divide and how different students

may not have the same resources as one another to operate in this environment.

SENATOR STAVISKY: You notice -- {inaudible} -- we're doing a lot of Zoom also.

Is there anything either of you would like to comment on what the college chancellors have said?

MS. PIQUANT: I know -- I believe it was Senator John Liu who asked about would, you know, he do in terms of if we had an extra couple of -- $4 billion. I just want to take the time to stress I have been a student leader in CUNY, I have testified in countless hearings.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Mine included.

MS. PIQUANT: It's been years and years of the same dance. And I think -- we are in the midst of a pandemic. It is up to this Legislature to decide if we are going to put public higher education as a priority, not forget about us after we come to the hearings. These are real stories, real students who are going through hardships, and

we have the ability to change their lives. We have the ability to make a difference in New York State and be a leading example in higher education. And it is up to us, in the midst of this crisis, for us to figure out how will we reimagine New York. That starts with investing in CUNY and in higher education.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So we're going to go to Assemblyman Ra, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chairwoman.

Thank you both for being here.

Always one of my favorite groups to come before us. I was a student government person back in my college days. In fact, I met my wife through student government. I held the position my junior year that she had held her junior year -- she was a year older than me -- and she had to train me in everything, and that's how we met.

So thank you for your advocacy on

behalf of your fellow students.

Really this goes along the same lines as what the chairwoman was just asking about, and that's, you know, what your experience has been in the last year. You know, not just in terms of classes themselves, but, you know, all those support services that you're used to getting as you're going through school. You know, career counseling, tutoring, all those different things. Have you been able to access those? What has your experience been, both things that you still can access in-person, or things you're accessing virtually?

MS. PIQUANT: I would say the digital divide has, as my colleague mentioned, Brad, has caused rifts, and it makes it a bit harder. For example, reaching out to the financial aid office or the bursar's office, it's much harder to connect with them because you're not on campus. You can't just go and wait in front of the bursar's office, now you have to send an email.

Some students who are new, you have

the freshmen who don't necessarily know how to navigate or know exactly where things are digitally on the website, or they may not know this is who I have to reach out to, it can create some barriers.

And we have seen, of course -- there has been some telecounseling, there have been efforts to have online support services for us. But then again, it is not enough and it needs to be more. Because there are some people who are falling in the cracks, and those students who are falling in the cracks, how do we help them up to speed.

MR. HERSHENSON: On our end, I think, you know, it really all adds up. Those mental health counseling services and the food pantries and veterans' services, I mean, it really is part of the student picture and it helps students graduate successfully and on time.

I think some services translate virtually in ways that other services don't. For example, gender and sexuality resources are a big concern for students. And if a

student is not out to their parents or their family, maybe they rely on that in-person environment where they can be comfortable and want to be who they are on campus. But in a virtual environment, that can be tough.

So in that area, we really like to see more investment on these services. And we see it as an investment in the State of New York. We're the taxpayers, we're going to end up living in New York paying property tax and income tax and frequenting the local businesses. So this is all part of the picture, the greater picture of investment in the State of New York. And we'll be here for decades to pay back that return on investment for as long as we're living here.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Right. Thank you both. Keep up the good work. Be well.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Now we move to Assemblyman Epstein.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Actually, we have Senator Liu who snuck in as well.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. So let's go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, thank you.

Senator John Liu to ask questions.

SENATOR LIU: I didn't realize I snuck in. All I did was press the "raise hand" button.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I know. But I saw that.

SENATOR LIU: I thought I'd do this quick before I get excoriated by our chairs again for exceeding my time.

First, it's nice to hear from Assemblymember Ed Ra that he was well-trained by his wife. Congratulations, Ed.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR LIU: Always great to see our student leaders. Nice to see you, Juvanie. I'm sorry about your granddad. I hope you get better soon.

And Brad, I was wondering if you might know Assemblymember Seawright. I was just wondering, but -- well, you don't have to answer that.

And like Ed, I was also active on campus. In fact, back in the day when I was

a student, which was a long time ago, it was called the Student Association of the State University of New York, SASU. It's a different name now, but that was the statewide student association for all of SUNY students -- all the campus student associations.

In any event, yeah, I mean, we're talking about trying to raise a lot of revenue. And we know what we would do with $4 billion for the public school system all throughout the state, and that is really to fulfill what the courts mandated the State of New York do a long time ago, more than a dozen years ago, through a court mandate.

And every year I've commented that higher education, meaning SUNY and CUNY, they kind of take a back seat to what we're trying to do to fulfill the Campaign for Fiscal Equity mandate for what's called lower education. You know, everything through high school.

Well, if we had $4 billion? And, you know, it's hard to try to fight for that if

no one can even say what they will use it for. We know we could get $150 million to fund the TAP gap. We know, you know, there's probably a collection of another $50 million to $80 million to restore all the programs. But how much would free tuition cost? Right? I mean, we're talking probably a billion dollars there. What additional expansions of CUNY, like we had seen in the 1970s fiscal crisis, could we embark on now?

I'm sure you have ideas. But, you know, if you want to answer them now, great. If not, you know, just think about it. But it would be helpful for me personally to know what could we do with $4 billion -- or three, or maybe five -- if we get that additional revenue and devote it to CUNY and possibly SUNY as well?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You have 23 seconds. Just John took a long time to ask the question.

SENATOR LIU: Don't you want $4 billion?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I think they're

going to put -- they're going to send you in writing some comments.

MS. PIQUANT: We'll definitely reach out to you. You'll be hearing from us. We will let you know all about the need.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So we go to Assemblyman Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I also want to know what you want to do with $4 billion. You can tell me that later too.

Again, Juvanie, just -- I'm sorry for your loss. You guys are -- both of you are amazing leaders, and I look forward to all the work you're going to do to improve all of the lives of all New Yorkers.

I'd love to kind of humanize the story a bit, because I think this is -- we all know we need to tax the rich and fund our schools. But stories -- like I don't think we know -- we don't hear enough stories of students who had to drop out or students who've had family issues or students who've had to struggle or how the cuts are going to impact. Because

they're just like, there are cuts, and these are theoretical things.

Is there a way that you could help us humanize like this person went to this school and this is what happened and now this is why they can't continue their education? Those stories will really help us as we push internally, as you guys push externally, for more funding for CUNY and SUNY to, you know, end the TAP gap and really have a program.

So can you guys commit to helping us with those stories and getting that information out so we can have those?

MS. PIQUANT: Yes. And I would say also -- we can definitely get you the stories. But also, if this committee should have more hearings to hear more of the stories, and more opportunities to hear not just only from myself and Brad, but other students that we represent to hear from us, I think having more hearings also can be an effective way as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Well -- and I think we'd be happy to do that. I know with

Senator Stavisky's hearings that we traveled, I was with her for many of those hearings, traveling around the state. I think I would be supportive of whatever hearing the Senate or the Assembly Higher Ed chairs wanted to have, to have these conversations, because I think we need to hear more about this disinvestment impacting our students.

You know, students with disabilities, big issue. What's the funding cuts looking like? And the food insecurity and housing insecurity. Can you tell us what you're hearing from students in the last minute that we have?

MS. PIQUANT: Well, I'll keep it short and then Brad can take it on.

I would say students with disabilities, the digital divide is creating barriers in terms of them having the accessible resources they need to receive proper instruction virtually. And we do have food insecurity, for example, which is a prominent issue. But we have seen the chancellor share out and say that students

will be able to go to any food pantry, despite that being your campus.

But I think we need more sustainable ways of running our food pantries and making sure they're stocked up and ready to go. And also mental health services is a very, very important thing that needs to be expanded, and time is of the essence and it's extremely urgent that we get on it now.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Brad, 20 seconds?

MR. HERSHENSON: Sure. We will definitely follow up with testimonies of students and share the stories of students.

On the disability side of things, it's tough for students. And it's tough to adapt to Zoom and Webex and all the different types of virtual platforms. It's tough when someone's wearing a mask and you need to be able to read lips. If your lips are covered, it's very tough. Students need to have colors and certain font sizes, where faculty need to accommodate for that. And in some instances, it's very tough for students.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We actually will have some student leaders later talking about disability issues and higher education.

So now we got up to Assemblywoman Seawright.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you, Chairwoman Weinstein, and Chair Krueger.

And Brad and Juvanie, you've provided very good testimony today. I want to direct my questions to Juvanie. And my sympathy on the loss of your grandfather, and best wishes as you yourself recover from COVID.

So I just have two quick questions, Juvanie. What is CUNY doing to extend telecounseling programs?

MS. PIQUANT: In terms of telecounseling programs, we know that they've had some funding to expand. That expansion is seen directly in the fingertips of our students -- we still haven't seen it, and we are in February.

And as you probably heard me mention before, time is of the essence. We do see

that there is virtual counseling, some campuses having them, but to the extensive point as it should be, allotted to help meet the demand of how many students are needing to receive mental health services.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Okay. And can you just tell me, how do you fund your organization?

MS. PIQUANT: So the University Student Senate is funded by a student activity fee, which is they pay $1.45 in terms of going -- every student pays $1.45 into our organization. That money is used for us to carry out our advocacy measures. And last year, last year's administration actually gave over $100,000 back into the pockets of the students in terms of scholarships and many other ways to help execute our advocacy measures.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: And how long has CUNY had that fee?

