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

JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING

In the Matter of the
2022-2023 EXECUTIVE BUDGET ON
HIGHER EDUCATION

Virtual Hearing
Conducted Online via Zoom

February 7, 2022
11:02 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

Assemblywoman Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn

Assemblyman Mark Walczyk

Senator John C. Liu

2022-2023 Executive Budget
Higher Education
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PRESENT: (Continued)

Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

Senator Diane J. Savino

Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy

Assemblyman Harry B. Bronson

Assemblywoman Rebecca A. Seawright

Senator Pete Harckham

Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman

Assemblyman Harvey Epstein

Senator Andrew Gounardes

Assemblyman John T. McDonald III

Senator James Gaughran

Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon

Senator Gustavo Rivera

Assemblyman Erik M. Dilan

Assemblywoman Judy Griffin

Assemblyman Victor M. Pichardo

Senator Robert Jackson

Assemblyman Kevin A. Cahill

Assemblyman William Colton

Senator Sue Serino

Assemblyman Robert Smullen

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PRESENT: (Continued)

Assemblywoman Vivian E. Cook

Assemblywoman Phara Souffrant Forrest

Assemblyman Garett Gandolfo

Senator Jeremy A. Cooney

Assemblywoman Latoya Joyner

Senator James Tedisco

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

And today we begin the seventh in a series of hearings conducted by the joint fiscal committees of the Legislature regarding the Governor's proposed budget for fiscal year 2022-2023. And the hearings are conducted pursuant to the New York State Constitution and the Legislative Law.

Today the Assembly Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee will hear testimony concerning the Governor's budget proposal for higher education.

So I'm going to introduce now the members of the Assembly who are here, and then turn it over to my cochair, Liz Krueger, to introduce her colleagues from the Senate.

So we have with us our Higher Ed chair, Assemblywoman Glick; Assemblywoman Bichotte Hermelyn, Assemblyman Bronson, Assemblywoman Buttenschon, Assemblyman Epstein, Assemblywoman Seawright,

Assemblywoman Simon.

And why don't I turn first to my ranker, Ed Ra, to introduce the members of his conference who are here.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Good morning.

We are joined by Assemblyman Mark Walczyk, our ranker on the Higher Education Committee, as well as Assemblyman Smullen.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, and now to -- and I thought I saw Assemblywoman Gandolfo here a moment ago, but maybe not anymore.

Senator Krueger, if you could introduce your colleagues.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much. Great.

So I want to introduce Senator Pete Harckham, Senator John Liu, Senator Jim Gaughran, Senator Jeremy Cooney, Senator Gustavo Rivera, Senator Andrew Gounardes. Of course the chair of Higher Education, Toby Stavisky.

And I will turn it over to my ranker on Finance to introduce his conference, and

that is Tom O'Mara.

SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you, Chairwoman Krueger.

On our side of the aisle we are joined by Senator Sue Serino and Senator Jim Tedisco. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Great.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

And we also have been joined by Assemblywoman Fahy.

So I think most of the members have been in hearings before, but let me just go through the time limits, and also for the witnesses coming up.

Governmental witnesses will have 10 minutes to make a presentation. They don't have to use all of their 10 minutes; we already have the testimony submitted.

Nongovernmental witnesses will have three minutes to present their testimony when we get to that.

The chairs of the relevant committees for the hearing will have 10 minutes and a second round of three minutes if needed.

Ranking members of these committees will get five minutes each, and all other members of the relevant committees that are here, both Assemblymembers and Senators, will get three minutes each.

And as I mentioned, the written testimony has been submitted, distributed to the members and the Senators. So there's no need to read your testimony. Summarization is always encouraged.

And just a reminder, really to the legislators, that the time limits are for both the question and please leave more than a second or two for the witnesses to answer.

With that, I'd like to now welcome our first witness. This hearing is being conducted with the Assembly as the main sponsor of today's -- or the first sponsor of the hearing. So after the first witnesses -- after witnesses testify, we'll go to the Assembly and then to the Senate, and back and forth until we have -- are either exhausted or have exhausted all of the questions.

So we go now to the State University

of New York, Interim Chancellor Deborah Stanley.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Good morning, Chairpersons Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky and Glick, as well as all members of the Senate, Assembly and staff that are here today.

I am Deborah Stanley, and since January 15th I have had the privilege of serving as the Interim Chancellor of the State University of New York. I've come to know several of you over the course of my 25 years as President at SUNY Oswego, and it's good to see you today.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I'm pleased to have this opportunity to discuss Governor Kathy Hochul’s vision for the SUNY system for both the 2022-'23 year and beyond, and to share the perspectives of our students, faculty, and staff on the proposed Executive Budget.

I'm joined today by both Bob Megna, SUNY's interim Chief Financial Officer and President of the Rockefeller Institute of

Government, and Cheryl Hamilton, SUNY's Student Advocate and Executive Director of the Educational Opportunity Program, who heads our work on many of the most important issues that ensure student success.

Before I begin my budget remarks, I'd like to take a moment to thank all of you and our other partners in the Legislature, Governor Hochul, the Division of the Budget, New York State Department of Health, and New York's federal Congressional delegation.

As you can imagine, the past two years have been an extraordinarily trying time for the SUNY community. Support from you and our other partners through formal guidelines and expert information, as well as financial infusions, made it possible for our campuses to keep their doors open, for students to safely return to campus to continue their academic and extracurricular activities, and for our institutions to contribute to the battle against COVID-19, especially our hospitals.

This was done through caring for

COVID-19 patients, producing groundbreaking research, as well as hosting mass testing and vaccination sites on our campuses.

In terms of the Executive Budget, it's important to note the atmosphere in which it's proposed. The pandemic came at a time of major change for higher education. It brought into even greater light concerns over access and affordability that have been expressed in the general public, as you know, and by prospective students, especially those from underserved communities.

This is a particular concern of mine, and one I know you share, as SUNY is respected as one of the greatest institutions for creating upward social mobility. In addition, the pandemic accelerated enrollment challenges for many institutions of postsecondary education, including in SUNY.

However, I'd like to point out that not every sector was affected equally. In fact, our University Centers and many four-year degree-granting institutions kept enrollment stable and maybe even had modest

growth in the number of students they serve.

Finally, the pandemic hastened changes needed in how higher education serves these students. Studies indicate that by 2027 -- and you know that's almost upon us -- 70 percent of all new jobs created in the United States will require postsecondary education. And the students of today also tell us that they seek a different approach to receiving their education. I want you to know that SUNY is on the forefront of delivering.

I share these realities because they are central to understanding Governor Hochul's vision for making SUNY the greatest comprehensive system of public higher education in the nation. We share her vision and know that with the right assets, investments, and partnerships, we can achieve it. SUNY cannot continue with the same policies and practices of the past.

We are on a path to continue SUNY's academic leadership in the world. And as we move forward, we recognize that many of the

changes will need your partnership, because they will need to be supported by legislative action.

Given how comprehensive and complex SUNY is, with 64 colleges and universities, including research and doctoral-granting institutions, four-year and master's-granting institutions, 30 community colleges, three hospitals, a law school, a veterans' home, and partnership with a national laboratory, change does not come overnight.

Recognizing this, the Governor has directed SUNY and its partners to work collaboratively across the sectors to develop a wide-ranging and detailed action plan. Objectives include increasing enrollment and redesigning our academic models to meet the needs of every student, including not only students straight out of high school but also the returning professionals who need flexibility and affordability to earn a certificate or degree to advance or change their career.

This year's Executive Budget is the

foundation to begin that work, and it is a strong foundation. This proposed budget is the most significant Executive proposal of investment into public higher education in more than 20 years, and it underscores the Governor's understanding of and commitment to the ways that SUNY is inextricably linked to the well-being of New York's economy, its workforce, its healthcare system, and so much more.

This is something which those of us who have worked with Governor Hochul know she has been interested in over the years.

We respectfully urge the Legislature to support all funding provisions pertaining to public higher education in the Executive Budget proposal, including:

Elimination of the TAP gap this year, in '22-'23. We were delighted to see action in the last budget to close the TAP gap within three years. The TAP gap drains tens of millions of dollars annually from campus budgets, and we applaud the Executive's proposal to close it for good this year.

Funding maintenance and new capital projects. To attract students and provide the excellence that allows our graduates to compete with graduates from across the state and the country, our campuses need the classroom and lab space that other institutions provide. The Executive's plan will provide SUNY campuses with the resources necessary for much-needed and shovel-ready projects.

Increasing faculty. Just as SUNY needs physical assets, we need the ability to attract world-class faculty who reflect the diversity of this state.

Implementing the 100 percent community college floor. Our greatest enrollment challenges are in the community college sector, where enrollment ebbs and flows in New York State as it does nationally. This will stabilize funding.

Establishing a real Part-Time TAP Program, and also reinstating TAP for incarcerated individuals. This expansion will provide financial assistance to those

part-time students juggling work and childcare needs, and will also help incarcerated individuals reduce recidivism.

Expanding the opportunity programs. We did great work last year creating 1,000 new spots in EOP, establishing medical EOP, and increasing financial support for every student. The 10 percent increase this year will give us even more opportunity for students to succeed.

Reforming the academic program review process is important for us to get our work done.

Providing SUNY hospital and mental health workers a "Heroes Grant." It's imperative to show our appreciation.

I look forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature to find collaborative ways that we can implement this vision for SUNY and ensure continued and increased success of the SUNY system.

Before I close to take your questions, I'd like to note that this year’s SUNY alumni legislative class is one of the largest in

history. In all, 63 of you and your colleagues in the Senate and Assembly graduated with one or more SUNY degrees. Several more have taken courses at our campuses. Your success is something we're very proud of. Thank you for all you do in support of our students, our faculty, and our staff.

I'd be happy to discuss the Executive Budget proposals previously noted, and any other items of interest to you, in greater detail. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. And thank you for -- we got the time clock to work, and thank you for staying within our prescribed time limit. That hopefully will be a message all will observe.

So now we go to our Assembly Higher Ed chair, Assemblywoman Glick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss some issues with you. And I'll try very hard to just use the 10 minutes and not come back.

But the Governor's budget offers an

increase in operating aid for the purpose of increasing full-time faculty, which we know is key to supporting students and seeing that they get out of school in a timely fashion.

But it funds -- after years, I'd say decades of disinvestment, it funds 340 full-time faculty. It's a huge system. If you looked at it, 64 campuses, you might get, I don't know, five or six per campus.

I'm wondering what we would need to do to dramatically increase the operating aid in order to ensure that you could hire and be competitive with other schools in hiring the best.

And how many professors are you short at this -- overall?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, we are very grateful for the $53 million call in the budget. It is incredible for us to see that included.

However, it also includes the fact that the campuses will have to undertake the fringe benefits. And that will reduce the number of faculty that we can of course

afford. As you rightly make the computation, that it would be about 340 new full-time faculty. I have a couple of issues here.

So if in fact the Legislature could see your way clear to take that provision away about paying for the fringes, I think we could probably move up full-time faculty somewhere near 500. That would give us a really good chance to do the things we need to do with new program development, but especially in attracting underserved faculty -- underrepresented faculty to our midst.

As you know, our students have risen across the system, in underrepresented students. And they tell us very clearly, often, that they want to see in the classrooms people who have succeeded but people who look like them, people who have done the work that they intend to do.

And we are trying very hard. It's going to take enormous work, but we have in fact a brilliant program at SUNY right now called PRODiG that has hired, to date,

136 new faculty. And it will continue to hire underrepresented faculty and women into the sciences and STEM programs. But we need more work.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: We need to look at the pipeline issues. And --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you. You know, my time is going to evaporate, so I want to go on to a couple of other areas, and maybe I will come back.

You talked about the capital, but we don't now have a five-year plan. Is SUNY going to propose that the action plan include a five-year capital plan like we do for the MTA in the downstate region?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: We hope so, yes. Right now it calls for $550 million a year. We know that when we look at deferred maintenance and the backlog of projects, that it's more -- the need is more like $850 million a year.

So with the proposal this year to take monies that have been in dormant programs and

move them into the capital program for this year, we believe that will be a much-needed infusion and it will bring us a long way to satisfying the need this year.

But we would like to see that happen for all five years, to have it be a five-year program.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

The Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act requires that agencies implement strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and review all decisions to see how they are consistent with the pollution reduction goals and ensure that those decisions don't disproportionately burden disadvantaged communities.

So I am wondering, where is SUNY -- since we have been told many times that SUNY has 40 percent of the state's buildings, where is SUNY on these requirements? Because they actually are requirements of state agencies. And, you know, while you are a higher education -- broad-based higher education institutions, you still are viewed

budgetarily as a state agency.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, we are certainly looking at the plan just released, the scoping plan for that act, and we're looking at that very carefully.

But SUNY is really ahead on this game. And yes, we do have 40 percent of the physical assets of the State of New York, but we also have requirements of plans from the campuses for every proposed project. Every new building proposed, every major restoration proposed must meet carbon zero, net zero requirements before it gets the green light to go forward.

We have -- we're working with NYSERDA on training issues to look at geothermal wells and heat pumps usage on campuses, to reduce the need for electricity as we move forward.

So we have many strategies in place right now, and have had for many years, to reduce greenhouse gases and reduce energy usage. So we've reduced energy usage over the last 30 years, and greenhouse gases have

been reduced about 20 percent in the last 10 years.

You know, most presidents in the SUNY system are signatories to the college and university presidents climate initiative, and that's a national initiative that has more than 600 schools signed on, with requirements of reporting every year what you do on campus to reduce your carbon footprint. And it's pretty -- pretty strict. As you go forward, you want to see how you line up with other campuses. And we're all, I think, competing with each other to be the best in class.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Well, that's very good to hear, and we will look forward to more information on that.

You know, the Governor has indicated that she wants to expand the healthcare cohort within the state -- you know, really generate 20 percent more people working in healthcare. A lot of that will be nurses. And our nursing programs, which SUNY has many, usually have to turn people away.

How oversubscribed are you? And

what's the demand? And I believe the restriction is largely on nurse educators, the limit of nurse educators. Where do you think you are, and what do we have to do in order to help the Governor's goal of increasing healthcare professionals?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, I know the answer about what we need. I don't know the details about numbers, of exactly where we are.

But you're right about nurse educators. It's pretty difficult to get nurses to -- into the programs. We are going to have to incent that pipeline a lot better than we do to get them into the programs.

But one of the problems has been with accredited programs and getting those programs approved through the state processes and the professional processes..

So we've taken a look at that. Some of the processes have changed, and we need to make sure that we can get our campuses developing programs to train nurse educators and that those programs will be approved.

Once they're approved we can, I think, span it across the state and incent more nurses to go into additional education to become nurse educators.

That will help us have the faculty available to train more nurses. Without that, we're not going to get to where we need to get to in the state.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: We would also like to know -- it's great that we've been able to increase EOP. We would like to know what is the demand. We don't expect you to have that at your fingertips, but if your folks could get us the information.

How many applications do you get that you have to turn away?

And I will cede my 6 seconds and come back for a brief three. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Great. We've been joined by Assemblyman McDonald.

And now to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

We've been joined by Senator Diane Savino and Senator Robert Jackson. I think

that's it since last time.

And our first questioner will be our chair of Higher Ed, Toby Stavisky, for 10 minutes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Sorry, I was muted. Which is a hard thing to do, I think, except on a computer.

President -- I think of you as president. But Chancellor, congratulations on your appointment. And I'm one of those folks who's known you for many years. I was up in Oswego about 10, 12 years ago for a hearing. And we really all of us thank you for your service.

Very quickly, because -- you talked about full-time faculty. What is the percentage of full-time faculty at SUNY?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I think we have about 52 percent full-time faculty right now.

Over the past 10 years it's really flipped from -- we're kind of even, but high 40s about 10 years ago, now a little bit over 50 percent. And it used to be part-time

faculty were a little bit greater than full-time faculty, but it's flipped right now.

We know that, you know, we provide excellence when we have more full-time faculty. When you look at the numbers in the different sectors it gets a little skewed, though, because we look at the doctoral campuses and they show that they have a great many full-time faculty and not many part-time faculty. They have a lot of graduate assistants. So it is a little bit different there, and so we may not be comparing the right apples to apples.

But in fact I think we're making advances. And with the new funding that the Governor has proposed, we will make great advances on the campuses.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Great. Thank you. One other -- a couple of other questions.

Chancellor, last week you published an op-ed in the Empire Report, and it talked about how applications for SUNY have been down about 20 percent or so -- which is the

largest decrease in SUNY's history, I suspect.

Is this trend being supported and reported by -- at all of the SUNY institutions? Or are there some that have seen increases in applications? And is there any -- are these demographic or geographic applications from various areas? In other words, do you see any trends here with the decline in applications?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, we certainly had seen a trend even before the pandemic, that there was a falling off of applications. That's not necessarily true in every sector. Certainly the doctoral-granting institutions are up significantly. Every other sector is down. But of course the community colleges are down rather significantly.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Very significantly.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Yes. We look at both ends of our spectrum there.

The demographics of the State of New York have something to do with that. We

know that because it was not necessarily related to the economy, it was not necessarily related to the pandemic. But we also believe that just the changes in the thoughts about higher education have been impacting that. And the changes in the way higher education is delivered have also been impacting whether or not, especially at the community college level, students believe that they need that two-year education or that they should be right into college right from high school.

So we have a lot to look at. It's a complex issue. It's not only about marketing, it's not only about programs, it's not only about full-time faculty, it's not only about where was the success that you had before. It's looking at a full spectrum of data and working sometimes with professionals, but also working in the artificial intelligence realm and bringing to bear some of the software that can help us understand where we are.

So we're trying very much to

understand this and move forward. We have a task force that we're going to be putting in place, it's been being developed as we speak. We have the rubric already designed at SUNY; we did it in the last two weeks since I've been at SUNY. It's a task force that brings together many people from around the university and outside of the university, so that we can approach this issue and start to work on it so that we can see results.

Hopefully the Legislature will be part of it as well.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Hopefully. I'll get back to that issue in a moment.

But I understand that the Executive Budget is increasing the spending authority for the SUNY hospitals, the three SUNY hospitals, by 250 million. But they haven't reinstated the SUNY hospital subsidy that was discontinued a number of years ago.

How has this impacted the SUNY hospitals? And are you going to be seeking additional help from the Legislature -- I think it was something in the neighborhood of

87 million or something that was never restored. And I hate to use the word "restored" because this is a budget of expansion, not retraction.

But how are the SUNY hospitals going to continue to stay healthy, in a sense, in light of inadequate -- to me, what I think is inadequate funding?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, we hope they stay healthy because they have been the heroes throughout the pandemic. We are so proud of --

SENATOR STAVISKY: That's why I'm asking the question, yes.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: -- of our hospitals.

I'm going to turn to our CFO and ask him to comment on that question.

SUNY INTERIM CFO MEGNA: Yeah, I think the members of the committee know that in the past there was a significant subsidy for both debt service and fringe benefits, which I think originally started out around the year 2000 at about 150, 160 million, and then I

think went down to about 76 million. And I think that was phased out in 2017-'18.

And so I think the debt service component now is about $70 million. And so I think one of the things that will be a huge advantage to SUNY is the debt service on hospital construction.

SENATOR STAVISKY: But in addition to the debt service, which the state pays for every other state agency, there were additional subsidies that were phased out a number of years ago, and that is of concern.

Because as you said, the SUNY hospitals really were on the frontline of the last two years during the pandemic. And it's sort of frustrating when you see certain advantages paid to other hospitals and not to the SUNY institutions, particularly at Downstate, but also at Upstate and Stony Brook.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Particularly. And they have been -- of course Downstate, as you mentioned, was designated as a COVID-only hospital during

the pandemic, and it performed brilliantly as a COVID-only hospital and we're very proud. But it has had some lasting effects from that designation that have resulted in lost revenue, which have multiplied the problems with the hospital.

SENATOR STAVISKY: All right, let me quickly get to another topic, which is sort of related to the first question that I asked.

Your decline in enrollment obviously, I think, has been affected by high school students who somehow got lost in cyberspace or something because they never enrolled in the four-year or two-year institutions. And that I think is rather pronounced, especially at CUNY but also at SUNY.

Have you been working with either the State Education Department or the local school districts -- or some way -- to find those students and perhaps have them enrolling in some sort of program either at the four-year or two-year institutions?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY:

Absolutely. I think of -- during the pandemic, most of the high schools were not open. Students were remote. They were not really face-to-face with their guidance counselors.

So what we noticed throughout all the of that -- and it really became a reality in our application base -- that students were not on the same course that they had been on before, they were not getting the same advice, because they were not physically present, they were not queuing up in the same way, they were not completing their coursework the same way. Tests were not being given that got them to the next level in the same fashion. So everything was really out of whack to get students ready for college.

But certainly our community colleges have stepped up and stepped into this breach very strongly with -- with thinking through ways to serve students when they come into the community college system, to reduce remediation courses so that students can see

themselves as learners that are proceeding, that are really making advances on their degree.

It's also dealing with Early College High School and SUNY REACH -- there are other programs that deal with a little bit older learners that have been funded.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Toby, I'm sorry --

SENATOR STAVISKY: I don't want to get yelled at, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- but your clock is off. So we're going to give you three minutes for follow-up later on, okay?

SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay, I'll do that later.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you so much.

Assembly.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the ranker in Higher Ed, Assemblyman Walczyk.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Thank you,

Madam Chair.

And Chancellor, wonderful to see you once again. Enjoyed your leadership at SUNY Oswego and look forward to working with you here.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: A quick question that's non-budgetary.

COVID community testing sites, are you still doing those on campuses and residential halls and gymnasiums and that kind of thing? And if so, when does that stop? When do you anticipate those will be off your campuses?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: When does it stop, did you ask?

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Yup.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, we're -- testing, of course, is still going to be very important to us into the future.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Yeah, Chancellor, I mean specifically community testing sites, not just for your students.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Okay.

I'm not clear that there is an actual stop date for any of the community -- the community testing sites. So no stop date has been issued. And we will continue to do that in collaboration with our local departments of health, especially. It's been very important to our communities, especially with Omicron, to go forward.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Thanks.

The Excelsior Scholarship, is that -- did Governor Hochul continue that or have we finally -- you know, right across the board, I haven't heard a lot of great things consistently about Excelsior. Is that still in her presented budget or are we going to finally get rid of it?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: We have about 20,000 students in Excelsior programs across the system. And yes, she's continuing it. As a matter of fact, she's brought it up to date.

So, you know, Excelsior paid a certain amount toward tuition which, when it was originally proposed, was a little bit under

the tuition that SUNY actually charged. And now the Governor is proposing to bring that to a match to the tuition that SUNY is charging. So it will be better for our campuses, it certainly will be great for our students.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: The -- and Chair Stavisky made the point enrollment is down significantly. Is out-of-state tuition something you would consider if we got a piece of legislation, for example, for SUNY Potsdam, to allow them to recruit some Canadian hockey players? Is that something that you think that we could do in the future or in this budget?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: And compete with Oswego?

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Of course.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, I'll have to think about that one. I'm not sure. But -- but yes, you know --

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: The question is really about out-of-state tuition incentives

that would allow some of the --

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Yeah, it's always been possible. So the border state issue, of course, it's always been possible for campuses to deal with the differential on their own. But it's a little bit difficult if you don't have the reserves or the revenue in place to be able to do so. I think it bears looking at over and over and over again.

We certainly are -- one of the strategies for dealing with our enrollment issues is to look out of state. And as we look out of state, we're going to be comparing what do we charge the students who come in as out-of-state students. Is this something that is a barrier to students coming in? How does that compare to their in-state tuition in the states they reside in?

Those are the kinds of issues we're going to be looking at. It's also going to be true for international students.

So looking clear across the board, I'd

say the issue is really going to be -- hockey aside -- it's really going to be about what will literally incent those students to come.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Great. And I look forward to a continuing dialogue on that. I appreciate your comments.

Chair Glick asked about something that's I think going to be critically important, and that's the master's-qualified nurses pipeline to get some nursing trainers into your institutions. And I know that's something that's important to you and the Governor moving forward.

I notice the Governor had 53 million in incentives for faculty and recruitment. How do we anticipate that that's going to square up with collective bargaining and incentives for -- how do you anticipate that that's going to be used to get those master's-qualified nurses so we can fix the nursing pipeline?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I'm not sure how it would be affected by collective bargaining. How would it -- we will -- we

will be -- certainly we have to have the programs in place before we hire the faculty for them and we opened it up for enrollment in the nursing professions.

But I -- could you explain that a little bit more?

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Probably not in 25 seconds, because I had one more question that I wanted to ask, and it was to echo Chair Glick's five-year capital plan. Do you anticipate -- and I know you just got on the job. But do you anticipate that you'll put one out?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: We hope so. The five-year capital plan? Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Thanks so much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We've been joined by Assemblywoman Forrest.

And we send it back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Next we have Senator John Liu.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Madam Chancellor, for

joining us.

I want to just piggyback off of what my chairperson, Senator Stavisky, asked about, which is the declining enrollment. You cited a whole host of reasons why enrollment at SUNY might be declining. I ask you this question. Is it possible that the cost of tuition is a factor in that declining enrollment?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, I think it bears looking at. But in fact there are declines in enrollment clear across sectors. In fact, also for private institutions across New York State. And the private institutions charge much more. They certainly can discount those tuitions, but they charge much more. So they're not declining --

SENATOR LIU: I understand that, Madam Chancellor, that private institutions charge more and they have declining enrollment. But I would -- I think, as a matter of basic economics, there's going to be some price sensitivity even for potential SUNY students

which, you know, clearly SUNY is not nearly as costly as some private institutions.

But I would think that there's some price sensitivity. And it -- as you say, I agree with you -- it bears looking at. The former chancellor said that SUNY was looking into it, and I wonder if there's any progress made.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Always bears looking at. Tuition is a factor that every family looks at when they make a decision and every student looks at.

SENATOR LIU: Then please have your team look at the price sensitivity.

And this goes to my real question, which is that as we all know, the tuition has been supporting more and more and more of SUNY's ever-expanding operating costs. And so SUNY tuition costs have risen in excess of other budgetary items, including the amount of state aid that's given to SUNY.

So what we need to do is reverse the decades of disinvestment in SUNY and bring tuition levels back to where they were.

Now, look, I went to SUNY when it was $675 a semester. Granted, that was a hundred years ago, but at some point in time SUNY tuition just skyrocketed, just took off, just, you know, left -- even left the stratosphere.

So what we need to do is get more investment into SUNY. And it would be helpful if you could have your team look at the price sensitivity and also at what point in time -- was there some kind of time correlation between the rapid increase in the tuition and the percentage of the operating costs paid by tuition and the decline in enrollment?

I think it would be helpful to see that kind of pattern if it exists. I believe it does exist. But SUNY for a long time now has been talking about looking at that.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, I think you're right about data, that data can inform our decisions. Looking at that will be important and -- important factors for us to consider as we consider all the factors

around enrollment. So we take to heart your advice, and we will certainly roll that into our computations.

SENATOR LIU: I'm heartened to hear your comments about the proposed budget by the Executive, and I'm heartened to see our new Governor looking to put more money into SUNY. I think it's desperately needed.

At the same time there are legislators I know of in both chambers that are concerned about SUNY's management. And I want to thank you for -- you were about to start enjoying your retirement and then they kind of like dragged you back in two weeks into your retirement. Congratulations, and thank you for that.

My question, and please don't take this personally --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senator, excuse me. So we're having a problem with the time clock, but I've been using my sturdy watch and the three minutes has expired a short while ago. So I think we're going to --

SENATOR LIU: Madam Chair, I was just

getting to the fun stuff. I didn't even know I -- I felt like 45 seconds had transpired.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, she was correct, John. I was watching my watch as well. Sorry.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I think the clock is fixed. For your next question, you'll be able to really see the clock. Hopefully it's fixed now. We've been having problems all day.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we go now to the Assembly, actually for five minutes to Assemblyman Ra. Can we put -- got it. Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chair.

Good morning. I wanted to just get into a couple of different issues, starting with -- so the community college base aid and the proposal to fund it at 100 percent of the 2021-'22 amount. Obviously it's better than, you know, dealing with perhaps more of a reduction due to the decreasing enrollment. And obviously it's an increase over the 98 percent last year.

But I know there are proposals out there to look at other years -- you know, '19-'20, I think I saw one proposal. Others have advocated for going and utilizing the 2018-2019, which was really the last year unaffected by the pandemic.

So can you comment on that and what, you know, these numbers actually mean in terms of money in the system? Because if we're basing it on a really down year that really is the culmination of years of enrollment decreases, I don't know that that's sustainable funding for those institutions.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Yeah, we definitely are interested in moving that benchmark year back to pre-pandemic. I think that it will be more rational and it will be related more to reality if we move it back and look at 100 percent.

And it will really restore the community colleges to be able to look forward. If we move back to the 2018-2019 year, that's about a $37 million delta. So

we -- we would -- we're proposing that. And we're hoping that that will be the case so we can remove the pandemic from funding levels.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: That would be great. I know community colleges all over the state would greatly benefit from utilizing that benchmark. Certainly we would in Nassau County, where I'm from.

The other thing I wanted to ask about, and this has been a concern for many years, the -- and it's great to see the Governor investing in this area, the childcare centers on campuses. And obviously in a budget where we're investing in part-time TAP, you know, this a central piece, I think, to that that goes along with that, so that those part-time students have access to that childcare that they need to go to class.

So do we know, you know, or have a list somewhere that could be provided of what campuses would benefit from this increased funding in terms of starting childcare centers that don't currently have them?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: So this

is start-up costs for about $600,000 to start a childcare center.

I don't have the list off, you know, the top of mind here, but I'm sure we can get the list of those campuses.

Yes, you are absolutely right. Students benefit greatly from this, especially single-parent households benefit greatly from this. And we're interested in seeing this happen.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, great.

And then the last thing I just would -- in my remaining time -- obviously we are now several years into the pandemic and we have students who have finished their high school years under these circumstances. I'm just curious what SUNY is doing and what maybe the Legislature ought to be looking at in terms of providing resources to ensure that that transition is going as well as possible given that, you know, these students either ended high school during a pandemic and probably missed out on a lot of the opportunities you normally have to make that

transition into college.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, we do see students come in with some emotional problems and mental health issues, and it's greater than it's ever been before. So certainly the dollars that we will be spending out of the federal stimulus and other dollars put to this will be sorely needed in order to help our students make the transition and to succeed throughout their college careers.

We also are looking at academic deficiencies, but we don't have those data yet. We have not amassed anything that shows us that there is a great distinction between students before the pandemic and after the pandemic. So it is something we're looking at, but we don't actually know the differences yet.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: To the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Apologies.

Next is our ranker on Higher

Education, Phil Boyle.

SENATOR BOYLE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you, Chancellor, for joining us today and also for this responsibility you've taken on.

Just two quick points. One's a kind of a comment, the other's a question. The idea of having SUNY flagships, including Stony Brook, I think is a tremendous idea. I've advocated this for a long time, and I think it would go a long way to improving and helping the entire system for doing that.

My question regards what we see -- I guess whether it's called cancel culture or the silencing of open debate on our college campuses, that's really been a tremendous concern of mine over the past couple of years.

Have you -- I don't know what you did at Oswego or with your other colleagues to make sure that everybody is allowed to say what they are for an open and honest discussion without being concerned about

losing their job as a professor, getting canceled as a student. And regardless of which side of the political spectrum they're on, to have an open, honest debate.

And how would you see yourself or any ideas about some policies that may protect our professors and our students in these difficult times?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, college campuses are a place where there's a marketplace of ideas. Free speech is absolutely essential to learning. Academic freedom is also part of this. What goes on in the classroom is very important.

You know, we're always pushing the limits. This is higher education. Higher education at its best is always at the end of the envelope, you know? Faculty members as well as students want to get to what can I do and how far can I take it? So it's a great place to be.

I think our campuses are really good at this. Our campuses in SUNY are excellent at kind of threading this needle of making

sure that the campus is safe, providing for safety for lectures and presentations and such and making sure there won't be anything happening that could have the campus be unsafe for our students or for any of our visitors, but also allowing free speech, allowing students to have the speakers they want, allowing students to have the debates that they want, and faculty members to express themselves inside and outside of the classroom.

There are limits, of course, and that's when -- that's when -- you look at it more carefully, the press looks at it more closely and we all get to decide one way or another. Sometimes it ends up in court, sometimes it doesn't. But in fact I think even that is an expression of what our country's all about. We go at different opinions in different ways. This is what we need to do in higher education.

So as long as we are allowing people to present their ideas, debate their ideas, that's where we should be.

I know at Oswego -- it's not always easy to do. You know, you stand up generally for the underdog. But sometimes you've got to go the opposite direction because free speech demands it. And then your campus is not quite as understanding.

We have some outside agencies that take a look at what's happening on the college campuses, like FIRE, and give us kind of a grade or a ranking as to how we're doing.

So we have many factors we take into consideration when we're moving forward.

Is there a particular issue you wanted to talk about?

SENATOR BOYLE: No, just generally, you know, on campuses around the country I see many times when, say, a conservative speaker is going to -- was invited to speak and then the students break the windows and they -- you know, whatever they do in terms of getting the point across that they don't want that speaker on campus, and suddenly the invitation is revoked.

I have not seen that at SUNY, I'm happy to see that. But the mob mentality cannot hold sway. And it's the same -- true with a liberal speaker. I think everyone should have an opportunity to come and speak and not be canceled or disinvited if what they're going to say may not be too popular among the masses.