MS. PIQUANT: That fee has been there since the 1970s. It was suspended but then reinstated.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Great. Okay, thank you. And best wishes to you with your studies. I expect one day to see you as the first CUNY United States Supreme Court justice. So good luck with your pre-law studies.

MS. PIQUANT: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you both.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. And the last Assemblymember to address the panel is Assemblywoman Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Hi. Thank you. Brad, the former Assemblywoman didn't ask you any questions. I wonder why.

Juvanie, it's always good to see you. And as you've testified, I've noticed that there's more strength in your presentation. So I'm just excited for your future.

MS. PIQUANT: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: My question is this. I am -- I was a -- when I was at SUNY New Paltz, I was an undocumented student. And so my question is -- and I remember being

afraid to ask too many questions for fear of someone finding out my status and reporting me.

So my question is for undocumented students, particularly in SUNY and CUNY, what avenues do they have now, being that we're in COVID and dealing with remote learning and, you know, wanting services or having food insecurities and not being able to meet their needs? How are your student bodies able to help them?

MS. PIQUANT: Well, I think -- I'm not only going to speak for the University Student Senate but many student government organizations across CUNY. They do a really good job in terms of connecting with students. And obviously we know the nuanced way of students being afraid to ask for help despite their status.

And I think it's important the student governments do a really good job in creating safe spaces, virtual events. You know, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, their student government organization created --

had like an undocumented-allied training just to share how we can create more safe spaces for our students.

But obviously we do know the digital divide does make people hesitant. Without seeing a poster in the hallway, students may be scared to ask where we do ask for help, where do we go. But I believe it's our job as students to make sure things are visible and they can see and come and ask questions.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

MR. HERSHENSON: At SUNY our campuses and specifically campus student governments do a great job of creating and fostering those virtual spaces, like Juvanie said, having virtual -- whether it's an online forum or a Zoom room or just a way to connect with other students. Maybe you don't want to formally go ask a faculty member or someone on staff for help; there's a really great way to connect with students in a virtual atmosphere.

And to address the point about food insecurity, I know at least 80 percent of the

SUNY campuses have a food pantry on the campus and at least somewhere within a small radius to the campus, in proximity, so students are able to access these services.

I think in some instances we need investment and more investment in these services because there's no extra money for some of the services that so many students, undocumented or international students or other students use. So year after year, as students become more reliant on some of these services, we also need to place the investment to fund them as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

Thank you, Chair Weinstein.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So now we go to our last Assemblymember, Assemblywoman Bichotte Hermelyn.

Rodneyse?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Yes? Sorry. I'm trying to -- okay, great. Wow.

I'm really excited to see both of you. Oh, my goodness. Juvanie and Brad, thank you

for being here, thank you for being leaders.

I have a question for both of you.

First, Juvanie, congratulations. As the first Haitian-American woman to be elected in New York City and the first Haitian to be elected as a county chair of Brooklyn, I'm really proud of you as first Haitian student to run the student government. So thank you for all that you do and for the leadership, and thank you for all the things that you were expressing.

And Brad, I just want to say that I have watched you and I am elated to see your leadership. You want to take over CUNY, it seems. So thank you so much for your leadership.

My question is around the Haitian Studies Institute, the Puerto Rican Studies Institute, the Mexican Studies Institute, Dominican Studies Institute, the Jewish Studies Institute, all of these institutes that help students and undocumented students in history and culture and really connecting to our neighborhoods. How are students

connecting with these institutes? Are they active? How are you using it as resources?

And then the second question is, you mentioned -- what is the rollout for COVID vaccination for all the students, and how are you communicating that? This question is for both of you.

MS. PIQUANT: Thank you, Assemblymember Bichotte.

So first off, I would say in terms of those institutes, when you're talking about our Black and Latinx studies and just studies that are very important in our journey of collegiate education, we do see they are active and they are trying to stay afloat.

But I would definitely like to see more investment in those programs and those departments, because I do believe as diverse as we are as an institution, there is still so much more we can do to help educate the futures leaders, the future doctors, lawyers, nurses, artists, chefs everywhere in New York City. And I think it starts where we receive our education. And expansion in those

institutes, more funding for those departments is pivotal.

To your question in regards to vaccine rollouts for CUNY students, I particularly have not heard in terms of anything specifically students being vaccinated.

We do know some campuses were being used as sites. We do know that, you know, faculty -- I believe -- don't quote me on this, but I believe like our faculty who are in-person, there's an agreement in terms of partnership of them being vaccinated. But in terms of our students being vaccinated, I haven't heard specifically in regards to those plans of that.

But if we do, we will definitely follow up and reach out.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Brad?

MR. HERSHENSON: In short, I think there's so much we're doing on the virtual side of things, and students are really being connected, now more than ever, to so many opportunities.

On the vaccine side of things, there's not really a SUNY campus out there where a parking lot is not filled with a giant tent and students aren't involved in vaccine rollout and everything related to testing.

So we're on the front lines of it, and we need the investment and support to make sure we get the job done.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you both for being here. And we look forward to getting some of your written comments to follow up.

So now we're going to move on to Panel C, the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, CICU, Drew Bogner, interim president, and Association of Proprietary Colleges, Donna Stelling-Gurnett, president.

So Drew, if you can begin, please. You need to unmute yourself. And just a reminder, you have three minutes to make a short statement.

DR. BOGNER: Okay, I'm ready. Okay.

Okay, so thank you for having me here to testify. I'm Drew Bogner, the interim president of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities. We represent about 100 independent colleges and educate about a half a million students in the State of New York.

So we're an integral part of the ecosystem of higher education in the state, which makes us quite unique. We educate about 40 percent of New York residents and produce 59 percent of the baccalaureate and undergraduate degrees, at a cost of only 5 percent of the state higher education budget.

Our students really rely on institutional aid and state and federal aid to be able to make their way through college. Our TAP recipients at our institutions, 75 percent of them come from families that earn less than 40,000, so they're very needy students. And our institutions do their part by investing $6.4 billion every year.

The pandemic has hit our families and our students and our sector really quite hard. Our students and families, many of them have lost jobs, they're worried about housing, they have food insecurity, and they are trying to make a decision on a semester by semester basis whether to continue towards graduation.

In February of 2020, our colleges made an enormous investment in safety protocols, and we've been very successful in making our institutions a safe place. Our positivity rate is 0.25 percent. In March we followed that up by making this transition to online and hybrid learning.

And these two almost superhuman feats did come at a cost. So the cost of the safety measures and the change in institutional delivery systems, coupled with revenue losses, has come to a $2 billion loss for our sector. The federal aid that we've received has not even covered 25 percent of that. So we're really at a tipping point.

So I'm here today to encourage you as

legislators to reject the Governor's Executive proposal to eliminate Bundy Aid. Bundy Aid is money we use for student scholarships, and that is $35 million in next fiscal year and making permanent another amount this year, towards a total amount of $52 million. And that would go to scholarships for students.

In addition, we're asking for TAP, which is our program that helps students, to go through a three-year phase-in that would bring us to the levels we had in 2017 and 2018.

Investing in Bundy and TAP is the surest way to help those people most affected by the pandemic. And it's also the best way to invest in our economy, because we help educate the workers, the individuals who will rebuild the New York economy.

There are a lot of other specific programs listed in my written testimony, but I will leave that to questions. And thank you for your -- my testimony, and I'm open to any questions you might have.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: There will be some.

So next let's go on to the Association of Proprietary Colleges, please.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Thank you. Thank you very much for this opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of the Association of Proprietary Colleges.

My name is Donna Stelling-Gurnett, and I'm the president of APC. As you know, the association represents the interests of 12 privately held, primarily family-owned colleges that are committed to educational excellence, access and affordability.

I would like to begin my testimony today by sincerely thanking all of you for your support for the past year as we've all struggled with the challenges presented by COVID-19. You've included us in public hearings and always made yourselves available to talk with us when needed, and we sincerely appreciate your efforts.

In APC's written testimony we have three requests. The first is to expand the

Tuition Assistance Program. The second would be to include proprietary colleges in the Governor's proposal to streamline the program approval process. And the third would be to support SED's request for additional funding to support students with disabilities.

In the interests of time, I'm going to focus my remarks today on our first request, which is expanding the Tuition Assistance Program.

We were relieved to see that the Governor's proposed budget did not make any reductions or programmatic changes to TAP or the Enhanced Tuition Program or the other opportunity programs. The commitment to maintaining financial aid is needed now more than ever, since those students benefiting from the assistance are also those that have been most impacted by COVID-19.

Over the past several months, the pandemic has truly highlighted the inequity that exists for minority and low-income students, and their ongoing financial needs are significant. Many are struggling

with homelessness, food insecurities, childcare needs, or caring for other family members, all while earning a college degree. This means that state aid programs such as TAP and ETA are especially critical right now.

APC realizes that the state is facing a tight fiscal environment this year. However, we feel it's important to advocate for the expansion of TAP. Increasing the minimum or maximum TAP award, or increasing the maximum income threshold, would help ensure that students most impacted by COVID-19 can continue their educations.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to mention a new APC initiative, and that is the Student Leadership Council. We asked each APC member to nominate two or three students to serve on this council, and we've been working with them over the past few months about how the legislative process works at both the state and the federal level, as well as how important it is to be engaged in that

process.