So I'm glad to hear that you feel that way, and I'm sure that you're going to show us great leadership in protecting all open -- ideas on all sides going forward. So I appreciate it very much.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Thank you.

SENATOR BOYLE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Back to you, Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman Bichotte Hermelyn for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Thank you so much, Chair.

How are you, Chancellor? Thank you

for being here. I am a proud SUNY alum, Buffalo State College and Buffalo University. So I'm happy to have seen over the years that we've had some progress, especially around the elimination around TAP gap, maintenance of effort, issues being addressed in a higher budget to hire more professors.

I do have a few questions that I'd like to ask, once, and then you can answer it in order.

The first one is around recidivism. And I know you talked a little bit about the TAP program for incarcerated individuals. And you know that it's commonly understood that college access dramatically decreases recidivism. And there's actually a new study out of Yale University focusing on this.

Can you describe your understanding and how and whether these programs impact recidivism? And how will it be implemented in the State of New York SUNY systems?

My second question is around the childcare centers. For the 18 campuses that do not have childcare centers, can you just

expand on what's the plan for that? And where do you plan to build the centers.

And then lastly, on the capital -- the five-year capital plan, do you have -- will your five-year capital plan include MWBE efforts, which is minority and women business enterprise.

But the first question is around recidivism, if you can answer that.

Thank you.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I don't have statistics, but I've been around a long time so I remember when SUNY was in the prisons before. And so there's been a break, we haven't been there. We're going back to be able to teach in the prison system.

And I know it was successful to a certain degree before. I expect it to be successful again. It is -- you know, when you talk about human rights, when you talk about treatment of prisoners, when you talk about all of the reforms that you've been seeing about incarceration and about what it means to be incarcerated, who should be

incarcerated -- this is the right thing to do. This is part of SUNY's mission. You know, we lift all boats, we -- access to excellence, access to a new life. This is the threshold that students can cross.

So we're very much in favor of this.

I think we can get back to you with additional information. I don't know if we have that information right now. Do we have anything that we could --

STUDENT ADVOCATE HAMILTON: So we do know that 21 of our SUNY campuses are now working with the correctional facilities and we're currently serving 500 students who are incarcerated. So the goal is certainly to increase those numbers moving forward.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: So did you hear that? We have over 20 campuses now and 500 students. We want to increase that.

And we'll be keeping data about -- information about how they do in the years following their time earning degrees, hopefully, from SUNY.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. The

time has expired.

If you could respond -- you know, and there probably may be some other questions that members have that there won't be time to respond to at the hearing. If you could respond in writing to both myself and Senator Krueger's office, and we will distribute it to all members who are participating so they can hear the answer.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: We will.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So now we go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Jim Gaughran.

SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

And as others have said, Chancellor, thank you so much for stepping up during these very challenging times. We're very grateful for that.

I want to get back to the three SUNY hospitals. I'm very concerned about the need for much more support. And in terms of -- we've already raised the issue of the debt

service, and I'm just hoping that, you know, you can help us in really advocating for getting rid of that, because it really makes no sense that, you know, everybody else is relieved of this. And our hospital -- these hospitals have stepped up, in addition to being, obviously, important safety net hospitals, they are the institutions that this state uses to make sure that we're getting our best and brightest doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals ready for tomorrow. And, you know, the Governor has put a big focus on more of this.

So what do you think could be done to -- you know, basically taking this off the plate of the three hospitals? And also the -- you know, the huge fringe costs that they have and the competition, you know, that they have with recruiting other people. How can we just eliminate this so that they have these funds available for educational and health services?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: So the funds -- certainly the hospitals need an

infusion of funds. All of the hospitals are not exactly alike. They have different -- they have expressed their missions in different ways and they have different situations, given through the pandemic that they've done different things.

SUNY Downstate, as we've said before, was a COVID-only hospital, and they have in fact some lasting effects from that, of lost revenue. And of course SUNY Stony Brook has served a great many patients during the pandemic, often up to I think 6,000 patients in a week. So we have had a great impact on that hospital.

Upstate, of course, has been involved in research. They've developed the saliva test. They are part of the Pfizer -- they're investigators, principal investigators for the Pfizer vaccines. So they're --

SENATOR GAUGHRAN: No, I agree. I appreciate that.

But I just want to ask you one quick question before my time clock runs out, and that is the Governor -- there's this huge

$10 billion overall in healthcare in addition to the education budget. Have there been some discussions -- and can there be -- that these three SUNY hospitals also get, you know, a significant share of that money as well?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: We are -- we are assuming that they will get a significant share of that money as well for faculty and staff, yes.

SENATOR GAUGHRAN: Maybe infrastructure? So if you could maybe provide more details on that to us --

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: We will. We will.

SENATOR GAUGHRAN: -- that would be great. I appreciate that.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I'm sorry that I don't have that at my fingertips, but we will provide it for you.

SENATOR GAUGHRAN: No, that's fine. I appreciate it. Thank you so much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Smullen, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Thank you very much, Chair. I really appreciate it.

Chancellor, nice to see you.

Now, the Governor is proposing to move the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering from SUNY Poly to SUNY Albany. And a couple of quick questions there.

Why does the Governor feel this move is necessary at this time?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, we don't know exactly why the Governor feels it's necessary. We're looking at all of the issues surrounding it.

It sounds and looks pretty good to put a research institute with the research College of Nanoscience and Engineering. But also SUNY Poly of course has a great deal to connect with those endeavors as well. So we're looking at the scope of all of it, and for our students, for our research base, for or connections to industry. All of these things will be very important as we move

forward.

I assume that that's what the Governor looked at, that, you know, as we elevate it --

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Excuse me.

Now, you didn't suggest this, this came from the second floor?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Okay. So the second question on that. I represent Herkimer and Oneida counties. Will there be any impact of this relocation on the local economy in the Utica area?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: We hope not. We know that -- you know, we are all SUNY and we share programs, we share ideas, we work together, we collaborate. We believe the same collaborations that are in place today will be the collaborations that will be in place no matter what happens with the formal connections that will be made.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Okay. But this isn't part of an overall, then -- a reorganization of the SUNY system, this is

something to make it easier for an administrative reason?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Not administrative reasons. I think it really has to do with responding to industry need. It has to do with responding to the needs of research. We have premier institutions here. And as we highlight them and we move them forward, we're not leaving SUNY Poly behind.

We haven't sat down to look at all of the factors yet. And we want to bring all of the institutions to the table to take a look at what this will mean and make it additive for every campus so that there will not be any loss.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: That's great. I really appreciate that. We want to get the organization right. We want the institution to really -- to prosper and to really take things into the 21st century. So, you know, at least from my perspective we're fully supportive of efforts to make it the very best we can for New York.

Thank you.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

The ranker, Tom O'Mara. Finance Ranker Tom O'Mara.

SENATOR O'MARA: Good morning.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Hello.

SENATOR O'MARA: And welcome. And thank you for your service at SUNY Oswego. You did an outstanding job there for many years. And congratulations on your appointment here.

Are you seeking the full appointment to this position?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I'm seeking sunshine, relaxation. I think my husband is listening in on this broadcast, and -- no I am not. I am not. I am not.

But I love SUNY, and I'm happy to serve. I'm here for a particular purpose. And I'm thrilled to be able to play that

role.

SENATOR O'MARA: Well, I'm glad you are. And I wish you were looking to stay on as well, but I fully understand.

With regards to the expansion of TAP for part-time students, is this going to include non-credit career and technical workforce development programs for individuals taking those?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I'm not sure if it does include the non-credit.

It potentially will include the non-credit. We haven't -- I don't think we've actually looked at it yet.

SENATOR O'MARA: Okay. Well, I would certainly advocate that it is included and that you further encourage the workforce development needs that we have across New York State. And I think that would be a help in doing that.

With regards to the Excelsior program, are there any changes being made or any leeway given to those students in the Excelsior Scholarship Program with regards to

either full-time status or GPA maintenance requirements due to COVID and the impact that has had on some students?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Last year there was accommodation for full-time status. I don't think that will go forward with the Excelsior program. I think we'll get back on track with it.

You know, if you look at the graduation rates for Excelsior, they're very good. They are higher if you are an Excelsior student or if -- than those who are not Excelsior students. The retention rates, first year to second year, are higher for Excelsior students. So we're looking for Excelsior to maintain those good averages.

SENATOR O'MARA: Well, no, I am as well. I've just heard from some students in my district that have concerns over either some poor performance because of COVID around exam time or whatever. So I hope there's some accommodations being made for those that were impacted by that.

The capital budget for SUNY. How much

is in the capital budget for the movement, under New York's Green New Deal -- for the lessening of emissions from all buildings, certainly including SUNY buildings? What's in the capital budget for that?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I'm not sure I know that. Bob, do you?

SUNY INTERIM CFO MEGNA: I think it's nested within our overall budget that we take in those requirements. There's no specific piece, but we are subject to all of the same requirements that other state construction projects are subject to.

SENATOR O'MARA: Do you have any estimates or cost studies, feasibility studies for the conversation of SUNY buildings to zero emissions?

SUNY INTERIM CFO MEGNA: Yeah, we'll certainly provide those.

I think, again, this is something that happens over time. Right? So there's a process that begins we make sure that we're hitting the guidelines we're supposed to hit now. And I think it's built into our

estimates of how much we're going to need for critical maintenance in future years to continue to hit what we have to hit.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: And they're usually rolled right into the project.

So what happens is -- you know, a few years ago we would kind of break out what would the project be without geothermal wells, what would the project be with geothermal wells? And you would kind of make a decision, are you going to go for that carbon-neutral and get into the higher rate for the project, or are you not?

And right now, because SUNY is requiring that we take a -- and we make a plan for moving to net zero carbons that we roll those into the project and we don't take them out as stand-out costs. So it's difficult to break them out --

SENATOR O'MARA: I think that New Yorkers who are footing the bill for what are going to be outrageous expenses in these conversions deserve to know, and I advocate

that that be set out and what the costs are going to be going forward.

So my time is up. Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Tom.

Assembly?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you, Chair.

And thank you, Interim Chancellor.

I know I only have three minutes, so if we could -- a couple of questions we could do quickly.

Can you commit to getting publicly available charging stations on all SUNY campuses?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I beg your pardon? Can you say that again?

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Can you commit to getting publicly available charging stations for E-vehicles on all SUNY campuses?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, it sounds like a great idea. I think a lot of

campuses already have charging stations on them. I'm not sure how many campuses have them, though. So we'll get back to you on that --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: -- and see what the feasibility would be of having them on every campus.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Can you commit to ensuring that as you're interim chancellor, that all new vehicles that you buy for the SUNY system will be EV or, you know, low-carbon?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I'd like to commit to that. I'm going to take a look at what that is. We are looking at a lot of initiatives on low-carbon, and it will be one that I look at. I'm not going to commit to it today, but I will get back to you on it if I do.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Okay, I'd love to hear back from you about it. Because obviously this is -- we're all part of our CLCPA goals, including our SUNY system. So

I'd appreciate it.

So we saw that $2 million for students with disabilities was included in the Governor's proposed state budget, but you know, the SED requested $15 million for students with disabilities.

I'm hoping we can work with you to increase that number from the 2 million currently in the budget to the 15 million that the State Education Department needs for our students with disabilities. Can we work with your office on that?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Yes. It's not released by SED at this point, the $2 million, but we of course have need and would be able to use that.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Wonderful. That's wonderful.

So there's been an issue with the student activities fee. Students have really relied on their budget through SUNY and CUNY as a separate set-aside for student activity dollars so the Student Assembly can, like, do the activities they need to do statewide.

Can we have a conversation offline around trying to have a set-aside student activity fee for the Student Assembly so they can get the resources that they need?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I'm sorry, I didn't catch that.

(Off the record.)

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Sure. I mean, we are -- we're in contact with the Student Assembly, we're looking at their needs. We just made available to them a full-time staff person that will help them with their administrative duties that we are paying for on the SUNY side.

So, you know, we're interested in the Student Assembly being successful. It's really important for students to have a voice and a conduit.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And one last question just on the TAP dollars for incarcerated folks.

Can we get a sense of where you are around the nonprofit schools like Bard Prison program and other programs versus, you know,

there might be for-profit colleges, other ones who might want to work with that population? I want to make sure that we commit to really degree-granting programs if we -- as we move forward to TAP for people who are incarcerated.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I'm sorry, can you say that again?

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Yeah. So we're going to make --

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: There's a little bit of a wobble in the voice.

(Off the record.)

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And making sure that they have degree-granting programs like Bard Prison Program and other institutions, versus some for-profit institutions or online colleges that, you know, may want to try to get access to the student population.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: So we will have certainly degree-granting programs available for incarcerated individuals. We're going to be working on what's most appropriate and what would be most sought

after. And we will be, you know, hopefully working on a cohort basis to get students through those programs so that they can have the -- whatever the certificate is or the credential that's associated with it.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

We have Robert Jackson, Senator RJ.

SENATOR JACKSON: Yeah, I'm here.

Chancellor, good afternoon. So I have only three minutes, so I'm going to try to move pretty quick.

I've heard that -- whoa. I'm so sorry. Can you hear me?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Yes.

SUNY INTERIM CFO MEGNA: Yes.

SENATOR JACKSON: So I've heard from students that one of the reasons why children are not enrolling in colleges is because of the debt that they're going to incur when

they finish school. Have you heard that at all? What are you hearing about that?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I think it's possible. Certainly it's a scary proposition for many individuals that they would have to leave school with debt.

So, you know, we're looking at this in a lot of different ways. But we should know -- and I think we never talk about the fact -- that almost 50 percent of our students leave SUNY with a credential, a degree in hand, without any debt. So I think we should be aware of that.

For those individuals who do leave with debt, though, it is about an average of $24,000 total. And that's pretty steep for students. So we're attacking this in many ways, trying to deal with it up-front and talk with students about financial matters before they even do that.

SENATOR JACKSON: Chancellor, I'm sorry to cut you short. I'm just trying to get two questions in before my time is up, if you don't mind. I'm not trying to be rude to

you at all, okay? Please understand that.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Okay.

SENATOR JACKSON: But during the lower education hearings, upstate and downstate school district leaderships voiced their concern with SUNY as a charter authorizer. Do you believe that SUNY should have authority over charter schools within New York City when CUNY is the state institution system for that reason? Does SUNY speak with local districts when reviewing charter school requests to see potential impact on local schools?

That's the question.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, I leave this in the hands of the Board of Trustees. The trustees have been dealing with this for almost 20 years. And I know they know much more about it than I at this point. And so I will leave that question in the hands of the trustees. And if you need more information, we'll get back to you.

SENATOR JACKSON: Got it, thank you.

And my last question, the Governor

proposed to prohibit withholding transcripts for failure to pay student-related debt. An institution in violation of this will be subject to a $500 fine per violation.

What is the average debt per student within your system? And do institutions withhold transcripts for minor debts such as parking tickets and library fees?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: The average debt that students leave campus with is about $24,000.

But I totally agree that we should not be withholding transcripts, we should not keep students from registering, we should not keep them out of extracurricular activities. We should not use the SUNY cudgel in order to keep students away from proper activities while they are still students if they owe minor amounts of money while they're students.

We certainly have the right to collect those debts, but we shouldn't use an undue influence or heavy bargaining power in order to get those debts paid.

And I'm 100 percent in favor of what's happened with the transcripts.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Chancellor. My time is up. I appreciate you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Robert.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, we go to Assemblywoman Fahy next.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Hi. I think I'm on. Chancellor, wonderful to see you. Thank you. Thank you for stepping in and, as was commented, coming out of retirement.

And a huge thanks to the Governor as well for what is a very encouraging budget.

So I have just a few comments, and I have two questions. So I just want to weigh in -- I know you've been hit with a lot, but I want to weigh in so that I'm echoing some of what you heard today.

Operating dollars for SUNY are incredibly important, and we do hope to see more. So pleased with the TAP gap, the

part-time TAP. And TAP for the incarcerated, very pleased.

The five-year plan matters to us. I need to put in a huge plug for the 20 million for the UAlbany engineering building that we've been asking for for probably a half dozen years now. I'm hoping this is the year. The building is -- I'm a little tired of seeing the fence up around what is an old Albany high school -- old Albany high school, the Schuyler building, and would really reinvigorate an entire neighborhood.

Absolutely support your comments and appreciate your comments on new faculty and trying to get to 500. Pleased again with the EOP increase and the community -- I think it's very important that we have a community college floor. I wouldn't be here without the community college I attended as a first-generation American. So I do think it's important that we have those avenues as well as some of the certificate programs that you yourself mentioned.

And a couple of things. The flagship.

Pleased with the proposal for a flagship on two of the colleges, on Stony Brook and Buffalo. But as you know, we think it's a great idea. We want to expand it to four. We think it's absolutely essential that it be four. UAlbany and Binghamton have always been university centers. Why not showcase, as we showcase all of SUNY, but why not continue to showcase those four university centers.

Question. We are pleased with the proposal for re-merging CSNE, the Nano College, with UAlbany. The question is how can we make this a win/win? We're certainly not trying to -- a lot of effort has been put into SUNY Poly in Utica. We recognize the potential there for some semiconductor businesses near Syracuse. How can we make this a win/win?

I know you can't maybe answer that in 20 seconds, but we want to continue that conversation because we support it. But I'll try to give you those few seconds. Thank you, Chancellor.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I think -- thank you. I think what we can do is bring Poly to the table and listen carefully about what will make it a win/win. We need to roll their opinions into this strategy to see what will make this happen and happen in the best way possible.

As I said, we're looking for additur, we're not looking to hurt any of our fine, wonderful institutions.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

To the Senate.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Assembly.

Next up is Senator Sue Serino.

SENATOR SERINO: Thank you, Chairwoman. Hello, Chancellor. You know, we've had a lot of discussions about mental health throughout all of these hearings. And I apologize if somebody had asked you this already, but I was just wondering what's included in the budget to help address the

mental health challenges I think that our SUNY and CUNY students face today.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: In the budget -- well, you know that we have a lot of -- we are charged to use, on our campuses, some of the federal stimulus money for mental health on our campuses. So $24 million will be applied to mental health from the federal stimulus packages, and $1 million will be continued from the budget.

So we're going to put all of that together. It's -- you know, we've been moving forward on these issues. We've had a task force in place for the last two years, and it finally reported out. I was one of the cochairs on that task force, with Dr. Wayne Riley from Downstate Medical. COVID -- COVID made us wait a bit to get our final recommendations in place, but once we got our final recommendations in place, we've been moving forward.

You know, we have moved forward on telehealth, it's been very successful. It was with Upstate Medical and now we will also

have a location in Downstate Medical. And that's a 24/7 counseling service that is a remote counseling service that students absolutely love and take advantage of to the maximum.

So we're going to expand that. That's going to be really wonderful for our students. We're of course going to hire --

SENATOR SERINO: That's great, Chancellor. Oh, sorry. Because maybe I can follow up with you on that, because I'm going to run out of time and I want to make sure I can ask you -- I have two more questions, if you don't mind. But I would love to continue the conversation with you, because this is something that's really important to me.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Okay.

SENATOR SERINO: But my other question is, you know, while higher education of course is very important, it's not necessarily the path that every student wants to take.

Do you think that SUNY could play maybe a bigger role through partnerships in

bolstering Career and Technical Education?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I think so. I think with P-TECH and Early College High School I think that we are playing a bigger and bigger role. And with apprenticeships we are playing a bigger and bigger role. And certainly the community colleges are stepping up into these roles.

We have graduated more than 300 students with P-TECH degrees. They identify in high school. It's a six-year program. They go right into careers that are designated. This is an important piece for an educated populace.

SENATOR SERINO: Thank you. And I also -- you know, recently I heard from EMS first responders in my district who complete their continuing education through Dutchess Community College and who are opposed to the booster mandate.

You know, these individuals have been on the frontlines since the start of the pandemic, and they are currently vaccinated. You must wear masks to attend. The program

they attend would bring them to campus for about three to five sessions, and classes are usually only about 10 students. So for these reasons, they feel the booster requirement is kind of onerous, especially at a time when COVID numbers are rapidly declining.

And at a time when faculty and vendors are exempt from this booster requirement, how do you justify requiring it for attendees of programs like this that are so vitally important?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, we're relying on the experts. We have an expert panel in SUNY that has helped us come to our decisions about what we require and is made up of researchers and doctors. They guide us in making our decisions. So we're relying on that going forward.

Hopefully we -- and we reassess it. So we will be reassessing as the numbers of perhaps Omicron come down, or if we move to no variant in the near future, we hope, we will make some changes in what we require. But for now the booster requirement stays.

SENATOR SERINO: It's kind of like a slap in the face that faculty doesn't have to, yet the people that are coming here for these vital services do. So I could hope that it's reconsidered.

And I know I ran out of time. Sorry, Senator Krueger.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's okay. You were pretty close. Thank you.

Assemblywoman.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Bronson.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Good afternoon, Chancellor. How nice to see you. And want you to know that we miss you tremendously at SUNY Oswego.

My question was just asked by the Senator. As you know, I'm very involved in mental health issues, and you and I have spoken about that in connection with Oswego. So I'm glad to see the $24 million of federal stimulus dollars. A little bit disappointed that there's only 1 million in state funds. As we go forward, we need to increase that.

But could you just tell us a little bit more about the task force and some of the findings to help us meet the needs of mental health services for our students?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, the task force was eye-opening. I mean, we really set about trying to assess where were there services on campuses for mental health. And we found it's really uneven throughout SUNY.

Some of the campuses have no SUNY services, they rely on the municipal services or county services around them. But they do have good coverage from those services, and they have great collaboration with those entities.

So we saw that there is a possibility for every student to have an avenue to mental health. But we needed to put in place a lot of things. We wanted to take away the stigma for gaining mental health counseling. We wanted to increase the counseling itself. We wanted to make it just in time, 24/7, students being able to contact and have

services remotely. We wanted to be able to assess the students.

So we have what we call -- we have put in place Thriving Campus, which is a program across the university that is a triage program that connects students with services in their communities, so -- with providers in their communities.

So we're trying to cover the map as far as mental health services are concerned.

We're also seeing the need for training on college campuses, for faculty and staff to become more aware of what is necessary. The QPR training for suicide prevention -- question, persuade and refer -- which is incredibly important, has really covered the map. I mean, there are thousands of people within SUNY who have been trained in the QPR training at this point. And we continue to do that.

But we need to do more. We need to keep on it. We need to make sure the funding's available. And we need to ask for funding every year on this matter.

ASSEMBLYMAN BRONSON: Yeah, I certainly will be with you asking for additional funds, because meeting the needs of mental health for our students is one of those wraparound services that are essential for them to be successful, to get their degrees and to move forward.

So thank you so much, Chancellor. So nice to see you.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Nice to see you too.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

Hi, Chancellor. Nice to see you. I've just been asked by a couple of people who aren't on the committees whether I can ask a few questions for them.

The first one -- and you partly answered before, but I didn't quite put it in context. Question one, has the -- and I don't know that you'll know this, in which case please just get back to Chair Weinstein

and I, and we'll pass the information along.

Has the ratio of administrators to full-time faculty changed dramatically in the last 10 years? There seems to be a belief that both university systems have really upped the number of administrators while not upping the number of faculty.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I don't know if I have that number exactly. I -- I don't think so. We'll get back to you with it.

I will tell you that I was a faculty member for 11 years. I believed that as well. And that was back in the eighties.

But -- so it is --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: If we go back 20 or 30 years, it's probably a little harder, yeah.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Yeah.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I didn't mean to cut you off, sorry.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: No, that's -- you know, we need to know. I know we know it. I don't know it at this point.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. I appreciate that.

And then following through also, several of my colleagues have asked you about the costs of universities and whether that has an impact on the students coming or not coming.

But do we think or does research show that the ratio of full-time-equivalent faculty to students actually impacts the reasons people go to SUNY or not? I know that private colleges market themselves based on the ratio of faculty to students. So I think they think it matters. And I'm curious what you think.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: You know, I don't think there's data that shows that students come or don't come because of that ratio.

We do know there are some data points that show that students are retained or graduate more on time or find themselves in the careers of their choice due to more full-time faculty.

So we're moving on those quality issues, those student success issues, as well as whether or not they come to the institution because of full-time faculty.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And it's been a pet peeve of mine for many years that even the least-qualified proprietary schools -- I'm not attacking all proprietary schools, before I get yelled at again. But there are unqualified proprietary schools that are drawing down a large sum of student money and then don't give them the education they need.

And when you ask students why they would head into those programs only to not get the education they need and lose the money they have, they tell you it's because they were so helpful on the front end, having them fill out the paperwork for them, promising them they would direct them through to make sure they took the right classes.

Are there lessons we ought to be learning here for SUNY and CUNY, that if we are more helpful at the front end, helping people maximize, you know, the benefits that

they're eligible for and decrease the costs and help direct students, particularly first-generation Americans or first generation going to college who have no one at home to advise them -- that if we did a better job at the front end advising, we would get more students and more students who actually headed into the right classes? What's your opinion?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Absolutely, I agree with you.

I think you'll see that the pandemic really hurt us in this regard. I think some of the programs of where we had either admissions counselors or faculty connect with prospective students and help them understand what the programs are about, what the careers are at the end of the programs, how you maximize your time at the institution, how you can work with individuals to leap over those barriers to get into the institution -- a lot of those things fell away from SUNY.

So they are in play as we start to look at what are the factors that are

impacting our enrollment at this point.

I've worked with a professional over the last year and a half on enrollment issues, and one of the things we attacked for SUNY Oswego was this -- as you say, this personal contact and having this feeling of confidence that someone will help them when necessary. It made quite a bit of difference in the number of applications that we received for the institution. And establishing that contact again, making that connection, made all of the difference.

So it will be one of the things we really look at very carefully. We're looking for best practices. We're looking for what really yields not only applications, but students who will make deposits and come to the institutions.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. And thank you for being willing to jump into this very important and challenging position when at least rumor has it some members of your family thought you had another plan in mind.

Thank you. I cede back my time.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

Good morning, Chancellor, and thank you again for your service and your willingness to step up at this critical time.

I have a couple of questions. First of all, let me just say, in the spirit of full disclosure, I did not go to SUNY -- but my sister did. And, you know, she was a neonatal intensive-care nurse. And so I know the issue of nursing education and capacity and nursing educators is one that we're all concerned about. And I'd like to ask your thoughts on that.

I also want to address a couple of issues about technology, which is largely capital issues. So the issue about technology is that we are now needing to really step up our pace, it's really an issue for access. And I'd like to encourage you and CUNY and the independent colleges to work

together to kind of influence product development so that it becomes more accessible because of the power of the joint purse that you have to drive that market.

I also want to support the $15 million for students with disabilities. And I'd love to talk to you offline about our teacher education programs.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Okay. With technology, I totally agree with you. One of the major issues during the pandemic is that students went home and did not have the technology to access their remote courses.

So many students actually came back to campuses, and we helped them with lending them laptops and of course allowing them on the infrastructure, the internet infrastructure, in order to be able to take their remote classes from the residence halls if necessary. It was a very difficult time for many students.

We need to be on top of this. We need to make sure that our students are capable

and have the technology in their hands to be able to access what they need in their curriculum. It will help them in the future.

We also need to up-skill, up-skill students who are not only in our curriculum at this point, but those students who have graduated from our institutions. Many of us are now getting in the business of working with alumni to bring them back to campus to up-skill them in certain ways for their placement in their careers and for credentialing them to move up in their careers. It's really important to them.

So technology is going to be, you know, more and more important as we move forward.

I'm sorry, was there another question?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Well, no, I just want to, if I can, just piggyback on that and encourage a view as well of up-skilling or upgrading, for example, the programs that are being used.

I think a lot of -- if you talk to anybody, Blackboard is not anybody's favorite

program. It's very difficult, it's clunky, it's difficult to use for anybody and it's particularly inaccessible for a lot of people with disabilities.

So I think that we can, you know, use that influence that we have in the market to, you know, make a Blackboard 2.0 or 3.0 or some other program that, you know, works much better as a platform for everybody.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I think we're migrating off of Blackboard as we speak.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Good.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: There is a faculty group, a faculty and administrative group that is compromised of people from across the system that keep an eye on what learning systems we use, learning platforms we use. And I believe that we're migrating off of Blackboard at the end of this year, but I'm not positive of the date.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Just

double-checking no other Senator has snuck in for a first-time ask.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I see Senator Cooney.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh, Senator Cooney, are you here with your hand up? Yes, you are.

SENATOR COONEY: I am, Chair, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. Thank you, Assemblywoman, for helping me.

Senator Jeremy Cooney.

SENATOR COONEY: Thank you, Chairs.

And thank you, Chancellor, for your testimony today.

I'll build off of the conversation that my colleague mentioned with technology. But sometimes technology can become harmful. And we know that a number of schools and institutions are facing the threat of cyberattacks and could find themselves endangering not only their institutions, their students and their faculty, but the long-term viability of their institution

because of some of these terrible ransomware attacks that we read about in the paper.

And so my question to you is, what resources does SUNY have available to protect institutions and campuses from these types of attacks? And if resources are unavailable, what type of investment does the State of New York need to make to prevent these cyberattacks from occurring?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, I won't know exactly what resources are available. But I do know it's a collaborative effort across all of SUNY that when one institution has a problem, everyone is on it.

I also know that we have to keep making the investments. That once you make an investment and upgrade, it becomes old pretty fast. It's an anachronism immediately, and we have to move on to the next to protect the system.

It's worthwhile to protect the system. I think last year all our eyes were opened clear across the system for all of the

attacks that were tried. Many of them failed because we were prepared across the system.

It's a -- I think that SUNY does a great job in making sure everyone knows what's happening across the system and how to provide for security. We're also testing it out all the time.

So I can't say we're immune, that we would always be immune. But at this point I think we've been able to weather most of these storms.

SENATOR COONEY: Well, I appreciate that, Chancellor. And of course I'm not surprised that SUNY is prepared. But I also would just close by saying that I am concerned not just for our public universities, but also for our private universities. That I think as these types of technology evolve, there could be risks of losing private information for our students and our faculty members.

And it's something that I would ask that we continue to actively monitor so that we can uphold the integrity of our public

higher educational system.

So thank you for your time today.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So before we go to the next questioner, I just want to acknowledge a number of Assemblymembers who joined us over the -- while the chancellor was speaking: Assemblywoman Hyndman, Assemblyman Dilan, Assemblyman Cahill, Assemblywoman Joyner. I think that may be it.

And now we go to Assemblywoman Forrest for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you, Chair.

And thank you, Chancellor, for being here.

I wanted to first of all echo the importance of providing funding to SUNY Downstate, which functioned as a safety net hospital during the pandemic. It's absolutely critical to support our safety net

hospitals. I'm very excited about that.

I do have a question. As a product of educational opportunity programs, I do wholeheartedly believe in the service that they're providing. Do you believe that expanding the opportunity programs will be enough to serve the students who are currently receiving aid, in addition to adding new students?

If not -- or what do you think? Would you support expanding that funding beyond 10 percent?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, I'm grateful for the 10 percent. I will always support expanding the funding beyond 10 percent.

I want to tell you a story about an individual who I've worked with who retired -- he actually did retire about three years ago. I worked with him, he was a SUNY Oswego student in 1970. He came in as one of the first classes of EOP in SUNY Oswego. And he's a writer. He stayed on for many and various administrative jobs. Eventually I

asked him to be my executive assistant, and he stayed with me in the president's office for 20 years. His name is Howard Gordon. He's a published writer. He was an amazing partner for me in the president's office.

And one day I asked him about the EOP program. And I said, you know, when it was so new, what was important to you? Why did -- you know, he would tell me about some of the discriminatory actions of student-to-student on campus and things that faculty members said that might be considered microaggressions today.

I said, "How did you get through?" He said, "You know what? The EOP stipend that I got made me know that New York State was pulling for me. I knew that it was important."

So EOP for me is real. EOP for me makes a difference. And I will always fight for more.

We're going to do what we can. We're going to add maybe more premed or more preprofessional programs in EOP. And we're

going to hopefully increase the stipends for existing students and perhaps add students to the EOP mix.

Am I missing anything, Cheryl?

STUDENT ADVOCATE HAMILTON: No, we're certainly grateful for the 10 percent addition that's in the Executive Budget. We feel that any additional support can make it possible to increase our students' success rates.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: I'm sorry, I couldn't really hear. But I do echo your sentiments. And thank you for your support for more beyond 10 percent. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So Senator Krueger, do you --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We have one more. We have three minutes for Toby Stavisky, a second round for her. And then I believe we're done.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Real quick, because it's sort of like a football game and I don't want to get a delay-of-game penalty.

Can you compare -- I asked a question earlier about the full-time-student enrollment decline. Can you provide us a campus by campus breakdown so that we can take a look at further information on that score?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Yes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah.

Secondly, let me just really quick mention a source of student potential enrollment, and that's the international students.

As the COVID rate goes down, I think there should be real outreach to the international students.

My two questions really concern improving on-time graduation and retention. And second -- well, let's see if we can do this one in a minute.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Improving on-time graduation and retention?

SENATOR STAVISKY: In other words, how is -- what are the trends in on-time graduation and the retention of students, not

having them drop out or go someplace else?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, you know how we measure the six-year graduation rate, the four-year graduation rate?

SENATOR STAVISKY: Right.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: SUNY is ahead of the state rate, and SUNY is ahead of the national rate on both counts. So we're doing pretty well there. But we are making -- we are making movement constantly.