This group of students has amazing stories to tell. They're truly engaged and have many wonderful ideas that we'll be rolling out over the next few months. And we'd welcome the opportunity for you to meet with them directly.

And with that, I'll end my remarks. I appreciate your time today, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Great. So we're going to go first to our Higher Ed chair, Assemblywoman Glick, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much.

Quickly, Dr. Bogner, you've talked about the number of students that graduate. What is the average time that it takes students to graduate out of colleges in the CICU -- on average, out of the CICU colleges? And what is the diversity of the student body?

DR. BOGNER: Well, I don't think I can tell you off the top of my head what the

average time is to graduation, but I can tell you that we do an exceedingly good job of educating minority students. Our graduation rate for those that attend our institutions is quite a bit higher; we graduate about 40 percent of that number.

So I do know we do a really good job with that. I know that many of our institutions have graduation rates at either the four-year or the six-year average that is much higher than the average across the country. I --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Well, maybe you can just have, you know, staff give us some of those details. It may even be in your written report, but --

DR. BOGNER: I will have them --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: If you could just spend -- you know, we're on a very reduced time frame. So let me ask you, you have a wide range of institutions. You have some very large institutions, like NYU in my district, but you have a lot of smaller institutions. Could you just speak a little

bit what the pandemic has done to those smaller institutions and their capacity to survive the pandemic?

DR. BOGNER: Well, you know, you would think it makes sense that the smaller institutions would be some of those most impacted, but in reality we have some of our larger institutions that are struggling financially.

So I would say some common characteristics will be who you serve. And if you serve students of color or students of lower income, you're going to be more at risk. If you have a larger residential population, you're more at risk.

So when I talked about the 2 billion, a significant component of that is not tuition dollar loss but room revenue and board loss.

So it's really all over the board in terms of the variables, but those would be the major variables I would see, will be those that I mentioned.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Very helpful.

And finally, when you said a three-year phase-in of TAP, are you hoping to -- at what top level are you hoping to reach with any phase-in?

DR. BOGNER: We would like to get to a $6,000 maximum. So in reality we've had a $165 increase in the maximum in the last 16 years.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay. Thank you very, very much. That's very helpful.

DR. BOGNER: Yes, thank you, Assemblywoman.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate, please.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Our Higher Ed chair, Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

May I ask Dr. Bogner a couple of questions. On the Enhanced Tuition Award, has it been accepted by the independent colleges? And if there are issues with it, what would you change?

DR. BOGNER: Well, I think we haven't had the number that you would think would make sense. And some of the issues that

we've had have been the way in which the processing takes place. And I think the number-one issue has to do with who makes the decision on who receives the award.

So right now we are -- we are precluded from weighing in on that. It's somewhat of a random process. So I noticed that in the past when I was president that we had individuals that would receive the award that might have one semester left, and things of that nature.

So I would change the involvement and allow the colleges to weigh into that and whether or not to make it somewhat income-driven as well. And that's a bias I have. But I do believe if we were more involved in the selection process of students, I think we would see that it would be more effective.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

What effect has -- I know that the independent colleges have been adversely affected by the pandemic, but would you talk about the smaller colleges? Assemblywoman

Glick and I had a Zoom with -- sorry, I --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: We lost her.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You're on mute, Toby.

DR. BOGNER: I think I know the institution that you had the Zoom with, because I think we talked about that.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Maybe you can guess the question, in the absence --

DR. BOGNER: Well, I don't know the answer to that. But if you want me to talk more about smaller institutions, I would say, though, that clearly we've been through a whole series of ripples in our sector that have been problematic, and they really have started with the recession and the amount of aid that private colleges have put into the system as federal and state dollars have gone away.

So we've put in, this year, an additional 6.8 percent of additional financial aid as a sector. Now, just think about that a minute. That's at the same time that we've lost $2 billion. So we are laying

people off, we're suspending pensions, all of those things are happening.

And I actually took the Bundy money and did a calculation that with that Bundy money that's lost, it would mean that we would have to lay off around -- almost a thousand people. If we had to make up that aid to the students, we're talking about 6,000 or 7,000 students that won't get institutional aid from our institutions.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Excuse me. We go to our ranker, Assemblyman Walczyk.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Dr. Bogner, thank you very much. Your testimony here today is great.

Your written testimony, especially, I found really succinct, and I encourage all members of either committee to look that over again, because I think you nailed down so many great points, especially on Bundy Aid and TAP, which you've reiterated here today.

I was wondering if you could zero in a

little bit on the impact of the Article VII language proposal to {audio frozen}.

DR. BOGNER: Oh, you froze there. You want me to go ahead and talk about that a little bit?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, why don't you.

DR. BOGNER: So the Article VII, that's the change in the authorization process, am I right on that? I don't want to talk about the wrong thing there. Am I --

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: I apologize. For some reason the State Office Building sometimes kicks me off the WiFi {inaudible}.

Article VII language and the impact of the changes there is what I was looking for.

DR. BOGNER: Yeah. So that's the authorization, correct, program?

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Yes.

DR. BOGNER: So for me, this is really personal, because I was involved in those conversations that have taken place with the State Education Department over the last

five years, and we really -- the proposal that's there is the same compromise proposal that we discussed in the offices of the State Department of Education.

And the idea behind that is to take pressure off of the State Department of Education on those proposals that don't impact new programs or those programs that have to do with state licensure or those kinds of programs where we require on them to do a certification process.

So we're really pulling those off and dealing with those kinds of things that might be a two- or three-course change in a major and those things, so that they can concentrate their staff time on these other ones.

And I understood and I listened very carefully about how important it is for them to be involved in guaranteeing quality. But this still gives them the chance to weigh in if they want to. And I listened to some of the testimony earlier, and I'll just say that it sounds to me like we need to go back and

have another conversation and find where those lines might exist that make it more realistic. And I think we can find those lines --

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: I think so too.

DR. BOGNER: -- that we're not talking about making massive changes. And I will say that things have gotten better from where they were three or four years ago, and we complained about this a lot to many of you, and they responded.

But there are still ways in which we could improve and streamline the processes in a way that will not take away what we need in terms of maintaining the quality of the programs of the State of New York.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Well, thanks very much. I couldn't agree more. And that's the rest of my time. Thank you, sir.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

I'm going to go to Senator Jeremy

Cooney, who we have not heard from today.

Jeremy, are you there? Oh, there you go.

SENATOR COONEY: Here I am. Thanks so much. I appreciate it, Chair.

Well, good afternoon. I've been waiting so patiently and long to talk to Dr. Bogner from CICU. You represent over 500,000 students across New York, and I know how important your role is, and I appreciate you being here, both of you being here today.

I represent parts of Rochester and the Finger Lakes region, including my own alma mater, Hobart and William Smith Colleges. And I am a proud son of a college professor, a SUNY college professor at Monroe Community College. And so I'm dismayed, like so many, by the cuts that we've seen, upwards of $46 million to SUNY alone.

But one of the institutions in my district, the University of Rochester, has upwards of $32 million in cuts, under this budget, alone. That's just one institution in the Finger Lakes region. And University

of Rochester is the largest employer in my community, as well as across upstate New York.

So here's my question to you. The reduction, especially as relates to Bundy Aid, I think may have a disproportionate effect upon students who are attending colleges and universities in upstate New York. And I'm wondering if you can comment on the need for additional funding, but also the role that these higher educational institutions play in economic development for upstate New York.

DR. BOGNER: We're really central to that in two ways, the economic development. So first, we really produce the talent that is really necessary in the state. And when I listen to the Governor talk about the need to rebuild New York, it's really important. And I'll just give you two examples.

We educate two-thirds of the nurses and half of the teachers, and both are in a crisis of a whole series of retirements coming, and we're going to need them. And

not to mention the engineers. And we have most of the research universities, we have a lot of them in the private side. So we're really important. But we also -- and that's one way we help the economy.

The other one is we're anchor tenants. So in what you're taking about is clearly the case in Western New York, but it's also the case on Long Island. The two biggest employers on Long Island are healthcare and education. So if you damage the private sector to a point where we are laying off and we're dismantling institutions and so forth, we will see an impact from that in so many ways.

The New York ecosystem is really unique, in that we rely on private higher education to really educate New Yorkers for the jobs that are required. So I really worry about unintended consequences. And right now, with the pandemic, we need to get the dollars to the students and then we'll help the institutions. But the dollars need to go to the students. You know, we have to

do that.

SENATOR COONEY: I appreciate that comment. And I just want to underscore the connection between economic development in regions like New York and to our higher educational institutions.

DR. BOGNER: Yeah, very true. Very true.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Ra.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chairwoman.

Dr. Bogner, good to see you.

DR. BOGNER: Good to see you again too.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Just a question for you both regarding that TAP proposal.

I noticed in your written testimony you talked about that -- I think two-thirds of the students at your institutions are from families making under $125,000, which is obviously the Excelsior threshold. So I don't know if you have numbers on that. But if you have numbers, you know, that aren't even getting TAP, either of you, up to that

110. And the impact it would have, you know, in the number of additional students that you would be able to serve who then might instead be utilizing that instead of taking out loans.

DR. BOGNER: I'll just go ahead and talk about that first.

I think that is the issue right now, and I believe that we're sidestepping the major issue in these conversations about loans and relieving -- you know, forgiving debt and so forth.

And the reality is, is we've really disinvested in higher education over time. When you go back and look at the aid programs that existed in the '70s and the '80s, they were quite different than what we have today.

And New York, the same way -- in the amount we used to have for Bundy and the percentage that TAP paid for. And I've had conversations with my friends at SUNY, and they have similar concerns about TAP covering the cost of a SUNY education.

And I think we're all in agreement

that this is what we need. And if we want to take care of the debt and how that contributes to our economic issues, the best way to do it is to provide the aid on the front end, and then there would be less borrowing.

And I won't even get into the federal components. But at the state level, that is exactly what we could do. And right now the need is much greater. So we see all the time how many people have lost their employment and they've used up all of their reserves, all of their savings. Well, those are the students who would get the TAP dollars.

So I can't think of anything more important right now than investing in TAP and the opportunity programs.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: And if I could just jump in, I would suggest the same. I know, you know, it's been many years since there's been any structural changes to the Tuition Assistance Program. For instance, I believe it was 2000 when the maximum income threshold was changed from 50,000 to 80,000.

And it has not been changed since.

And so, you know, I really feel like now is the time -- as Drew said earlier, it is just more important now than ever. You know, the students are really suffering, they're doing the best they can with what has been dealt to them. But, you know, this additional assistance would be tremendously impactful to them.

So I would just agree. I think that now is the time to make those changes.

DR. BOGNER: We're trying to get research on exactly how many students are stepping out because they can't afford to continue. And I really am guessing that we're looking at a pretty sizable number that stepped out in the fall, might be stepping out in the spring -- and next spring too, next fall too.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Right. Thank you both.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: I was going to say

good evening, but it's still afternoon. Good afternoon.

DR. BOGNER: I'll look and see.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Hello.

SENATOR JACKSON: But listen, let me thank you for coming in and giving your testimony, advocating for the institutions that you're advocating for. And I have no problem with what you're doing. Because of the fact that your institutions are educating young people -- the majority are young people -- in order to be the leaders of our great state and our country. And that's a good thing.

And as you know, some of you know, my fight has been with education, to make sure that enough monies are there so that everyone can get a good education.

So the only question I really have of you, and since you represent independent and some private universities also, is that many legislators are talking about increasing taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers, in order so that we get the money from the feds -- and

many experts have said that all of the money that we were going to get from the feds may not be enough in order to have everyone in our state survive. And I know I only have a minute and a half, but quickly, I say that education is not the most important thing for right now, it's about making sure people aren't evicted from their apartments or their homes and enough food for everyone to eat, and everyone to get healthcare, physical and mental health, because this pandemic has had a negative impact.

So are you willing to support and say as an institution that we will consider taxing the wealthiest New Yorkers a little bit more? And that's a basic question. Because if not, where is the money going to come from? And so that's my question to both of you. And I'm not trying to set you up or anything, but I'm just talking reality based on everything that I know.

DR. BOGNER: So I actually have already answered that question with a few other representatives. So I don't think we

would take -- could take a position on that as the independent college association. But I do think that there is an opportunity to open up a dialogue between whatever group of legislators would be pushing that concept and how you might interact with college boards.

Now, I don't think the college board's going to take a position either. As a former college president, you know that it's going to vary who's on your board.

However, there is a way to get some people who might be very influential into that conversation if you have an opt-in kind of approach, Senator. And so I think there's a conduit, perhaps, for that. And certainly we can talk about that later, if you want. But that would be my answer to it.

SENATOR JACKSON: In essence, there has to be a dialogue on this particular matter. Not -- no shoving anything down.

DR. BOGNER: Yes.

SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Assemblywoman Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you very much, Donna and Drew. Drew, congratulations in your new role. Just different -- different perspectives. Now you have to listen to all of your colleagues, as opposed to your --

DR. BOGNER: I listen to them anyway, because they're friends of mine.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. And when the chancellor of SUNY gave his presentation he said there is a shortage -- there will be a shortage of 250,000 nurses come 2028. Donna, how many of the schools, of your member schools, offer nursing? That's the first thing.

And the second question is your process for additional courses for APC members is the same as any other institution, right?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: That is

correct, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: And what is the average length of time that OQ responds to requests, applications for additional courses?

And Drew, my questions are asked and answered regarding Bundy Aid, and I know how important it is to your students. But I will ask how many students, Black and Latino, receive Bundy Aid, if you have those kinds of numbers, because I think it would affect them more.

So Donna first, and then Drew, please.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Yeah. So I was just looking at our membership list to answer your first question about how many APC members offer nursing degrees. I believe there are at least two or three. I know Bryant & Stratton, their Syracuse campus is going to be starting a new nursing program as well.

To answer your second -- go ahead.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Is it practical nursing or registered nursing?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: No, registered nursing. Yes, exactly. And I believe Monroe has a B.S. in it as well.

So yeah, so we do have -- some of our colleges are producing the nurses. And they also, many of them have very robust medical assisting and, you know, those types of paralegal, you know --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Right. Because there's a shortage in those areas too because of COVID.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Right, exactly, medical assisting and so on.

And then to answer your other question about the length of time that it takes to get programs approved, you are correct that our process currently is the same as any other college. You know, New York State has a longstanding history of treating all four sectors of higher ed the same. Which is why, when we saw that streamlined approval process, we, you know, would want to have the same flexibility for our colleges.

I will say that we -- APC members do a

very thorough job of assessing whether or not there's a need for those types of jobs that would come out of new innovative programs. And so when they turn in their program approvals to SED, you know, it's usually a pretty quick turnaround, honestly. You know, I would say within a month or two. So usually it's a pretty quick turnaround.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: My time --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Drew, I'll get back to you. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Are there any other Senators?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes, actually we have me. And then if there's a second round for Toby --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: No, not on the panels, right?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh, no, there's no second? Okay.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And then I have Assemblymembers. So go ahead, Senator.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So Toby, I'm sorry, you got frozen out of your last minute before, but they will follow up with you. I promise they will follow up with you.

So Donna, I don't know if you were here earlier today when I was referencing the State Comptroller's recent audit findings of proprietary colleges, which was really an audit to say: SED, what are you doing about this?

So I'm going to ask you, what are you doing about this?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: So it -- actually, I did see that report. It was actually in regard to the non-degree sector and their oversight by BPSS.

APC and their colleges, we are all degree-granting, so we actually fall into the purview of the Office of College and University Evaluation, like any other degree-granting college in New York State.

So, you know, we have a very close relationship with SED, and so, you know, we're always talking with them about

accountability standards and metrics. So, you know, it's just -- it's an ongoing conversation.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So wait, so your mention don't fall into that category?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: No, we don't, no.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Is there another association those groups fall under?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: There is, yes, there's another degree -- it's run by Terry Zaleski. I can get you that information if you'd like.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. So you don't see this as a problem for your members.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: No. No. They're all very high quality -- again, held to the same standards as any other degree-granting college in New York State.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

That's it for me.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, and we have one last Assemblymember, Assemblyman Otis.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you, Helene. And thank you, Donna and Drew.

Dr. President Bogner, a question to follow up on Deborah Glick's inquiry before about financial stress for private colleges. If you could go into a little more detail -- and I think there's sort of two categories that I'd ask you to talk about.

One is just for your average private institution in the state, they're not necessarily in a crisis mode, but my understanding is they have taken a financial hit during COVID. And maybe you could give a little more texture to that.

And then I'm very concerned about private colleges who are not surviving. Even before COVID, many private colleges were stressed. We've had closures across the state from some of the smaller private colleges. If you could just share your reflections on these kinds of situations as we sit here today.

DR. BOGNER: Yeah. So clearly the major stressor started early on with the

recession, and the Governor's Excelsior Scholarship did deepen it for some. For others, it was just recalibration that might have taken a year to push through in the marketplace. But the transfer-student market really faded dramatically because of Excelsior.

But I will say that we have some issues that get in our way, and one issue -- we should talk about it sometime -- is the definition of university. We are working on that legislatively a little bit, as well as with the Regents. We're the only state that has a very archaic definition of university, where you must have three academic disciplines at the doctoral level, which means you have to have three PhDs.

No other state has anything. Massachusetts was the last one. And the common definition is you have graduate programs. So that puts a lot of our institutions at a disadvantage.

And if you're SUNY, you're already in the umbrella of being in the State University

of New York. So the private colleges are the ones that are at risk.

So in the international market, a college means high school. And you're also at risk if you're on a border or if you're at the Pennsylvania border, and you're also at risk if you're dealing with international students or if you're dealing in the online environment.

So I'll just put that out there. We have to look at some of those things that could bolster New York.

The ones that are most at risk tend to be those that are liberal arts institutions, do not have professional programs, tend to be more rural, and don't have online programs. And it's very hard to be in the online space now. You can't compete, because you're competing nationally with Arizona State University or whatever.

So it is hard to come up with new revenue. And I think one of the solutions has to be how do we collaborate. And I'm a big believer in that. And if you want to

talk offline about that, I could. And I can tell you a little bit about some of the institutions that are looking at that and what CICU has done to try and encourage collaboration. And I personally have been involved in that and I've consulted on that.

ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you very much. Thank you for your testimony.

DR. BOGNER: Yeah, mm-hmm.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. And thank you both for being with us today and for your testimony.

DR. BOGNER: Thank you.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We move on to Panel D, On Point for College, Samuel Rowser, executive director, and Hispanic Federation, Diana Cruz, education policy director.