The retention rate is very important. It's important to make progress toward degree. We have to look at the COVID numbers, and that has impacted retention. So we're -- you know, I don't know if I could give you the numbers this year on what the retention is yet. But it certainly has suffered since COVID.

SENATOR STAVISKY: If you could get back to us with that.

And the other part of my question is it bothers me that SUNY and CUNY are spending money on remediation. How much are you spending on remediation and doing what the

high schools should have done in the -- in my opinion, in the first place?

You can get back to me because there's really -- I'm running out of time.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I don't know exactly the dollar amount, but I do know that we are trying to move away from remediation totally. And the community colleges are making great strides in math pathways and corequisite English, so that students will not be placed in remediation courses.

We have not moved away from them totally at this point, and I don't know exactly the amount of money that we're spending on them, but we can certainly get back to you on that.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Good. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly, I think it's yours, because the Senate's done for now.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. So Assemblywoman Seawright for three minutes.

(Pause.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: I'm having trouble unmuting here.

So thank you, Chairs Weinstein and Krueger.

Chancellor Stanley, first as a parent of two SUNY graduates who are currently graduate students at your campus, I want to thank you for bringing your stellar academic and administrative record to the SUNY system at this critical time for the hundreds of thousands of families served by this higher education institution.

Here's my question. President Biden has tried to persuade Congress to move in the direction of providing free tuition at community colleges, but without success thus far. With all of the community colleges -- do you think the Governor's Executive Budget goes far enough in addressing greater access to our community colleges, which are on the frontlines of higher education democracy here in New York?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: So I didn't catch all of that, but you're talking

about free community college?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: So President Biden has tried to get Congress to support greater access for community colleges and free tuition.

Do you think the Governor's Executive Budget goes far enough in advocating for greater access to our community colleges?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, I think we can always go beyond where we are for access. You know, I think we certainly could look at free tuition. But that has not -- if you look at all of the factors on free tuition, it does not necessarily impact enrollment to the extent that we might think it does.

We support part-time Pell. We support -- many of the graduates in community colleges graduate debt free. So at this point we're looking at a pretty good model in the community colleges. And the part-time Pell we think -- and the part-time TAP -- will help a great deal.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: So President

Biden has tried to encourage Congress to provide free tuition to our --

(Zoom connection lost.)

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: You're breaking up quite a bit, so it's hard to hear.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Let me turn off my video and you can hear me better.

Can you hear me now?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. You have 30 seconds, Rebecca.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: I just want to echo my colleague Harvey Epstein in support of --

(Zoom audio dropped.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we've lost Rebecca, but she agrees with Harvey.

So we will go to the next -- Assemblymember Buttenschon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Good morning. Or good afternoon, excuse me. Good afternoon, Chairs and Chancellor. Thank you all for your leadership.

I come from a family of SUNY graduates

and understand the importance of all that you do. Many of my colleagues have brought many topics and issues that I support regarding maintaining our community college floor, childcare, EOP, students with special needs concerns and the challenges that they have brought forward.

You spoke of SUNY's mission and highlighted the rubric of importance of utilizing data and expanding partnerships. I have the honor to represent Mohawk Valley Community College, Herkimer College, and SUNY Poly.

Over the last two years SUNY Poly has increased its student population, has vibrant partnerships at the federal -- as well as industry and business. On the federal level, the Air Force Research Lab; industry with Wolfspeed, that has dedicated 1.5 million for hiring and retaining faculty; and endless business partnerships.

One of my colleagues had brought up the issue regarding possibly making some changes in the SUNY system that would reflect

negatively with SUNY Poly. I would ask if you could advise me clearly if data as well as many of the -- that is incorporated within the SUNY mission is considered before any changes are made at this time.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Absolutely it will be. And of course it will be appropriate data that -- certainly enrollments, as you talk about; partnerships, public-private partnerships; research opportunities -- all of these things will be looked at when we're talking about what happens and the end result of this proposal.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Again, I appreciate that answer. I know that it is so important that we look at strategic planning with changes that are made within the SUNY system.

I've had the honor prior to serve 20 years within the SUNY system, starting as a student intern and finishing my career as a dean. So I do understand the importance of strategically looking at changes that need to be made.

And again, I would just request that any discussion looks at SUNY Poly as a model of everything that you've talked about today in regards to the ability to be a leader and just continue that leadership within the SUNY system as we approach the importance of affording our students so many opportunities in so many parts of the great State of New York.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: You have my assurance.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Thank you, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblywoman Griffin.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay. Thank you, Chair Weinstein and Chair Krueger.

And it's nice to meet you, Chancellor Stanley. I appreciate all the work you've done so far.

I am also a SUNY graduate, as well as my husband. So I really admire all that SUNY does and how SUNY has grown. Every decade SUNY has, you know, been that much more of an

education institution.

And I completely agree with a lot of the things mentioned by my colleagues, with expanding childcare, mental health services, you know, making strides in services for students with disabilities. And I have Nassau Community College where I represent, Nassau County in Long Island, and Nassau Community College is a great school, great place for students to go for two years, maybe go on from there to stay local, save money. So I am all behind anything we can do to make that more affordable and increase the floor funding for that college -- those colleges, community colleges.

I just -- I don't know if this was asked, and forgive me if I missed it, but I wanted to ask about the Excelsior scholarships. I've been in office -- this is my fourth year, and I have yet to meet one constituent that is a recipient of the Excelsior Scholarship. So I'd just love that information, love to find out how many students does the Excelsior really help. And

is it something we should look for increasing access, increasing the salary that a family has to make to get that scholarship.

And I just wondered if you could maybe impart some of your opinion on the Excelsior, its success, you know. And also if you can provide a current -- not now, you know, but provide a current list of Excelsior recipients, perhaps by district, so we would know how many students in our district take advantage of Excelsior.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: I'm not sure that that list would be available due to privacy issues, so we probably could not provide you that list.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: I don't mean -- I'm sorry --

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: But we could provide you gross numbers -- we could provide you probably gross numbers.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: I meant to say the numbers.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Okay. Yes, we could certainly provide you gross

numbers.

Excelsior I think has about 20,000 students right now that are being helped by that scholarship program. And actually I was looking at data about Excelsior, and it looks as if the retention rates are higher for students who are on -- of course it's built into, it's kind of baked into the Excelsior plan that you have to have 30 hours every year, you have to be making progress on your degree. So the retention issues -- and you can't stop out or you lose any ability to go forward with Excelsior, and it may make the previous payments a loan.

So it's a good way of kind of attaching students to their degree progress and making them go forward. So the retention rates are higher and the graduation rates are higher.

So I think those things are very positive items for students. So I -- this year Governor Hochul has increased the amount of the Excelsior scholarship to match better the SUNY charge for tuition, and she's

proposed that. I think that would be a very good thing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay. Thank you so much. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblyman Cahill, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAHILL: Thank you very much.

And welcome, Chancellor. It's good to see you. It's good to have a person with a background at our comprehensive colleges at the helm, at a time when our comprehensive colleges are facing such serious challenges.

I'd like to ask you just to give your view on the Governor's proposal for flagship universities and "national university" status for certain of our schools, and in particular to discuss how that might work interacting with the comprehensive colleges.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Well, we don't know much about what the flagship designation means. I mean, we all have our ideas about what "flagship" means by looking

at other states at this point.

We believe that all of our doctoral-granting institutions, especially our four doctoral centers, are magnificent schools and they all do a wonderful job. They all have great research programs, they are all certainly awarding doctoral programs {sic}, they have very good statistics on the type of students they bring in and how they graduate those students.

So as far the flagship designation is concerned, we're looking at it. What does it mean? The Governor's budget has not actually been reflective of what a flagship means. There's nothing attached in the budget numbers that shows us any differentiation of a flagship designation. So as we go forward, we will have to think about that carefully.

What does it mean for the comprehensives? Well, I think it does mean a distinction, and it has -- but I can't say that I think it's a distinction that hasn't already been made. There has always been a distinction between the doctoral-granting

institutions and the comprehensives as far as whether or not students want a particular type of institution to study at. And some students are on the fence, they don't really know which one they want to study at. But there are differences in those institutions, and I'm not sure flagship makes a difference in that respect.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAHILL: Thank you. I'm going to run out of time, but I want to cover a few other things very quickly. One of the things I would ask that there be a greater focus on -- and I saw and I was very happy to see the Governor include a significant amount of funding for new faculty lines across SUNY and CUNY. But 340 lines divided amongst all of our campuses doesn't really add up to enough to overcome the years of neglect that SUNY has suffered under when it comes to restoring full-time faculty.

I would urge you and also my colleagues to make it our business to do all we can to restore funding for more full-time lines, particularly at our comprehensive

colleges. You know, our president of our local college said, you know, we have an obligation to be a steward of place, but you are primarily an institution of education.

I'm going to run out of time, but I want to also draw your attention to some of the issues surrounding our community colleges in the state and the fact that a significant number of people who participate in them do not matriculate, graduate, get the courses that they need and are unsuccessful at the end of it, so -- but I have run out of time and I will look forward to an opportunity to see you face-to-face and have that conversation.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Yes. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We've been joined by Assemblyman Colton and Assemblywoman Cook.

And our final questioner is Assemblywoman Glick for her second round of three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very

much.

We've talked a bit about the Excelsior scholarship. I'd just like to just for a moment mention the STEM scholarship. This provides for any student who graduates in the top 10 percent of their high school, anywhere in the state, and is studying in the STEM disciplines, a scholarship, you know, a free tuition at SUNY or CUNY.

It comes with a little bit of a hook that says if you do not get a job in your chosen field, it will revert to a loan. Which I think is sort of a, you know, a dirty trick if somebody is looking to go back home in an area that doesn't have as much STEM commerce but they want to go home to where their family is or whatever.

What is SUNY doing to assist students so that we retain them in the state and they do not have that scholarship turn into a loan?

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: You know, we actually retain a lot of students in the state. We retain over 85 percent of the

students that graduate in the state. But of course they may not be in -- they either are in higher education or in careers. They may not be in the career of their choice right away when they graduate.

So what is SUNY doing? Well, we certainly all have career offices on our campuses. But career offices are changing a great deal. We're working with alumni. We are working with corporations for internships and apprenticeships. It's making that pipeline, it's making those connections while students are in school in order to place them in the careers that they're looking for and give them the practical experience that gives them a leg up when they get into those careers.

So we need to expand that to a greater extent clear across the system. Most of the comprehensive institutions are doing this at a great clip. Certainly the research institutions are doing that. And they're doing that with their research as well. When you have students in the lab, that certainly

helps.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Well, thank you.

I would just say that Excelsior requires somebody to stay in the state for five years so that it doesn't become a loan. But they could go home and do flower arranging with mama and they are not penalized. So I think that, you know, the STEM scholarship students need a little bit more help.

And I just, in the moments -- I would just want to raise one other issue which you won't have time to respond to, but to get it on your radar. Out-of-state colleges, the for-profits are doing a lot to recruit students to online courses. So perhaps at some future point you can inform us of what the plan is to get SUNY into that business and make it as available to students as these other campuses that use a lot of money for advertising, which you don't have. What's the plan for you to compete in that arena?

Thank you.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Thank

you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So we are finished with questions. I just want -- for you, and I want to thank you for being here, Chancellor Stanley. And I think there may be a couple of questions that -- where you may be sending us answers, where there wasn't time to do that. So just, you know, a reminder to the members we will share -- the Senator and I will share those answers with you.

Again, thank you for being here.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes, thank you very much.

INTERIM CHANCELLOR STANLEY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we're going to call in Chancellor Rodríguez, the chancellor for the City University of New York, CUNY.

And you will have -- there you are, Félix. You will have 10 minutes to make a presentation. We've already distributed your testimony, so feel free to summarize, and

then we'll go to some questions from members.

Thank you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you, and good afternoon, Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky and Glick, and the members of the Senate Finance, Assembly Ways and Means, and the Senate and Assembly Higher Education committees, staff and guests.

I'm delighted to be here with you this afternoon. I'm joined by our chief operating officer, Héctor Batista, and our chief financial officer, Matt Sapienza.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify this afternoon. I am proud to share the many steps that CUNY has taken to assist in the state and the city's recovery and advance CUNY's mission of social mobility, education and knowledge creation. I also am extremely optimistic about the future and CUNY's priorities, plans and goals for the coming fiscal year and beyond.

I am extremely honored and humbled to lead the premier and largest urban public university in the United States, serving

about 260,000 degree-seeking students and another 185,000 in adult and continuing education programs, and with nearly 40,000 faculty and staff at our 25 campuses.

On behalf of the entire CUNY community, I want to thank Governor Hochul, the State Senate and the State Assembly for your steadfast and sustained support, which has enabled CUNY to deliver strong results for our students and the citizens of New York. Governor Hochul has been a long-time friend to CUNY and her commitment to higher ed is evident in her Executive Budget proposal.

In the past year, even though it was difficult, there were many triumphs for CUNY. We completed the 2020-'21 academic year and awarded 59,295 degrees -- the largest number of degrees in the 175-year history of CUNY. And that number represents a 5 percent increase over the previous year.

The ability of the CUNY community to reach this milestone in the face of unprecedented challenges exemplifies the

perseverance of the students, the determination of the faculty and staff, and the importance of our mission. Among those who received a diploma this year were the first graduates of the Macaulay Honors Bridge Scholars program, a new program that opened the Macaulay experience to community college transfer students.

The federal Higher Education emergency Relief Funds were used to advance a number of initiatives that directly assisted our students -- among them, the expansion of mental health services to assist increasing numbers of students at CUNY struggling with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We used $5 million from federal stimulus funding in each of the last two fiscal years, allowing colleges to reach more students with face-to-face online counseling and other remote and in-person wellness services.

Thanks to federal relief funds, CUNY made history by launching the CUNY Comeback Program, erasing more than $100 million in unpaid tuition and fees for more than 57,000

students through what we believe is the country's largest debt-forgiveness initiative of its kind.

Additionally, the CUNY Comeback Program granted relief in the form of enhanced emergency grants for students who did not accrue unpaid tuition and fee balances during the period but experienced financial hardship stemming from the pandemic.

We also stopped the practice of withholding student transcripts due to failure to pay past or present tuition in August of 2021, a policy that was made permanent by our board at its past January 31st meeting. And we congratulate the Governor for including this in her budget request.

CUNY oversaw the timely distribution of $455 million in emergency grants from three federal stimulus bills. In the fall of 2021, all degree-seeking students received funds from the ARPA allocation.

And even with the challenges the

pandemic has created, prestigious national organizations continue to signal the phenomenal return on investment New Yorkers get from CUNY. Let me give you three quick examples. Ten of CUNY's four-year colleges have been named among the top-performing public schools in the Northern U.S. in 2021 by U.S. News & World Report rankings. Ten of our senior colleges also were among the top 50 colleges in the nation, and two of our colleges were among the country's top 10, according to Third Way, a public policy think tank, using economist Raj Chetty's work to create an economic mobility index.

And not to be left behind, six of our community colleges were invited to compete for the 2023 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, considered by many as the highest recognition for community college achievement in the nation. And those six were the only ones in the entire State of New York to be invited to participate.

We are also providing direct assistance to the wider community in fighting

COVID-19. Eight CUNY colleges across all five boroughs hosted vaccination sites and pop-ups, collaborating with the city, state and federal governments to vaccinate over 520,000 New Yorkers on the grounds of our campuses. Also, more than 2,500 CUNY nursing and medical students stepped forward to help run vaccination sites all across New York City.

In the fall of 2021, we increased also our in-person class offerings. And this spring semester, a majority of our class offerings are in-person, while we're also offering more online and hybrid courses than we ever did before the pandemic began.

CUNY is also a research powerhouse where externally sponsored research and programs totaling over $500 million contribute knowledge and develop solutions for critical regional and national challenges including the climate crisis, energy, public health, and other public impact areas. Just this fall, CUNY secured one of only seven national awards for an innovation hub through

a $15 million grant from the National Science Foundation.

Now let me comment briefly on Governor Hochul's Executive Budget, which would increase CUNY's operating budget by over $171 million. The Governor's proposal to add $53 million to hire approximately 540 new full-time faculty would fulfill a request from CUNY built around student-centered priorities. We know that full-time instructors have a particularly high impact in courses that have low passing rates, provide more consistent opportunities for faculty mentoring and advising, and have more time to focus on the development of new courses and the revision of existing ones.

Additionally, Governor Hochul's Executive Budget contains a number of welcome improvements to the TAP program. The Executive Budget would increase state support to CUNY four-year colleges by $59.6 million to cover the so-called TAP gap; include TAP awards for part-time students enrolled in degree programs and in non-degree

state-approved workforce credentialing programs; and also propose the repeal of legislation banning incarcerated individuals from receiving state financial aid.

We have advocated for similar changes in the past and thank the Governor for her leadership in making these changes.

We're also grateful for almost $48 million in increased funding for CUNY’s fringe benefits budget. Unlike state agencies, CUNY's fringe benefits are a line-item appropriation in our state budget. Annual funding increases are vital, as our fringe benefits costs account for almost a quarter of the university's total operating budget.

For the community colleges, the Executive Budget includes a 100 percent funding floor, equated to current-year funding levels. This will assist our community colleges with budget stability and is something that CUNY advocated for in our budget request for 2023.

With respect to the capital budget,

the Executive proposal recommends $792.8 million in new funding, $284.2 million for critical maintenance, and $425 million for expansion and improvements at the senior colleges.

The Governor's budget also adds $44.8 million in matching funding for community college projects that have already received funding from the City of New York. These funds are needed to maintain our 300 buildings, totaling 29 million square feet across 25 campuses, and to expand where needed. And those dollars, as you know, for every million dollars in construction spending, we create 1,000 direct and indirect jobs for the local economy, and it allows us to continue to support our MWBE vendors.

I am extremely optimistic about the future of this great university, especially in light of the challenges we have overcome these past two years. I thank you for your support.

And this concludes the abridged version of my testimony, but please note that

I have submitted a more comprehensive version for the record. I'm delighted to be here to answer any questions that you have -- and ended up with time to spare.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: You must have sat with a timer to get it down to just the 10 minutes.

We go to our chair of Higher Ed, Assemblywoman Glick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thanks. We were having a little bit of trouble with the rodent mouse.

Okay, thank you so much, Chancellor. It's always good to see you. And as a CUNY grad, I'm very proud of all of the work that the university does.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: It got me and my sisters to where -- and their husbands -- to where we are today, and we're very grateful.

The operating aid is very welcome news, but, you know, it's over a long period of time of disinvestment. So what is the actual -- it's a nice bump-up, but you have a

large cohort of students, hundreds of thousands. So what's the actual deficit on the number of full-time faculty that you would really need in order to expand your proper ratio for full-time faculty to students and adjunct instructors?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Well, thank you for that question.

The proposal of the 540 full-time lecturer lines that was included in the budget would actually significantly reduce our reliance on part-time faculty, going back to the point that you make.

Our budget request had included 1,000 new faculty lines, including the 540, so we could also fill in existing vacancies in other areas too. So that was part of our budget request for 2023.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Great.

Now, again, on your capital needs, a lot of your buildings are, you know -- it's New York City, they're a little bit older than some of the campuses that might be in other parts of the state.

At the current rate that is included in this budget, how long will it be for you to upgrade the facilities that you have, and how many proposed upgrades and new buildings will it take -- how many years would it take for you to get to where you want to be, at this current support level? Which is better than we've had in the past, admittedly. But there are a number of -- I get the requests from various campuses, they need this, they need that.

Where does this get you, and how many allocations like this will it take for you to build out the campuses as you'd like?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So thank you for that.

And I forgot to begin by also bringing greetings to you, an alum, from the 727 CUNY students who are part of your district. I always travel with all of them when I come to talk to all of you here, the Assembly and the Senate.

I don't think that we've made the calculation in the way that you have

formulated your question. We can certainly do that and provide you that figure.

But clearly we have a need for additional critical maintenance support for our campuses. It is a great investment for the City of New York. You know, our campuses are not just used by us, they're used by the DOE, they used them during the pandemic when they needed extra classrooms. They're used for early voting.

So any dollars that you invest in CUNY infrastructure is not just great for our educational mission, but the multiplying effects in the neighborhoods where our campuses are really, really significant.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Let me just turn to -- we have, over the last 10 years, done a very good job of incrementally increasing our opportunity programs and providing more resources. And we are grateful to the Governor for, you know, not -- for not only giving an increase, we are so thrilled we don't have to backfill.

But I'm wondering if someone on your

staff at some point can inform us of how many students apply that you cannot serve, based on what you have allocated in this budget. So we know that those programs get students on track, keep them on track, and graduate them on-time or close to on-time. And we assume that there are students that are turned away, and through only the lack of resources.

So if we could get that number, that would be helpful.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Certainly happy to provide that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I want to thank you for your debt forgiveness and transcript position -- that has been extremely important -- and for the emergency grants that I know that you worked very hard to raise funds for.

I'm wondering about where -- when I went to school we did not have food insecurity issues. We might have had cafeteria, you know, inadequacies, but we did not have the level of food insecurity.

What is the current status of campus food pantries, and what kind of assistance is being offered to students? And how much more could we be doing if you got additional resources specifically for that?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So, I mean, it's a huge issue. And one of the things that we're doing now, for example, is a very aggressive campaign to get as many of our students who are eligible for SNAP to be able to qualify. Because those are dollars that we can't be leaving on the table, which is additional support for students.

So we have an entire web page and a strategy and are working with some private funders to be able to secure and direct more students there.

During the pandemic we learned a number of things. Our food pantries became open to all CUNY students. And I would argue that probably in the future, Assemblywoman Glick, it would be through partnerships with local community groups that we can better attack food insecurity, right? Because if

our students are living in whatever community they live, they should be able to access their food there.

So I think that down the line a public policy that connects us with other ones who are engaged in food insecurity at the neighborhood level will probably be a smarter way from a public policy perspective. We will always have the food pantries and all those things, but it's much better to meet the students where they live, where they have the need.

And that's where I would invest dollars, even if they didn't come to CUNY. But if they were going to the right community groups and agencies, then they were able to support our students where they live.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Well, perhaps we can have, with some of your staff, more of a conversation of what partners are out there and that you're currently working with --

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Yup.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: -- and see what we can do about directing resources there.

Now, I think we're all very excited about part-time TAP. Where do you think you will see -- do you think that will be most helpful in our community colleges, or do you think that that's going to be across the board, that support? And of course that part-time TAP is targeted to undergraduates. So what are your thoughts about how it will help, where it will help, and any other thoughts you have about what more we could do in that arena?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: It's a long-awaited change, and kudos for the step in the right direction. And I think as we do more -- and you and I have spoken about this -- we'll see where the added need is and we can maybe allocate additional resources.

Clearly our largest sector of part-time enrollment is at the community colleges. And I think that that's where we will see, you know, the highest volume assisting.

I also think that it's going to be very beneficial to the enrollment issue that

that sector has been experiencing, because I think you have a lot of students that have been affected economically, healthwise, in their families, because of the pandemic, and the idea of going full-time can be intimidating. And so by attending part-time with support from TAP, we get them engaged, we get them back into higher ed. So I think that this is, you know, one of the best news in the entire budget, this support for part-time TAP.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: One of the things the Governor is very keyed in on is expanding our healthcare professions in terms of -- you know, from my point of view, nursing is one of the most important. Because if you're in the hospital, that's 90 percent of who you're going to see, are going to be nurses.

You have a lot of nursing programs. Perhaps somebody can tell us how many people you have to turn away and whether or not they are working with their students to explain to them that there are scholarships available,

through the state, for continuing their education and focusing them on also thinking about becoming nurse educators. And expanding those programs to perhaps find nurses who have, maybe through this pandemic, thought maybe they'd rather be teaching rather than going back to hospitals.

So perhaps we can work together on -- and maybe your folks could get back to us on what you're doing with nursing programs and getting students to think about continuing their education in that arena.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: We can send you that. And thank you for raising that point, because to expand our capacity, one of the main issues is the shortage of teaching professionals in nursing. So very much in line with your colleagues, and we're happy to provide the information that you requested.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And we go to our Higher Ed chair, Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: I guess I have a rodent problem too, with the mouse.

Chancellor, thank you. And I appreciate our conversations as recently as I guess last week.

Real quick, you spoke about full-time faculty. What is the ratio of full-time faculty at CUNY now?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: I don't know that number offhand.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Will you have someone get back to us?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely, yes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay.

The second question. We passed the TAP expanding eligibility to DREAM students. How has that impacted CUNY? Do you know how many students, Dreamers, have enrolled at CUNY?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So we can

get you that information.

We have about 5,500 undocumented students, is our calculation, in the system. And it's been a game-changer for them in terms of some steady support. So kudos to the Senate and the Assembly for that support. And if we can do more, I'm sure that those students would continue to benefit from that.

SENATOR STAVISKY: I think that's a terrific idea, frankly.

A couple of other questions -- because many of them have been addressed. I asked the chancellor of SUNY, and I want to ask you the same question. I am concerned about --

(Zoom interruption.)

SENATOR STAVISKY: Excuse me?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Go ahead, Toby. I'm sorry, I forgot my microphone was on.

SENATOR STAVISKY: I am concerned about the students who I think somewhere may have left high school, never made it to CUNY, and I think the community colleges are the perfect place for -- or the four-year colleges, either way.

But what have you been doing to reach out to work with the New York City Department of Education to find these students and to have them enrolling in the community colleges or the four-year colleges? To me, that will help any decline in enrollment very, very dramatically.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So we've done a great number of things.

And let me also bring you greetings on behalf of the 9,764 students of CUNY that are in your district, Senator.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Are you talking about current students?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Yup.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Wow. Okay.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So we created a number of programs with the DOE.

We got support from the Petrie and the Bloomberg Foundation, for example, to create a program to have students at CUNY mentor, graduating kids, so that you wouldn't have the summer melt, it will stay with them, and make sure that they enroll and they came to

class. And it provided internship money, a stipend for our students, so a win/win in all scenarios.

We also had the first community college exclusive sort of marketing campaign from the central office. We were particularly looking at African-American and Latino students, because we saw that there was a decline in those numbers, particularly the community college enrollment session.

So we did a number of things to be able to work with the DOE and others to bring those students into CUNY, and we will continue to do more.

SENATOR STAVISKY: The Governor's Executive Budget has various provisions for the so-called flagship four-year colleges of SUNY. How do you feel about applying this concept to CUNY?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: We don't use the flagship term at CUNY. I think -- I welcome the focus from the Governor in expanding research funding throughout the state, and we would like for CUNY to benefit

from that investment.

Research creates knowledge, but also research funding attracts additional research dollars. So we want those dollars in New York City. We're talking about bringing the city back. It would be a great way to have added support for research, because that's going to multiply knowledge and it's going to multiply grants into CUNY.

And also think about the equity issue. A lot of our researchers of color in the state, and the students, the graduate students, are in CUNY. So we would like to be able to see an initial investment there too, and are delighted that the Governor is focusing on research overall for higher ed.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. Because I too agree that CUNY has tremendous research potential, which I'd love to see in reality.

You and I discussed the question of mental health support for your students. Would you comment on that issue and what you've done and what's there in the budget?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

So we have used stimulus funding, the funding that's going to the colleges, $5 million in each cycle, to bring in additional in-person and virtual support and mental health for the students.

We would love to be able to get additional support, we think about maybe $8 million in the budget would be appropriate for this, to continue those investments that we made. And also to cover some of the schools that we were not able to provide any funding because they were not -- the students did not qualify for the stimulus funding.

So -- and I want to thank also, because I know that you were key in getting that additional million last year in the budget, and would we like to have those things as baseline.

SENATOR STAVISKY: And you and I discussed what happened in reality when we did not increase tuition last year and this year, including the shortfall that may have resulted.

How would you address that issue of --

because I totally believe we must not rely on the students to support higher education. This is a state requirement. And certainly we're trying to reverse the trend. But I don't want to see CUNY or SUNY affected by it.

How has this no-tuition-increase policy affected CUNY?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: I mean, it is something that has been beneficial to our students. We have also with the community colleges, as you know, not raised tuition for now over five years. So we did it before it was something that was included in the budget.

But we have mandatory costs that we have to meet. Right? And for example, in the -- and we're so appreciative for the filling of the TAP gap on this budget. But that is based on the tuition about three years ago.

So those last two years and then this incoming year, going, those three years of no increases have left a gap of about

$133 million in our campuses, which we need to cover the mandatory costs, the commitments we made -- for example, the large significant bump for adjuncts goes into this summer's -- into this year's budget. We'll be able to -- sort of be able to fulfill all that with that additional support of $133 million.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Obviously, you know, we discussed this and I just wanted to -- everybody to hear the effect, because I am so totally committed to increasing the state support and reversing this terrible trend of requiring the students to pay for what the state should be doing.

What have you been doing to improve student graduation rates? In other words, coming closer to the traditional four-year, two-year graduation?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Well, again, I mentioned in my testimony that we broke the record of the number of graduates at CUNY in this year, and you would think that a year with so many challenges, right, that that would not have been the year in

which that would occur.

So -- and we were 5 percent over the year before. That was the second highest number in our history.

So programs like ASAP, on the community college side, keep improving the overall numbers there. Many of our colleges are including different aspects of those programs into the regular attainment, making sure that students take 30 credits in the year, they remain on pace to be able to graduate -- all those things that are best practices that most of our campuses have incorporated and we see that now in the graduation -- in the graduation rate.

Obviously additional financial support is important. During the pandemic we also did the switching of -- for a year of courses -- the students had the option of taking credit/no credit courses to navigate their needs. I think that was very helpful, and the students mentioned that flexibility as something that helped them.

So we're taking a comprehensive look.

And actually we had a one-day conference two months ago of best practices across the system to continue to deliver on higher graduation rates.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to our ranker on Ways and Means, Assemblyman Ra, for five minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chair.

Chancellor, thanks for being with us again.

Just along the same lines of what Chair Stavisky was just talking about with regard to the tuition freeze. I'm just wondering specifically -- you know, we know costs always go up. Obviously with the record inflation we're experiencing, I would imagine there's any number of things that are perhaps going up even more so.

So just wondering, you know, again if you can shed any light on that, how that has impacted the costs of the school relative to, you know, what we should be thinking about

when making investments in this budget.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Well, thank you. And again, greetings from the 189 CUNY students that are part of your district. So thank you for your support.

And for us, clearly, being able to keep the mandatory costs -- I mean, it was really important for us, the covering of the fringe benefit costs which as you know is something that we always have to add into the budget. So we appreciate the fact that the Governor included it this year. I mean, fringe benefits is, you know, about 25 percent of our costs. So that's a huge investment.

And again, if we could get sort of that number that I mentioned, which is about 133, which would have been if we had had tuition increases over the last three years -- which we didn't -- and it's probably doing the right thing for the students, right, in terms of what they need. But we have made commitments in terms of our labor contracts, in the case of a number of other

things. If we could get that support back, it would be a huge advantage to us.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I always love that you have those statistics ready for us, because it brings it all home about the impact on our individual districts. So thank you for that.

The one other question I had, you know, talking to Chancellor Stanley, you know, about the floor, the funding floor and, you know, the 100 percent of last year's number, which is -- which is good and provides some continuity. But we know that, you know, given what we're coming through here, that perhaps looking back a couple of years, maybe even pre-pandemic, might be more beneficial.

Do you know what that number would look like in terms of the difference in the funding at 100 percent if we're basing it on '21-'22, as opposed to if we went back to the last pre-pandemic year of '18-'19?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So I don't have that offhand, but we can certainly make

that available for you.

And we -- the -- in our budget request we asked for this funding floor, and in addition $300 dollars in base aid. But I can certainly get those numbers to your office.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, that would be great. Thank you, Chancellor.

Thank you, Chairs.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the Senate.

I think somebody may have their mic unmuted.

The Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

We go to John Liu, our chair of New York City Education, for 10 minutes.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you so much, Madam Chairs.

Thank you, Chancellor, for joining us. It's always a pleasure to see you. Let's start with the pleasure before we get to the pain.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Can we just have

whoever try to mute so that you're not overlapping John Liu? Thank you.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate your testimony, Chancellor, and the responses that you've given to my colleagues before. I guess, you know, we're -- I feel like we're in some kind of twilight zone when we're celebrating a $124 million increase to CUNY. Right? I mean, it just doesn't seem like a lot to celebrate. It's -- it might taste great, but it's less filling.

So I've often posed this question to you, and I'll pose it again to you. Right? What if somehow there was a lot more money for CUNY? And I guess, more specifically -- I don't recall you talking about this recently. You know, the PSC and students and a lot of CUNY advocates, myself included, and Senator Gounardes, they put forth this plan called New Deal for CUNY. What do you think about the major components of this New Deal for CUNY? And is it something that we should aim for? Is it something that's in your

chancellorship's eyes? Or is it just something that -- are we going down a blind alley here?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Well, thank you always for your questions. And, you know, I also bring you greetings on behalf of the 10,833 CUNY students that are part of your district. So thank you for your support --

SENATOR LIU: I think it's down from 12,000 last year.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: My note says that is an increase. But I can double-check that for you.

SENATOR LIU: Okay.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: But there's still a kind of quite a sizable group there.

But -- so again, many of the elements that are present in the CUNY New Deal are things, for example, that we included in our budget proposal, like the additional number of full-time faculty, additional number of personnel for mental health services.