And just a reminder, you have three minutes to make your presentation. We already have circulated your written testimony. And we will then -- members will have three minutes to ask a question and have your answer within that three minutes of the

panel.

So Samuel, can you go first?

MR. ROWSER: Sure.

Thank you, Chair Weinstein and Chair Krueger, Chairs Glick and Stavisky of the Higher Education Committees, for this opportunity to talk with you guys about transforming lives and communities in the face of this pandemic.

I've been listening to a lot of the testimony today, and what I'd like to say is that On Point is the conduit that pulls all this together. We work with those students that need to get to those colleges.

We all know that poverty is a problem in the rural and the urban communities, and we know education is one of the most effective pathways out of poverty. We find, based on a Pew Charitable Trust study, that 90 percent of the students who earn a bachelor's degree are lifted out of poverty in the course of their lives.

Since On Point has been founded, in 1999, over 3,000 students have completed or

graduated from college, and another 3,000 have completed some other post-secondary credential. That means that there will be about $3 billion over their lifetime which they will spend in their communities.

What On Point does is we empower first-generation, opportunity youth, and financially challenged youth with an opportunity to achieve post-secondary access first, post-secondary success next, and then a career for life that will lift their families out of poverty. Without our assistance, these challenges can turn into barriers that lead students to stop out or to never attend college.

So On Point helps students develop a plan to address the challenges before they become stumbling blocks. We provide a broad range of services that we tailor to meet the needs of the individual student.

On Point, we're unique. We're unique in the nation for the holistic approach that we take when we're helping students. We offer services that no other organizations do

-- transportation, on-campus visits, we have Campus Angels. We take hundreds of students on college visits throughout New York State, and we help students fill out their FAFSA applications, their college applications. We work with students in foster care, housing-challenged. And we use volunteers to do wellness checks on our students. Especially during this pandemic, we need to check on them to make sure that they're okay.

An investment in On Point is also an investment in New York State's educational institutions. These students are contributing over $23 million in tuition, fees, room and board, in community colleges, in SUNY, CUNY and the private industry.

On Point students persist at a higher rate at the community colleges. We have a persistence rate of a little over 77 percent, while it's about 60 percent at the local community colleges. So if these students had not had On Point support, they wouldn't even have gone to college.

And so we believe that providing the

million dollars in state funding for the On Point program will continue to have an impact on our students.

So we thank you for this opportunity to speak, and we ask you to keep it On Point.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, Donna? I mean Diana.

MS. CRUZ: Diana, yeah. I just wanted to make sure that I can go next.

Thank you, committee members. I know it has been a long day. My name is Diana Cruz, and I am the education policy director at Hispanic Federation, and leader of the Latino Education Advocacy Directors Coalition, focused on supporting Latino students across New York State.

We appreciate you for hearing our testimony today, and we understand that since the pandemic began, Latino students have been hit disproportionately hard. And the health crisis is forcing many of them to decide between staying in school or working to help their families.

Hispanic Federation strongly urges the

Legislature to include and prioritize the following budget and legislative recommendations as they directly will benefit and remedy some of the issues that many of the Latinx college students are facing right now.

Speaking to the Senator Jose Peralta New York State DREAM Act, Hispanic Federation asks the Legislature to ensure that the $27 million for the New York State DREAM Act remains. We also believe that HESC needs additional funding to spearhead community outreach and partnership with community-based organizations to continue dispelling misinformation and expanding opportunities to apply.

Moreover, HESC alone cannot provide enough outreach. SUNY and CUNY also need funding to increase marketing and recruitment efforts to assist students.

Moving towards direct student programs, with the COVID-19 crisis many Latino students have been forced to drop out. Through the CUNY ASAP program, 44 percent of

Latino students and 85 percent of Pell or TAP recipients increase their chances to graduate. We urge the Legislature to restore the 2.5 million in funding to continue the impactfulness of this program.

Similarly, the CUNY Citizenship Now! program offers free immigration services to help individuals and families on the path to U.S. citizenship. The Legislature must restore the 20,000 in funding so that Latinx and other individuals in New York City can continue to receive this support.

Moreover, the Hispanic Leadership Institute is a critical program that helps to ensure that SUNY's leadership is reflective of the Latino students that they enroll. We strongly support the Hispanic Leadership Institute and urge that $150,000 in funding be restored to SUNY for this purpose.

As for our positions, Hispanic Federation strongly opposes the $200 tuition increase or future increases, as they will be detrimental for students, especially students from underserved backgrounds who are already

struggling to continue their higher education studies.

Our time to envision a tuition-free college is more critical now than ever, and we have been part of the immense work that the CUNY {inaudible} has been leading to make CUNY a free-tuition institution. We strongly advise that the state committee takes a stand on addressing tuition challenges for students now.

We're also concerned on how the pandemic will affect student borrowers, particularly for students who have been harmed by transcript withholding. Hispanic federation, along with Young Invincibles and partners at the New Yorkers for Responsible Lending and the Student Borrowers Protection Center, are calling on New York leaders to stand with student borrowers and end transcript withholding.

Finally, we must ensure that current and future funding is allocated equitably across SUNY and CUNY. This funding can address some of the challenges that our

students are facing now, and we must act on it now.

Thank you for your time, and I reemphasize how critical it is to focus on these priorities. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for being here.

We go to Assemblyman Stirpe.

ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to ask some questions of Sam at On Point. Hi, Sam, how are you doing?

MR. ROWSER: How are you doing, Al?

ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: I'm doing all right.

You know, as we've discussed before, you really do work in collaboration with a lot of the other opportunity programs. So can you explain to us a little bit who, who you work with, what programs and what you do?

MR. ROWSER: Well -- absolutely, Al. One of the things I would say On Point does is we're working with students, first-generation students, we're working at campuses all across the state, and we're

working with the EOP, HEOP, SEEK programs to make sure that those students get into the college -- and not just get in, but they are able to stay in college. We provide them transportation to and from. You know, during the pandemic we flipped over from taking them shopping to getting them laptops so they'd have, you know, access to getting their classwork done. We have Campus Angels on these campuses that are working also with our students to help them to be successful.

So it's really a full-service program. If I could give you an example, you know, if a student goes off the campus, they make sure they have health insurance. But what happens if you get a toothache and you need dental support? Well, we have a dentist that does pro bono work. We drive out, pick you up, bring you home, fix your teeth, take you back to school.

So it's providing those services that, you know, we normally think is okay for our children but other students don't have those same opportunities.

ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: So, I mean, the reality is the success of a lot of these opportunity programs sort of depends somewhat on the ability of On Point to sort of lift them up and fill in the cracks when somebody else doesn't do that.

You also, you know, I think, try to help kids get paid internship jobs and regular jobs, you know, in the summer and stuff like that. Can you talk a little bit about that?

MR. ROWSER: Absolutely. That's our third leg. Our first leg is access, our second leg is success, our third leg is career services. And we're helping students do cover letters, we're helping them do the actual mock interviews, and then we're helping them get paid internships. Our students don't have the ability to work for free -- they need income for their families -- so a paid internship is critical. And we don't do it in the standard way. We don't just place you at first. We vet the company, what do you want, vet the student,

what do you want, and then we put them together. And then once a week we go back and sit down with the company and the student just to make sure it's working out for both.

ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: Okay. Well, thank you. And I thank On Point for what they do. And maybe some day we'll convince New York State that On Point needs to be one of the opportunity programs.

Okay, thank you.

MR. ROWSER: Get New York State On Point.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We're going to go to the Senate now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I just want to double-check, does our Higher Ed chair have any questions?

SENATOR STAVISKY: No, ma'am.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Then I will go to Senator Robert Jackson, three minutes.

SENATOR JACKSON: Yeah, okay. Good afternoon. Yes, still afternoon. I thought

it was evening already.

But hi, and good to see both of you. And I listened to both of your presentations, and obviously I'm all in favor of it, especially when you talk about helping students and especially in your geographical areas. To the best of my knowledge, you're both representing Black and Latinx communities. And I'm an African-American myself, so believe me, I know, I've come up through the Upward Bound program and through EOP. So believe me, I do know.

And even I grew up on social services, my wife and I have broken that cycle and we have three beautiful girls that are 45, 40 and 34, an M.D., an assistant principal, and a daughter that's in the arts. So let me just tell you, I know how important education is, and community-based organizations that help us to move us in the right direction. And that's very, very important.

And for me, it was in high school, Erwin Goldberg, our track coach, in which many, many people of color, young men and

women, Black and Latinx and some Caucasian also, we feel that Erwin Goldberg was like our stepfather. That's how much he cared for us overall. And I say this to you, that that's very, very important.

And so the only question that I have is -- I can assume what your answer is, but I have to ask you. Obviously, you know what the situation is as far as the budget. I don't need to tell you. And we hope that we get all the money from the feds. And where necessary, we're going to have to raise revenue ourselves.

And so my question is that in order to make sure that we cover all of the programs that need to be covered, along with housing, food security and health, along with education, are your organizations willing to go along with the fact that we have to raise revenues from the wealthiest New Yorkers in order to survive this pandemic? That's my basic question. Because I don't have any questions about your programs; I'm sure that the intent in what you're doing is very, very

good, and I have no problems with that, I support you wholeheartedly.

But I have to ask that question in order to know whether or not we're going to have support in trying to do what we need to do in New York State.