One element, for example, which is of particular interest to me -- which is not addressed directly in the CUNY New Deal -- but is support for our infrastructure and career services. If we want additional paid internships, if we want additional connections to industry, if we want the pipeline of our courses and curriculum to be better aligned, we need to have the individuals who are out there connected with industry bringing that knowledge back, connecting our students. And frankly, it's one area where in CUNY we have work to do and it's often not mentioned when we think about -- we talk about advising as a general category, and that's an important category, and academic advising is.

But the advisement of students to connect with the world of work, where half of our students come from families that do not have parents who have a college education, I think it's particularly, particularly important and would pay great benefits if we have added support in that arena.

SENATOR LIU: That seems like a relatively minor budget item, at least from the advocates' point of view. It's a $28 million cost over five years.

So I guess that your -- that's the first thing that you would mention as part of the New Deal for CUNY that they didn't --

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: I think I mentioned before that in the budget request we included faculty and additional mental health support. And I was saying something that was not part of the elements of the New Deal. But I mentioned faculty and mental health support and the academic advisors too.

So I was just signaling something which I think we don't include often and is moving forward a key element if we want to really succeed in connecting our students to the world of work.

SENATOR LIU: Sure, I appreciate you mentioning faculty. It is certainly a huge part of the New Deal for CUNY, getting full-time faculty. You know, it looks like CUNY is at half the national average with 35

full-time faculty per 1,000 students, as compared to nationwide, which is more like 65 per 1,000 students.

So what do you think, do you think students -- current students and potential students care about the faculty/student ratio? Because the interim SUNY chancellor a couple of hours earlier didn't seem to think that students cared.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Well, again, I did not listen to her testimony, but given her track record, I'm sure that that is not what -- I mean, I didn't hear, so I'm not going to comment on that.

But, I mean, clearly when any of us -- right, you go to a reunion, you bring alumni back, they often remember a faculty member that was inspirational and important in their life. It's one of the things that in all those places always matters.

So really -- and that's why we made in our request a big push for additional full-time faculty. They're there for you for advisement, for mentorship. They're there

year to year to year, right, so it gives some consistency.

You know, because I know that you took your teaching duties very seriously, and you still do, they're also important for reference letters, to be able to support you when you're looking for jobs. Right? All those things that having someone who is consistently there for you matters.

So I think it's a key thing for universities. It is a part of any student's success strategy. And it's also part of our investment in research and the creation of knowledge and dissemination of knowledge, which is what -- you know, part of the core reasons for a university. So absolutely. Absolutely.

SENATOR LIU: Okay, so you think that the faculty -- having a larger faculty-to-student ratio is something that students would like to see, and that having more full-time faculty, which is what the private colleges like to boast in their records, is also a good thing for students?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Absolutely.

SENATOR LIU: All right. And then a big part of the New Deal for CUNY has to do with tuition, curtailing the rise of tuition. You talked about how there hasn't been an increase for the last three years, which I think is a great thing.

But can we do even more than that? And would it be a priority if the money was somehow there, to not only hold the line on tuitions but actually reverse the line on tuitions -- again, with this interim goal of getting the percentage of CUNY operating costs paid for by tuitions back down to what it was 20 years ago.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So again, there's no doubt that a policy that would make tuition free for the students would be beneficial to the students. Right?

The other part of that question is, are you going to have the resources so that the education that you're receiving and the experience that you receive is a quality one?

Right? And that is the part that is often not addressed in formulations about free tuition. Right?

So I think that most people would say that if you could have the resources available to be able to have the highest quality education possible and not charge tuition, that would be a win/win scenario.

We are very proud of the fact that, you know, about 75 percent of our students graduate with no debt and about 66 percent of our students -- between the support from the state, which is very generous with TAP and Pell -- pay no tuition.

SENATOR LIU: Great. Thank you so much. I just have one last quick question for you, which is kind of a pet peeve of mine because I taught there for a little bit, and that is the -- at the Murphy School of Labor Studies. And I believe CUNY, under your leadership, has given them a little bit more resource, an additional floor for them to have classes.

They have a great idea. They want to

be able to use some of their classroom space for some kind of a labor museum during the daytime, when obviously they don't have many students, because the students at Murphy are all full-time workers. So what do you think of that idea?

And, you know, they don't want you to have to pay for the whole thing, but they do need some kind of a slight lease expansion.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: We are very proud to have supported their request, and they're getting about 50 percent additional space, not just for their classrooms but also for the library and some of their administrative needs. So we're very, very supportive of that school as it continues to galvanize -- and I think that, again, we have many of our campuses that have exhibits in part of their space, and we are fully supportive of those kinds of partnerships.

I want to focus on really strengthening and solidifying our great School of Labor, and -- but any partnership

that they want to do, that they're going to have with assisting space, it's music to my ears.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

Madam Chair, see, I ended on time. Like I always do. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Senator Liu.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Epstein, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you, Chair.

And thank you, Chancellor, for all your work and being with us today.

You know, I wanted to talk to you about the struggles that we've seen with students who, you know, have food insecurity, transportation insecurity, housing insecurity, and how CUNY can be a better provider for them. We've seen a lot of young people who haven't been able to continue their education. And I know this is something that you hear regularly, and I hear

it as well, you know, part-time students can't make it, they're dropping out.

What -- you know, I know you've done a lot of expanding food pantries across every campus and allowing people to go eat. But I'm wondering what you haven't done yet. What are the -- where are the holes that we need to start filling for all these young people?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Well, thank you for that. As I mentioned in the questions from Assemblywoman Glick, I do think that we need to provide some core elemental support. The food pantries in our campuses. Make sure the students qualify for every possible benefit, right? Those things are steps in the right direction.

But I also think that moving forward, and I think the pandemic taught us a lot about supporting people where they are in food insecurity. So I think that partnerships with some of the nonprofits that occupy this space might be the way to go in terms of really -- because those are the

neighborhoods where the students live, right? Probably easier for them to shop in that community, be around that community to get their needs met.

So I think that that is work that we want to do.

On the housing insecurity, we have a couple of --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Chancellor, can I ask you, what do you need to help make that work? What do you need from us to allow those partnerships to flourish?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: You know, I think that we should have -- I mean, and because food insecurity was such a key issue during the pandemic, right? I mean, not that it was not before, but I think it drove it home. I think that we should really sit down together with the folks who are doing innovative work in that space, because I think there's a lot of -- and we saw it.

We have, for example, deliveries of food that some of our campuses took in the pandemic because they were not coming to the

campus, right? So it means that meeting them where they are is the key thing. And there might be some institutions better suited than we are in making that, and we use it to make the connections.

So I just want to be in the space of not just doing the same things that we've been doing, but try to be more innovative to really meet the student where the need is.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: That's great, chancellor. And I'd really look to the Medgar model because I think they have a very comprehensive model of food, social worker support at Medgar Evers.

And, you know, I'm happy to sit down with you, you know, past budget, just to really think this through more, because I think this is a critical thing that we haven't grappled with.

And I know I only have, you know, 30 seconds left, so maybe quickly on housing and quickly on transportation.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So on housing, we have a number of pilots that

we're working with several nonprofits in the Bronx that are very promising --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: What do you need from us, Chancellor? I'm sorry, I know what you're doing. I would love to know what you need.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So, I mean, on the housing front I would imagine that since we don't provide housing, partnerships for us to work with the entities that provide housing to make those connections happen and make them lasting.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And how about transportation needs that students have?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: I mean, I've -- you've heard this from me before. When you are in the DOE, right, you get your books, you get meals and you get transportation. You graduate and three months later you show up in my campus -- in any of my campuses, and none of those things are covered.

So any additional support that we can get to support that -- ASAP has shown us the

difference that providing transportation costs for the students makes. So any investment there would be well received.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you, Chancellor. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

To the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And we're back to Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: So good afternoon, Chancellor, and to your chief operating officer and chief financial officer.

Let me just say this to you. I looked at your stats, and you said you had the highest number of graduates ever in CUNY, and I'm so proud of that. How did you do it?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: With thanks to the very dedicated faculty and staff that we have, and the tenacity of New York City students that wanted to persevere and they really wanted to make their education count during the pandemic. So the students and our faculty and staff and the

entire team are the heroes in making that happen. Thank you.

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, congratulate them on my behalf.

But I have a question. The PSC last contract made substantial gains for adjunct lecturers and professors. Teaching a three-credit course at CUNY will move them to a single of $5,500. However, they still do not have pay parity with full-time faculty of the same title.

Would you support legislation that provides funding for CUNY to increase adjunct faculty pay to achieve parity with full-time lecturers?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So in this budget proposal we have the high bump that we negotiated where adjuncts will go to $5500, which is a significant increase from where they are right now. So I'm very proud of that increase.

And so again, we're delighted to be supportive to do more for our adjuncts.

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, clearly when

you pay staff and you're paying them a decent wage, they stay. If you don't pay them well, they leave. And that -- we need continuity of services provided, in order to increase the graduation rate that you're doing now. So please keep up the good work.

But do you think that expanding TAP for five years and/or restoring eligibility to graduate students, in addition to allowing optional semesters, quarters or terms eligible for awards, will have a similar result in enrollment, student achievement, as you stated for your part-time TAP expansion?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: We have seen the difference that TAP makes in our students' lives. So support for them, like the one that we see in this budget for part-time and for people that were incarcerated, are huge steps into bigger equity and having larger numbers of students take advantage of higher ed.

SENATOR JACKSON: So Senator Stavisky mentioned mental health professionals. From my understanding, CUNY has chosen to hire

part-time temporary mental health counselors to try to meet the needs of students. With increased funding, are you committed to hiring permanent, full-time mental health counselors during and after this pandemic?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So I'm not sure that that -- about that statistic, about just hiring part-time mental health folks, so I'll double-check on that. But that's why I made the point that we would like to make the money that we used from the stimulus dollars, that we used for two years, we'd like to make that permanent so we have a steady, regular support of in-person and online support for our students' mental health.

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, thank you, my time is up -- $253 million for CUNY and $253 million for SUNY.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Next up is Assemblywoman Rebecca Seawright.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you,

Chair Krueger and Chair Weinstein.

Chancellor, it's great to see you today. Thank you for your leadership as chancellor of one of the largest public urban university systems in the nation.

I know of your long-standing and vigorous efforts to create opportunities for students entering the healthcare professions, but there's still a construction hole in the ground in my district at 74th Street and New York Avenue which should be a new Hunter college facility to serve nursing students and faculty, which we're in need of more than ever now with the pandemic.

What can be done to help move this vital project forward?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Well, thank you, Assemblywoman and alum. And also I bring you greetings from the 1,225 students in your district.

I forgot to mention the 6,800 in Senator Jackson's district. So my apologies to him.

You'll be very happy to hear that we

have issued a request for information to look at potential partnerships that would allow us to really move forward with that space in -- that would support Hunter science and nursing and other health faculty.

So we put out that request for information. We want to see what kinds of partnerships are there so that we can maximize resources and actually bring to fruition this space that we've been talking so long about.

And there's been a lot of interest, so we're very, very enthusiastic about being able to move forward with that project soon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Terrific. Thank you, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And to Senator Andrew Gounardes.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you very much, Senator Krueger.

Hello, Chancellor. Good to see you.

I know we've touched on this a little

bit, but I want to go back to the proposed funding levels in the Governor's budget this year. The CUNY Board of Trustees in October had asked for an increase of an additional $313 million in operating support to support a whole host of investments in hiring staff and some research and support services, et cetera, but you're only getting about $120 million of that. That's a very, very big gap.

Do you feel that with the funding that the Governor is proposing you can still meet the kind of goals and expectations that the Board of Trustees has laid out from their original budget request a few months ago?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So thank you, Senator. And again, greetings on behalf of the 10,370 CUNY students that are part of your district.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: More than any other district. I represent more CUNY students than any other district, I believe.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Do you want me to --

SENATOR GOUNARDES: I want you to answer the question. We can talk more about that later.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Our data has to be high, Senator, comp -- so that -- I don't want to create any competition here.

But again, this has been really one of the best budgets from the Executive that CUNY has had in a very, very long time. We're very appreciative of that. We also know that getting to sort of -- you know, longer-term gaps in funding is something that takes time. So this is definitely a step in the right direction. We would like to see additional investment. We put that out there in our request of additional full-time faculty, additional personnel in areas like mental health and career services. But this is clearly a step in the right direction.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you for that.

And similarly, on the capital side, you know, the Board of Trustees had asked for 437 million; the Governor is proposing 324.

That's a much smaller gap.

I know you've answered a bunch of questions about the capital, especially from Assemblywoman Seawright. What will that 324 million go towards? What are the big capital priorities that CUNY is laying out that they want to tackle with this money moving forward?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: We are actually in the process of addressing, you know, what will we prioritize with those additional dollars.

Clearly there's a need for additional critical maintenance. We all, for example, have seen how important things like ventilation that was not too sexy, for example, are so important as we deal with the pandemic. So we'd like to be able to continue some of these investments that we have made in that area.

We might be able also to invest in some new projects that we have not been able to in the past, in some of the campuses that have been able to address new or newer

facilities. So we are in the process of doing that analysis there.

And we'll be happy to receive your feedback and your thoughts as we move forward with that process.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you very much, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assemblywoman.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I actually have a question, Chancellor. If nothing else, if you can tell me how many students I have, and then I have a real question.

(Laughter.)

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Three thousand nine hundred and twenty-one in your district.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: See, Senator Gounardes, and an Assembly district is much smaller than a Senate district.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So in all seriousness, Chancellor, I just was wondering about the CUNY School of Labor and Urban

Studies. I know that it's really been doing well in these past years and that they're looking for additional classroom space and have suggested or put forward a proposal for a Labor Museum for New York City, a very large labor city.

I was just wondering if you could give us an update on the school and if that proposal is something that may -- that you're looking to go forward with.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Well, thank you for your question.

We -- you know, we are very proud of the sustained growth that the School of Labor and Urban Studies has had over the past three or four years. And we -- as I mentioned earlier, we've allocated additional resources to almost meet 50 percent of the space that they have now, so they can expand for their class offerings, and also space they needed for a library space and for some administrative space that we're in, you know, in need for.

So we're happy -- I think that's going

to be ready fairly -- fairly soon to do that.

And at CUNY we have a tradition of working with a lot of museums and other institutions utilizing our space for galleries, for exhibits. So fully supportive if the School of Labor Studies wants to use any of their existing space to collaborate in having exhibits and things of that nature. I think it's a great partnership.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I guess some of the issue is that it's been so successful, the school, that they need even more space. So that's certainly something we could talk about going forward, I would think.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Absolutely. Absolutely. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So now we'll send it back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

I see Brad Hoylman just popped up with his hand. So Senator Brad Hoylman.

SENATOR HOYLMAN: Thank you, Chairwoman Krueger. I just wanted to follow

up on Senator -- thank you, Senator Krueger.

I want to follow up on Assemblywoman Seawright's question about capital. Why not use capital that's already afforded in the budget, allocated in the budget, Chancellor, for any new construction at Hunter College, in particular with the nurses' building?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So first, greetings from the 2,949 CUNY students in your district.

We have made no determination about how we're going to be using the new capital, right? I mean, it actually still needs to be approved at the end of the budget process. Right? So, you know, we're doing that as is now. There's 25 campuses in the system, and many of them have needs for additional space too. So we will put all those things at the end of the budget process and determine what are the best investments that we can do. There might be some areas also, Senator, in which we can leverage, in public-private partnerships and leverage our state dollars in capital to be able to do more.

That's why, for example, this request for information is out there, to be able to see what kinds of creative ways we can use to leverage the good funding that we receive from all of you in a way that it will maximize money for Hunter and for other campuses too.

So we have not made any determination. And clearly, if we were not interested in advancing the project, we would not have put the request for information out there.

SENATOR HOYLMAN: Okay. Just -- I guess it begs the question we have, you know, hundreds of millions of dollars we dedicate to CUNY for capital, and it's a little frustrating that we as legislators don't know where that money's allocated. But I guess you're telling me that it takes time -- in this case, I guess it takes decades -- to determine.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Well, what I said was -- you were asking about the capital at a location that was proposed in the budget now, and that was what I responded

to, saying that we have not made a determination because it hasn't been approved yet, right?

We can provide you with the information about all the -- in every year how we have allocated our capital funding request. That has been done.

SENATOR HOYLMAN: Is it something you support, the use of capital funding in the budget for this purpose?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Whatever we're going to end up doing at Hunter, we're going to need to have a capital allocation, absolutely. But we're also trying to be proactive and identify other possibilities, like a public-private partnership, that would leverage additional dollars that would allow maybe to even do more than we can do now, if we can bring a different partner in.

So we're trying to be as creative as we can to be supportive of a great project and a great opportunity.

SENATOR HOYLMAN: And in my district, at the Brookdale Campus, too, on the

East Side, I just want to thank you for your support of that and the Macaulay Honors Program.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I believe we have Assemblywoman Glick for her second round of three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Very briefly, Chancellor, I think a few members have mentioned the Murphy School of Labor, which the point is they do need some additional space. The reluctance seems to be that some of that space would lie fallow part of the time. The classroom space would be fallow during the day, and that's why they have suggested this alternative use, so that the space that they need, the additional space that they need could be acquired and that CUNY would not feel like it was being underutilized.