MR. ROWSER: I would say absolutely, that if we want to be successful, we have to share the wealth. And the wealthy have it, so they need to share it with the rest.

MS. CRUZ: Senator Jackson, I think you're definitely, you know, posting a lot of -- a lot of -- a great question, and it is necessary to kind of take a stand.

I think at Hispanic Federation, for us, we know that that the money is needed, we know that all of this is the only way that we're going to be able to afford like the different programs and needs, is to get more money.

I think for us, it's more about thinking, what do we do with the money. Kind of going back to Senator Liu's question that he was presenting earlier on, what do we do

once we have this money? And I think that that's really where we're standing. As a partner, as a collaborative effort, we're always -- you know, we're working with over a hundred different organizations across New York State, and I think that's probably our strength, that we can offer more knowledge on, like, well, where does the money need to go once we have that.

And so I -- I know that that probably doesn't answer your question directly, but I can tell you that we are definitely committed to the work and we're committed to collaborating across the different sectors, so.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairs.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

There are no more questions for this panel, so thank you for being here with us today.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you both very much.

MS. CRUZ: Thank you for having us.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So next, there's a list of Panel E, but it should actually be Panel -- the next is just going to be the PBA of New York State, Ryan Law, and then we go to the final panel, the last five witnesses.

So, Ryan, please proceed.

OFFICER LAW: Good evening, respective members of the joint committee. My name is Ryan Law, and I am the president of the PBA of New York State, and I'm a University Police officer at SUNY New Paltz.

In the interests of time, and knowing that you have my testimony before you, I will summarize my testimony.

Simply put, our members in our union, and those in University Police, are on 2014 salaries -- 2014 salaries. Our members have been on the front lines of the pandemic response from the beginning. We continue to work through the pandemic response, and we will see this through to the end. We will be

here working to the end of this, when it comes to an end.

As most of you know, our vaccine sites and our testing sites, a lot of them are on SUNY campuses across the state. That puts our University Police officers on the front lines of this pandemic in every way imaginable, and so much so that our members are -- have contracted the virus while in the scope of their duties.

And beyond that, I have to mention, you know, they go home at the end of their shift not knowing if they're taking this virus home to their families and their loved ones. You know, and then they turn around, they come back for that next shift regardless of that, and they continue to stand that line, work through the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, side by side with our healthcare workers.

And they do it proudly. We know the risk, we know it's our job. But again, we're doing this on 2014 salaries.

Back in March of 2020, through the

arbitration process, our union was awarded a series of increases from 2015 through 2018. That pay bill is now known as the Governor's Program Bill No. 1 of 2021. And I am here to respectfully ask the Legislature to introduce Governor's Program Bill No. 1 of 2021 as soon as possible, and move our members off those 2014 salaries, as I think we can all agree that they deserve.

You know, our members, they don't forget to show up and work the testing sites, they don't forget to show up and work the vaccine sites. So I'm asking that our Legislature doesn't forget about our members, what we're doing in the field, continuing as they sit home and have discussions with their families about where we are with our salaries -- they continue to go out there and put their best foot forward and work this fight against the pandemic.

So with that, I'll conclude and certainly take any questions. Appreciate your time.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We have

Assemblyman Walczyk with a question.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Hey, Mr. Law.

First, thank you for your service to the people of the State of New York, and please pass that on to your membership. You guys do a phenomenal job for us and I think sometimes, as far as police agencies go, you know, sort of get a little bit forgotten. But we certainly haven't forgotten you here in Northern New York, and appreciate everything you do.

OFFICER LAW: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Yeah, absolutely. This came up in a prior budget hearing, and I just kind of wanted to get your thoughts. Do you think the state is trying to merge Park Police and Troopers?

OFFICER LAW: I know that there has been, you know, some back and forth on that. I think right now, you know, the commissioners are in middle of trying to figure that out. So as much as the Parks and the PBA as a whole has tried to receive a solid answer on that, I don't think that we

have.

And in regards to the Park Police officers, you know, they need that solid answer, they need to know what's going on with the future, they need to know what's going on with the future of the agency. You have Park Police officers that have worked there for, you know, many, many years. Our -- one of our -- the vice president and one of the directors on the board has been there for over 30 years.

So they're dedicated to the agency. They care about the future of the agency. So we are seeking to see, you know, exactly what the next move is, and hopefully we can get some answers in the near future ourselves.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: I wondered, along the same lines, what does your staffing look like for University Police? Are you seeing similar attrition rates? And are there academies scheduled, or are you getting answers there from the state?

OFFICER LAW: Sure, great question, and thank you.

We continue to have an attrition problem within University Police. Most people here have heard us talk about this in the past. The unfortunate part of having to talk about our pay bill and trying to get that satisfied and fulfilled is it has taken away from us trying to address you all on our current attrition problem within University Police.

Some things that add to that that we would like to speak to you all in the future about is centralization, our heart bill, a twenty-year retirement -- things that we're all familiar with and we've talked with you in the past about. Those things are a big part of why we continue to lose people to other agencies.

For example, SUNY Purchase last year lost approximately six members. It's $100,000 per member to get them through their first year. So that's $600,000 that SUNY Purchase has lost to see well-trained officers walk out the door and be ready and trained to walk in the door and work for

another agency that doesn't have to foot that bill.

And that puts the department back in the beginning stages of hiring and training and getting them through their first year. So --

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Thank you. My time is running out, but we appreciate you keeping our students safe, and please reach out any time.

OFFICER LAW: Thank you very much, Assemblyman. Appreciate your support.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So now we go from the Assembly to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Hi. Our first questioner is Senator Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. Real quick, Ryan. Senator Gounardes, I think Senator Savino and I co-primed your pay bill last year, and it will go in in one form or another probably -- you know, if it hasn't gone in already.

I just wanted you to emphasize the loss to the state in the training aspects.

You touched on it, but what happens to your members after they're trained?

OFFICER LAW: So what's different from all of us not being centralized, which would be a focus for us in the near future, is that we send our officers to the municipal academy nearest to where they're getting hired. Once they graduate the academy, they go directly into field training.

And that process, from hiring until they're on the road by themselves with not needing a field training officer, is approximately a year. To get through that first year of training, including salary and equipment, it costs a about $100,000 -- and I think I'm on the low side of that. I believe when I was working with the commissioner's office, they were near $120,000 per officer.

This has gotten to the point, Senator, where we have municipals and town PDs that basically poach from us. They wait for our officers to get trained. And when we're competing with what they are paying in salaries -- to my point of our 2014 current

salaries -- it's a no-brainer for a lot of these officers to leave.

And I'll give you a prime example. We had an 11-year lieutenant leave recently to go next door to a municipal and make -- I think it was about $33,000 more a year than what they make with us.

You couple that with no heart bill, no 20-year retirement, not being centralized -- it's almost becoming easier for them to walk away after getting trained and the state footing the bill to train them.

So this is a great concern of ours, and we know it's been a concern of yours. And we appreciate anything that you can do to work on it with us in the future.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

(Overtalk.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And may we have three minutes back on the clock for Senator Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you. Thank you. Hey, Ryan, how you doing?

OFFICER LAW: I'm doing good, Senator. Thank you for your time. I know it's been a long afternoon.

SENATOR JACKSON: Oh, I know. But listen. Clearly, my gosh, you have not had contract raises since -- you know, I've listened to what you had to say, and you're at SUNY New Paltz. And I was at SUNY New Paltz back in the '70s. So that's where I went, and I am a grad from SUNY New Paltz, and my oldest daughter also.

But clearly, Toby, you're there -- make sure that I'm signed on immediately to the Program Bill No. 1 of 2021. I clearly support the increase. Just knowing that you haven't had a raise and all the other issues that you talked about. So I wanted to let you know that. I mean, if you were talking about something else with respect to especially education, I don't -- this is not the same thing, in my opinion as -- I'm not going to ask you the same questions I asked the others, do they support to tax a little bit more of the wealthiest in order to fund

education. Education is a multi-billion-dollar --

OFFICER LAW: Sure.

SENATOR JACKSON: But when it comes to just your pay bill, I say to you I support it. Toby, make sure that I'm on it also, okay?

So Ryan, I don't have any questions of you, but I wanted to let you --

SENATOR STAVISKY: You'll send in a whatever you call it?

SENATOR JACKSON: Yeah. Sure.

I want you to know that I support the pay bill and I will advocate for it in the Democratic Conference.

OFFICER LAW: Senator, I appreciate that very much. And on behalf of our members within the union, and certainly those of University Police, thank you very much, that it means a lot.

SENATOR JACKSON: You're welcome.

OFFICER LAW: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I think the Senate's done.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, and the Assembly is done.

But I also want to join my colleagues, Ryan, in thanking you for the efforts of your members all the time, but particularly this past -- it's almost the past year, in helping to keep our campuses safe and helping with the COVID-19 vaccine distributions and testing that's happening on campuses. Thank you.

OFFICER LAW: Absolutely. Thank you for the kind words, and thank you for your support. Take care.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So now we go on to our last panel. And it is CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities, Lennyn Jacob, secretary; Friends of Liberty Inc., Shawn Denise Landry, president; APACS, Inc., Michael Molina, president; SUNY Albany, a student from SUNY Albany, Ahmat Adam Djouma; and Center for Food Safety, Jean Halloran.

So if we could start with the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities,

that would be great.

MS. JACOB: Buenos tardes. Good afternoon, distinguished members of the State Legislature. My name is Lennyn Jacob. I'm a student activist and most proud to be a loving mother of a neurodiverse son with autism. I served for 12 years as a teaching assistant for children with disabilities with the DOE in the Bronx and chose to further my education at Bronx Community College, BCC. That's right, the Bronx is in the house.

I proudly serve as the treasurer of the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities, CCSD, at BCC chapter, majoring in nuclear medicine technology. I was recently elected as secretary for the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities, CCSD, the university-wide group that represents all CUNY students with disabilities. Who are we? CCSD.

According to CUNY's Office of Institutional Research, there are more than 1,800 CUNY students with disabilities enrolled in degree programs in my proud

borough known as Da Bronx. We all rely on reasonable accommodations from our colleges to have an equal opportunity to succeed, especially in the area of distance learning made necessary because of COVID-19.

The enrollment of students with disabilities at CUNY is at an all-time high, with more than 11,000 of us enrolled at our university. At CUNY, our disabled student enrollment has grown by more than 50 percent over the past two decades -- and yet our state funding for crucial accommodations and support services for these students has remained flat over the past 27 years. It breaks my heart.

The CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities supports the New York State Education Department's $7 million budget request to enhance support services for students with disabilities statewide. This new source of funding would supplement, not replace, existing college and university support for students with disabilities.

CCSD enthusiastically supports the

State Education Department's budget request for students with disabilities that would be the first of its kind in the nation, to yet again allow New Yorkers to lead the way for the rest of the country.

My sincerest hope is that this would also increase the likelihood of success for my son and others like him, who I encourage to come to CUNY to better their lives and the lives of their families.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Can we go on to Friends of Liberty.

MS. LANDRY: Yes. Good evening, and thank you, committee members.

Liberty Partnership Program serves more than 15,000 marginalized and oppressed students across New York State. We are the only state-funded dropout prevention program and have been since we were established in 1988 under Section 612, subdivision 6, of the Education Law, to address the significant dropout rate among New York youths.

The program and staff provide a safety

net for at-risk students and their families. We support the whole student, their social, emotional and academic needs. We were doing this before the pandemic.

Liberty has been here, as I said, for 50 years. We appreciate and are grateful for all of the support we've received during that time. We also are dependent and wouldn't have survived without contract extensions for program year 2019-2020. This extension saved programs from closing and limited furloughs and reductions in staff. This extension provided that safety net that we talk about for all the at-risk students during the pandemic.

However, the delayed funding and the 20 percent withholdings that we received and just received payment in January of 2021 greatly influences our continuity and limits our ability to plan and to spend our funds in a way that's most effective for our students.

We're asking for a contract extension for program year 2020-2021 to continue to support social-emotional interventions

without interruptions.

We provide families and community engagement services and college prep activities. And if New York receives additional federal support, we urge important investments into our students. Liberty prepares students to give back academic and economic capital in New York State. We have not stopped giving those services since the pandemic has begun, and we'd like to be included under the guidance of Executive Order 202.6 to qualify as essential service workers. Item Number 8 and Item Number 12 include us in that. We're not technically DOE -- Department of Education employees, but under Priority 1b we are ready and willing to go back into the schools as soon as possible.

So again, thank you. We're hoping for an increase in budget, a contract extension, and essential worker categorization.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We now go to APACS, Michael Molina.

MR. MOLINA: Thank you very much.

Good evening, everyone. It's good to see you all. Thank you for being here, and thank you for all that you do.

I also want to just give particular thanks to Higher Ed Chairs Glick and Stavisky and to the Senate Finance chair and Ways and Means chair, Chairs Krueger and Weinstein, for their assistance in helping our STEP and CSTEP programs to get their funds flowing in December. Yes, in December, six months into the fiscal year. So thank you for your support, and thank you for your comments.

Today, again, I'm here as president of APACS, which is the professional association of CSTEP and STEP directors and staff throughout New York State. The evening -- the day has been long, so I promise I will be brief.

What I would like to say, first and foremost, is that we are requesting a 20 percent increase in our funding for STEP and CSTEP programs. And this is in keeping with a pledge made by Speaker Heastie to double the funding of CSTEP and STEP and of

all of the opportunity programs.

I think the one thing I think that -- I hope we can all agree about is that all of the opportunity programs in New York State are the crown jewels of our education system, without doubt.

As you all know, the COVID pandemic, which arrived in March -- March 6th, I remember the date well -- has disproportionately impacted Black and Brown communities. Our students have had to endure financial instability, resulting in instances where students have been forced to work long hours to help support their families, which of course impacts on academics.

Our students have had technology shortcomings, insofar as both hardware and internet access is concerned, and this is not just in urban areas. This is in both urban and non-urban areas. We've had issues in Central New York where STEP students have had problems accessing WiFi. So that's become an issue.

But we have intervened, we've been

forced to intervene in the area of mental health and wellness issues. We have provided support to our students to help fill the gaps of virtual learning, and we have provided training to our students as well in how to learn in a virtual environment. Everyone thinks that you go virtual and then it just happens. Well, that's not the way that it works.

So I'm very proud of the work that we've done, how we have pivoted. And I'm really proud of the 100 STEP and CSTEP programs, their staffs, the institutions that sponsor them, and the fact that we've provided stability to 20,000 students and their families. So --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank --

MR. MOLINA: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. The time has expired.

MR. MOLINA: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We have your written testimony.

MR. MOLINA: Very good, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next I'm going to call on the SUNY student, Ahmat Djouma. And Ahmat, if you would like, I'll tell you when there's 30 seconds left so you'll know about the time to conclude.

But you're on.

MR. DJOUMA: Thank you. Good afternoon to the members of the Legislature. My name is Ahmat, and I am a student at University at Albany, majoring in political science with a sociology minor. I am also a student who is blind, registered with the Office of Disability Resource Center.

It is my hope that my education at University at Albany would be on a path for a career in law or government. My achievements and academic successes are all due to the support of many like On Point and colleges -- and colleges -- and the Disabilities Offices in colleges.

With the increasing number of students with disabilities in colleges, many of these offices are underresourced, and enhancing the support funding request would help them in

providing support for equal education.

The Disabilities Offices go above and beyond in supporting a student. And with limited resources, it's become very difficult for them to do so. These supports include but are not limited to providing accommodations like Brailling services, accessible textbooks, ASL interpretation, making course materials accessible and providing professional training to instructors.

I am hopeful this year that the budget -- that the Legislature will provide the funding that is greatly needed for college Disabilities Offices to continue providing this support. On behalf of the students with disabilities, I strongly support the State Education Department's "Enhancing Support and Services for Postsecondary Education Success of Students with Disabilities" funding proposal of $7 million in its 2021-2022 Executive Budget request.

Thank you, and I hope you all will

support this proposal on behalf of the students with disabilities. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Next we go to the last witness before we have questions: Center for Food Safety, Jean Halloran.

MS. HALLORAN: Hi. And thank you all very much for hanging in to the bitter end here.

I'm from the Center for Food Safety, which is an organization that works -- a national organization that works for safe food and a safe environment. And I'm here to talk to you about something completely different than what you have discussed for the rest of the day, which is our impending crisis of loss of effectiveness of antibiotics.

And the reason I'm discussing that here is because of the Higher Ed Committees' responsibilities for regulation of veterinarians. Veterinarians are critical in this issue. It was a surprise to me, and I think it's a surprise to many people that

two-thirds of the antibiotics produced in the United States are given not to sick people, but to relatively healthy animals being raised in industrial farming conditions, in order to prevent them from becoming sick.

This is something that has got to change. We are overusing antibiotics, and the more you use them, the less effective they are. We already have a crisis where more than 100,000 people are dying of infections that used to be cured by antibiotics in the United States.

This is of course not matched by the COVID deaths, but this could go beyond the COVID totals. A research outfit in the U.K. has estimated perhaps 10 million deaths a year globally if this problem isn't addressed.

So Assemblywoman Rosenthal and Senator Kavanagh have developed legislation that would limit the use of antibiotics to just treating sick animals and would not allow use in New York State for disease prevention. And we urge you to incorporate

their bill in this year's state budget, in order to preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for the future.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We're going to go to Assemblymember Glick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Just a couple of comments, and then one question for Michael.

First of all, I very much support the State Education Department's attempt to increase dramatically our commitment to $7 million for students with disabilities. We have seen a growing number of students working and seeking to be professionals, and they need the education. And the schools have not had the kind of support that they need. So it will certainly be in my chair letter to the Speaker, and we will advocate for it as strongly as possible.

But I have a question for Michael. Thank you so much for being here at the end of the day. CSTEP and STEP programs are incredible.

I'm just wondering, you said -- now, the withholding from the 20 percent from last year, you finally -- did everybody actually get that in December? Or are there still programs that have not had payment out of SED because the Division of the Budget has not released it?

MR. MOLINA: My understanding is that the latter, that there are still institutions that have not received their final payments. And what SED did, as you know, is to withhold 20 percent of the final payment. So that's what they've done.

So it's still -- so some institutions still have payments pending, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: If there's any way that you can find out who they are or give them to us, we certainly will ask SED about that.

But if you have members who can raise their hands -- because sometimes you get different answers. I'll ask them, I'll get the answer from you, and hopefully they'll actually look the same, and we will try to

get any of those dollars freed up as quickly as possible. Because that money should be available out of -- you know, we've been told that it's been released, so we have to be sure that that happens.

And as far as the 20 percent increase, it's under discussion for our one-house. Certainly Speaker Heastie has -- we have always been committed to increasing. And when we have flat funding, it's a good time to go ahead and add to it. So assuming we get money from the feds -- you know, that's the big wishing and hoping. Without that, I think we're kind of -- it will be a little bit tough. But if we get federal dollars coming in, we will press very hard for that.

And I want to thank you and all of your members for the great work they've been doing.

MR. MOLINA: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We'll go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Toby Stavisky, chair of Higher Ed.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

First, Michael, real quick, thank you. Your members were very effective in contacting us. And if -- would you send a copy to us too? Because we want to be helpful.

MR. MOLINA: Absolutely.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Real quick, let me just thank the CUNY coalition for Students with Disabilities.

I am so proud to represent Queens College in my district in the State Senate. And they have a really great group of folks. And I truly miss seeing Dr. Rosa and Charmaine and Steve and all of the people from Queens College. I know they're part of the entire group.

And I'm delighted that the Executive did not cut the CUNY LEADS program, because it is such a wonderful program. And we too in our budget -- it will be in my recommendation that we do the best we can for the coalition.

But getting back to Michael, to what

do you attribute the unfairness in that distribution, in the 25 percent withholding?

MR. MOLINA: You know what? It's hard to say. And this is part of the problem, Senator. And that is that NYSED is completely incommunicado. They don't give you information.

These -- these -- you know, this 20 percent -- these 20 percent cuts are announced informally. No one wants to put anything in writing, so it's all very mysterious.

And I was listening to the testimony throughout the day and people were talking about 5 percent cuts, and we got 20 percent? I'm a little confused by that. So -- but seriously, we don't get much information from NYSED, very, very little information throughout this whole process -- throughout this entire fiscal year. And by that I mean contracts and disbursements for the current year and the final payments for last year.

SENATOR STAVISKY: These are really important programs, because they work. And

very shortsighted, I must say, because these students -- as I said in previous testimony, that with a degree they're going to earn more money and they're going to stay in the community, participate, pay more in taxes. And we've got to do the best we can for really all of the opportunity programs, but I know CSTEP and STEP.

Thank you.

MR. MOLINA: Thank you, Senator.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, we have Assemblywoman Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Still here. Thank you, Chair Weinstein.

Thank you to all the participants. To Michael Molina, I remember you when your hair was darker, as I used to run a CSTEP program out of -- a CSTEP and STEP out of NYCOM.

And so I just wanted to say that I'm sure the Speaker will work with -- make sure the Assembly does do their best in getting the additional funds that CSTEP and STEP

programs need. And thank you to all the panelists.

I'm done, Chair Glick. Thank you very much. I'm tired now.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. I don't know, Helene, should you or I take bets on whether Harvey or Robert Jackson has something different in their rounds?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Maybe they can, you know, merge their time. So I think you're going to Senator Jackson, right?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I am going to Senator Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, thank you. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, you're on mute, Robert.

SENATOR JACKSON: I'm not now, right?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Not now.

SENATOR JACKSON: I can say good evening to everyone.

But let me just say I want to thank you for coming in and sticking -- even though you're the last panel, you're a very, very

important panel, especially when you talk about students with special needs and disabilities.

And believe me, I do know, I do have a relative that is now totally blind as a result of retinitis pigmentosa. And so, believe me, I do understand the needs of children with IEPs and children with disabilities, and adults.

And so I just wanted to say to all of you that I support you. And as far as the money that I think, Ahmat, you said $1 million -- is that what you said?

MR. DJOUMA: $7 million.

SENATOR JACKSON: How much did you say again?

MR. DJOUMA: $7 million.

SENATOR JACKSON: Seven million. When you're talking about a $192 billion budget, $7 million is a piece of dust in that amount of money.

So let's push for that. And Toby, I'm standing with you as the chair of Higher Education to try to do what we can do for the

children and students with disabilities. Okay, Toby? Let me know.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Absolutely.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, everyone.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Robert.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Thank you, Robert.

And we have Harvey Epstein from the Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you all. And I want to thank you all for being here so late in the day. And for all of my colleagues, Students with Disabilities Advocacy Day is February 25th. So if you have some time that morning, we have -- we'll do a virtual press event and we're going to push for this $7 million for students with disabilities. It's a really important issue that we haven't seen an increase in funding in so long. So I'd love to have as much support from my colleagues.

And I want to appreciate both Chair Glick and Chair Stavisky about like pushing

this issue in their letters. It means so much to everyone.

And so I just -- I just would love to hear from one of the students or some of the students kind of how has COVID had serious impacts on learning and remote learning for students with disabilities. Are there unique challenges that the students have faced? And what, as the State Legislature, should we be doing to ameliorate those issues?

Ahmat, if you wanted to go or --

MR. DJOUMA: Certainly.

I want to start by saying I think that generally students who actually -- who can't say they usually have access to technology and they access online information, everything being digital -- everything being digital, so digital accessibility is very important.

And when something is not designed digitally to be accessible, that automatically, you know, kind of -- you know, it's basically -- they're not able to participate if something is not designed with

accessibility in mind.

And then also, you know, I think that this $7 million funding is also necessary because if -- just because you have a document or a textbook sent to you doesn't make it automatically accessible. You need someone to be able to work that document to make it accessible.

So I think in terms of COVID, I think it's -- everything being online, we have to deal with digital online barriers.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Well, thank you for doing that, thank you for raising that. So you think there's -- it's just a funding issue, or are there structural changes that need to be made that we could do legislatively?

MR. DJOUMA: I think that -- well, there is a funding issue where I think that funding is needed to be able to train staff or instructors that -- for teachers of students with disabilities to be able to design things that are accessible.

But I think that there are some areas

I think we can go further in. I think also educating our future generation when it comes to designing websites or, you know, things like that, they know how to design things that are accessible.

And I think that we can go further, but I think we can start with that $7 million and being able to train the staff and instructors on how they should make the content accessible.

And, you know, also providing other services like college transition, if a student is trying to transfer to a different college, you know, getting the necessary information on what needs to be done.

But I think that there are certain things -- I think changes that need to be done, and I think the Legislature could take certain action in terms of, I think, setting guidelines for digital accessibility, I think.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you. Thank you so much.

And thank you all, and thank you for

being here. Thank you, Chairs.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Senator Krueger, and then back to the Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Great. So I also want to thank all of you for being here tonight, and to voice the -- though I usually stay pretty quiet during all of these hearings, to say it's amazing to me that New York State is putting so little money into these programs, the STEP, CSTEP, Liberty, the opportunity programs.

Because I've been studying what works to get people out of poverty for pretty much my whole life, and the answer is education, and college in particular. Even a couple of years of college makes a giant difference in whether their families move out of poverty forever or not.

So you look at these programs New York has developed -- and thank you, Michael, for all your advocacy to help educate everyone about the importance of specific programs for students with special needs -- you can either

invest a tiny amount of money in supporting their ability to get into college and move through college, or you can check off a box somewhere that will show how many years we will need to subsidize them and their families because they end up in poverty.

And so the cost/benefit difference is so radical, so radical in what these programs do and can do, that I think it is just worth repeating for the record -- even though everybody here already knows this -- what a phenomenal set of programs we have, and yet we do starve them to death, and we get all excited when we don't start off with a cut at the beginning of budget season.

So yay, we didn't start off with a cut. But imagine how many generations of people wouldn't have remained in poverty if we had been investing more in exactly these programs with exactly these kinds of outcomes for my lifetime.

So thank you all for the work you're doing and for being students who are brave enough to fight for your rights even in

really tough times. Because again, a little help will change your future, your family's future.

Thank you for letting me go on a rant briefly. Thank you.

Helene.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, thank you.

We go to Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you. And so I want to thank my colleagues. I want to thank these witnesses. It's been a very long day, and I know that you've been waiting for a chance to testify.

And I also just want to say, for those of you who are students with disabilities, I started off years ago as a disabilities services provider long before you were born.

And, you know, at that time I worked with colleagues, I was in Washington, D.C., at Gallaudet at the time, and I worked with colleagues who were in the SUNY schools. And while there have been improvements, we still haven't come as far as we need to in SUNY.

You know, the SUNY schools and the

City University schools have just not funded disability services enough. So they've kept people back, they haven't been able to provide the support that they need. And with -- that $7 million could go a long way, and it really should be just a first step in making our schools more accessible for students with disabilities.

So I want to thank you very much for your testimony and to tell you that you have a friend in the Assembly. I work very closely with Assemblymember Epstein and others to support students with disabilities, and, you know, we're here for you.

So thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you, Assemblywoman Simon.

And I just want to join my colleagues -- first of all, you have many friends in the Assembly, not just Simon and Epstein, and in the Senate --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And in the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I want to join

my colleagues in thanking you for being here and spending the day with us. I think it is good that you are the last panel, because it's your comments that are going to stay with us as we end this hearing.

So with that, I want to announce that the Higher Ed hearing is now concluded. And tomorrow morning at 9:30, please join us for the Mental Health hearing.

Thank you all.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you all very much.

(Whereupon, the budget hearing concluded at 6:23 p.m.)