So I just want to weigh in on that.

My question -- my question is around sustainability. Obviously it's a big question. New York City is a large

metropolis, and there are lots of things that are on the table. So I'm just wondering what things are CUNY -- what steps has CUNY decided to take, what have they taken already, and what do you see on the horizon?

You know, the city is doing things like getting rid of single-use plastics, energy efficiency, all of those things that reduce our carbon footprint and your expenses. But obviously sometimes you have to spend money to make these improvements.

Where are you, what are your plans?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So that is a very important priority for all of us. And if you don't mind, I'd much rather maybe have your office -- and share with members here -- some of the things that we've done in a comprehensive way.

Because, you know, I can talk about, for example, a project at your old campus, Queens College, with NYSERDA, in which we're trying to see if we can store energy in electric vehicles that would serve as a backup for electricity on the campus but then

also fuel the -- you know, those vehicles moving forward.

So we have, I mean, like this, many, many initiatives. And I'd much rather, instead of using all your time, send you a report on that and then, you know, talk about the ones that you might find more interesting.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I appreciate that.

And I just wanted to say at this point that the focus -- Borough of Manhattan Community College is in my district, and everybody seems to be weighing in on the capital needs around their campuses. So I just would be remiss if I didn't plant a flag for the many needs at -- it is an enormously -- you know, it is so used -- day, night. They have a number of capital needs that I hope will wind up on the list.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thanks.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senator

Krueger, do you --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Yes, I have myself, and then I think I have --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We have an Assemblymember.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yes, sorry. Myself, then the Assemblymember, then Toby Stavisky.

So hello, Chancellor. Nice to see you. How many students do I have? Come on.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Two thousands, four hundred and twenty-six.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. A lot more coming through -- I think I have three campuses of yours in my district.

We've talked about this every time we've ever met, but it's already been raised by Assemblywoman Seawright and Senator Hoylman. Just, again, we need a nursing school. The one you've got is going to collapse underground soon. It's not even a building you own anymore; the City of New York owns it. And we just need to address the crisis ASAP.

I'm glad you have an RFP out on it. I'm not telling you how you have to do it. I'm just saying you all know that we have a nursing shortage and it's just almost untenable that we're not doing something to speed along the creation of a new location to train your nurses.

So I'm just not -- it's not even a question, I'm just stating it as a fact there.

I asked SUNY, so I'll ask you the same thing -- and I don't expect you to know now, but to get back to us all. If we look over 10 years, what's the ratio of administrators to faculty in the CUNY system? Because there's a belief that the number of administrators keeps growing as the number of full-time faculty don't keep growing. And that is a concern.

But we'd like to see the numbers, and maybe we're wrong. So I did ask CUNY the same question.

So then we'll jump into the shocking reduction in the number of students,

particularly at CUNY community colleges. I've been here in the Senate long enough to have been around the last recession that almost collapsed the world, back in 2008, and we saw a growth in students because when the economy tanks, usually the pattern is to see an increase in the number of people who go to school, because there aren't really jobs available.

And yet in this crash -- granted, a different kind of crash, with a pandemic attached to it. We've seen also a plummet of CUNY students -- and again, my understanding is primarily in the community colleges. And yet at the same time, we've seen -- and my data may be wrong, but it's been reported to me that during the pandemic, the number of New Yorkers who went into the online out-of-state non-certified proprietary colleges doubled, from 45,000 to 90,000.

Those are my least favorite models because they have accountability to no one, and the record shows that the outcomes for the vast majority of their students is

terrible.

So something's not jiving. They're not going to our schools, but they still want to go to school, and they're pouring their money into these online models that are going to fail them, when I keep getting told by CUNY and SUNY for years and years that we're expanding our more successful, effective online options.

So help me understand how this all is coming together the wrong way and how we can turn it around.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So lots of things in that last question. I'm equally concerned about the declining enrollment in the community colleges. I do think that the pandemic brings a different kind of economic downturn than the others -- that speaks to mobility, to people's willingness to go places, to -- and so that might be part of the rationale for the increase.

Some of the sectors where many of our students are employed part-time and full-time have not come back yet. I think that that's

part of the explanation as to why there might be some hesitancy in returning to school or going to programs associated with those areas. That's why I think the part-time TAP is going to be particularly helpful for those.

I don't know that we know that the students who are not coming back are the students who are going online elsewhere. Right? And what we need to do is to be the best choice for those students who want to do online, who think that that is their option, that we have the largest number of options for them.

And we are investing some of our stimulus money into creating fully online programs using the expertise that we have in our School of Professional Studies, which is ranked among the top 10 online schools in the nation, to use that expertise to assist our campuses to build more online programs for the students for whom that's the option that they want.

So this will be a direct response to

the point that you're making, and we're making those investments right now using some of the stimulus dollars to be able to do that.

And we're also revamping, on the community college side, the applied associate's degrees. Those are the degrees which are not made for you to transfer, right? That they say in this field there's demand, you should be able to come and get a job with an associate's degree.

I've asked all my campuses to look at their menu and maybe do away with programs that maybe were good 30 years ago, now not so much, and double down on the ones that are effective.

Part of the things that we've been doing with the CEO Jobs Council that was led by Jamie Dimon has been to invest in a couple of new pilot associate's degrees that include apprenticeships, right, for our students. Because I think that those programs are going to be some of the programs that folks are looking for. And if we have more of those, I

think we're going to be able to attract more students back.

So those are some of the things. I'll be happy to sit down with you and your team and discuss this more, because I do share your concerns on two fronts -- on the community college side, and on losing those online students going elsewhere who should be coming to options at CUNY and SUNY for online.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. And I -- again, in my reading -- and I'm not the academic here. But in my reading about what's working and not working with online, it's being careful that it's not just you turn on a computer and you stare at it, but interactive classes where you have actual faculty that have Q&A back-and-forth with the students. That you may use, you know, your best lecturers to do the lecture part of classes and then break out into smaller subsections with adjuncts and others to do Q&A and follow-up on written assignments.

That, you know, what really doesn't

work is just telling a student: Hand me some money, now go start a computer screen for X number of hours and then we'll call it a day.

So I do urge you to look at, you know, the models that seem to be the most successful.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: And those are -- if I -- that is exactly why we're doing the investment we're doing with SPS as the lead, because that is exactly the kind of quality control that we want for our online programs.

So you are quite the expert, and those are exactly the things that we want to replicate, not just open a Zoom and there's no quality there.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Correct. Because we're not doing any young people in New York a favor if we've got 90,000 of them signed up for crap online education with no standards applied.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Yup.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We're really not.

Thank you. I'm going to cede back the

rest of my time. Assemblywoman?

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

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you, Chancellor. It's good to see you. I have --

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: And you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

I have one question about capital. I know we've talked about it, but I'm curious what the CUNY system is doing in its analysis of its capital needs that are consistent with the CLCPA and the constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment.

What are we doing to look at our CUNY capital about its carbon footprint and planning for the future? So that's one question.

And then the other is -- just maybe a comment on this issue about debt relief. And I know that for our students, many of them end up not paying much in the way of tuition. But there is so much else that is about money. And -- so I recommend, if you haven't

read it already, the opinion piece by Tara Westover, who wrote the book "Educated." And what she talks about is when she got a Pell grant is when she finally was able to take care of her health, she was able to actually become a student. And that it wasn't about financial -- it wasn't about money, it was about financial security and freedom, the freedom to actually plan her life.

So it's something I think everybody should read, and I really would like to have further conversations about that issue.

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So thank you again for those questions.

You know, I also want to bring you greetings on behalf of the 1,385 students from CUNY in your district.

We are -- I mean, ASAP is part of our model of a comprehensive approach to your point about supporting students in different kinds of needs.

I think, moving forward, we need to do some of those things in-house, and we also need to be a better connector with some other

nonprofits and other ones who are doing those services out there too, so it's not something we have to provide but we just need to make sure the student -- the student gets what they need, right. And that might be from us, but that might be from an outside program, government or nonprofit.

Let me, if you don't mind, allow our COO, Hector Batista, to address a couple of your things about the carbon footprint, because that's a lot more in his immediate expertise.

Hector?

CUNY COO BATISTA: Thank you, Chancellor.

Assemblywoman, thank you for your question.

With regards to our capital projects, I mean we make it part of any procurement that we do, any construction project that we do, that at the forefront on all of those is to meet the carbon footprint goals that we have to meet. And we're at 22 percent right now for a goal of 35 percent by the year

2025.

So we feel very confident that everything that we're doing at CUNY is going to get us to that number, if not exceed that number. And part of that process is to make sure that as we're thinking through capital projects or construction projects, that the environmental impact that that's going to have not only in that campus, but in the community, is taken into account.

I'm happy to report that we have, you know, a host of charging stations in our campuses and that we have launched a study to make sure that those stations and that footprint continues to have the impact that it needs to have, from solar panels and -- multiple around campus. So, you know, it is a goal that the chancellor has charged us with, and one that we take obviously extremely seriously.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. And I

believe the only Senator left -- always have to be careful with us -- is Toby Stavisky for a three-minute second round. I believe I'm correct.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. Thank you.

And Chancellor, on behalf of the wonderful two CUNY institutions in my district, Queensborough Community College and Queens College, I thank you.

And I wanted two things, real quick. I want to associate myself with what Senator Krueger said about the online out-of-state institutions. These are very dubious institutions and I have grave misgivings, particularly when it comes to TAP for the incarcerated -- I just get a feeling that they see something here, and I do not want to see that happen. I think CUNY and SUNY and the independent colleges could certainly do a better job.

And as far as the Labor College is concerned, it is -- it's increasing in enrollment. We've got to make sure that

those students stay. They represent the working men and women in New York City and New York State, and it's really a wonderful college.

Let me ask a couple of quick questions. We've been talking about virtual learning. Has there been any way to evaluate the success or failure of the virtual learning experience for the students?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: So we did, in the first year of the pandemic, along with Ithaca, research on that effectiveness. So, you know, I can make that study available to all of you.

At the end of the day, right, what we want is different modalities that fit different students' needs. If you learn better online, we want the best teaching available to you online for you to succeed. If it's in-person, in-person hybrid. So we have to talk about quality instruction all across the modalities, right, and meeting the students where they need.

I think that the pandemic has allowed

us to look more at the online. We want to continue to do that in a quality way. But again, we want quality teaching in whatever modality, and to be getting data on student success on them so that we can advise you properly.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

And in terms of the childcare, bringing the childcare program to campuses that don't have it right now, are you prepared to -- I think it's a great idea, so are you prepared to implement it?

CUNY CHANCELLOR RODRÍGUEZ: Absolutely.

And if you would allow me, I'll be remiss -- and many of you will do this -- in that this might be the last budget hearing which we have our beloved colleague Matt Sapienza as a CFO, as he goes into new ventures beginning in February, so I want to give two seconds to Matt to address the group and for you to salute his great contributions.

I know that you have all loved working

with Matt over the years, and we've been lucky to have him. And I do want to acknowledge him.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you, Matt.

CUNY CFO SAPIENZA: Thanks so much, Chancellor.

And many thanks to all of our colleagues here in the Assembly and Senate for their great advocacy for CUNY and all of public higher education over the years. It's been a pleasure serving, and certainly a pleasure working under our great chancellor, Matos Rodríguez. So thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Matt.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you, Matt, for your service.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So we end this portion of the hearing, and we will move on to the New York State Education Department. And we welcome back to this hearing Commissioner Betty Rosa.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

Good afternoon, everyone. Let me start by thanking for this opportunity

Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky, Glick, and members of the Senate and Assembly here today.

I'm Dr. Betty Rosa, the commissioner of Education, and I'm joined by Executive Deputy Commissioner Sharon Cates-Williams, Senior Deputy Commissioner Dr. Jim Baldwin, Chief Financial Officer Phyllis Morris, Deputy Commissioner Sarah Benson, and Deputy Commissioner Dr. Bill Murphy.

I also want to thank Chancellor Young and our Board of Regents, including our chairs, who are watching today.

The Regents and the department, as you know, have two strategic priorities. The first is to create equity for all students to prepare for college, careers, and civic engagement. And the second is to fundamentally shift to a service-and-support-oriented approach for our statewide educational community and the public.

To achieve both priorities, the department needs the funding we requested to hire and maintain appropriate staffing

levels. The severe spending and hiring constraints imposed in April 2020 worsened the impact of a long hiring freeze on the department's capacity to achieve these priorities.

The department's full-time equivalent FTE staffing went from 3200 in 2008-'09 to 2500 in 2021-'22, a decrease of 22 percent.

In response to the Division of Budget's October 2021 call letter, the department requested funding for 302 positions to rebuild our capacity. We are encouraged that the Executive Budget includes funding for 134 of these positions, 44 percent of the positions requested. however, full funding to support all 302 positions is needed.

There are several proposals in the Executive Budget we are very pleased with, including the expansion of the TAP program to part-time students, and restoring TAP for incarcerated individuals; the increase to the department's access and opportunity programs, which include Liberty Partnerships Program,

HEOP, STEP, CSTEP and Foster Youth; and also the increase in the Readers Aid program by $700,000.

However, there are Executive proposals of concern that need your thoughtful consideration.

First, we strongly oppose transferring oversight of 42 healthcare professions from the department's Office of Professions, OP, to the Department of Health on January 1, 2023.

OP ensures competent professional practice, aligning the state's system of educational preparation, licensure and professional oversight under the single umbrella of the Board of Regents, which is elected by the Legislature. Allowing the agency that regulates healthcare facilities to oversee licensed practitioners results in conflicting objectives, and it's not in the public's best interests.

Instead, fully funding and staffing OP each year would allow OP to be more responsive to the needs of our customers,

their employers, and the public.

Second, the department urges a thoughtful and thorough review before considering the Executive proposal to enter New York State into the Interstate Medical and Nurse Licensure compacts. Our Board of Regents has directed our staff to fully examine these compacts to see what may be possible and in what professions this may make sense.

We have already started that process. We have been in conversations with the Department of Health, and we've been in conversations with the new, amazing Dr. Mary Bassett.

It is important to note that these compacts require member states to adopt the same standards in law without modification. For example, compacts mandate applicants to submit a Social Security number and background checks. Neither is currently needed for New York State licensure. This could adversely affect foreign, DACA and low-income applicants and may also have

unintended consequences related to the "BSN in 10" law, since this is not a compact standard.

To address the concerns of enabling out-of-state licensees to obtain New York State licensure more quickly, the department has developed and will roll out a new "Fast Track" pathway for licensed nurses and physicians. This will maintain New York State standards for licensure and practice without ceding our authority to a nongovernmental agency.

We oppose the Executive's proposal to allow new programs of study offered by certain not-for-profit colleges to be temporarily approved 45 days after submitting a completed application.

Currently most of these approvals occur within 30 days of receipt of an application by our staff, and 96 percent within 60 days. This independent and objective review of the integrity of proposed degree programs is the single line of defense protecting the educational and financial

interests of students, and the investment of taxpayers' dollars in financial aid programs.

The Board of Regents and the department do not want to stand in the way of innovation, but we do want to ensure that our students and their time are invested in quality higher education programs.

In conclusion, we request the Legislature provide additional investments to enhance support and services for students with disabilities to ensure success in college and further equity for all.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions and providing any additional information that you so desire. Thank you for this opportunity.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you, Commissioner.

Assemblywoman Glick, did you have questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Glick for 10 minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

A couple of questions. You refer to your review period for program approval. Of the 134 lines that you have been authorized, how many would wind up going to the program approval division?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, first of all, let me just start by saying, before I ask Sarah, that it's not the approval of the 59 positions, right, that would go over. And that's one issue.

But I think the other issue is that the way that we found out about this was during a budget conversation. So we've had no real exchange and opportunity to really understand the rationale, to really understand what's the thinking behind this.

So I think the positions is one issue. The fact that the sweeps -- the 2.8 million sweeps have been of real concern, in order to really build our growing responsibilities, the freeze impact it demands. And actually the last year, the reduction by 10 percent of our budget has really, really been critical.

Sarah?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: Sure. Thank you, Commissioner.

Assemblywoman, in terms of staff dedicated to program review approvals, on the OP side we did request 59 additional positions, and some of them would go towards professional licensure qualifying program review.

Are you also asking about, on the higher ed side, the number of positions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Yes. Let me preface it by saying that over a period of time the department has been systematically starved. And as a result, there are either organizations like colleges and universities or professional groups that have requested different approaches from SED, including this rather strange one to remove all of the oversight and move it to DOH, which as far as I know does not have the capacity or the expertise at this point to handle it, while you have been building out a licensure renewal and electronic program.

So I'm just wondering if there are

going to be -- I believe the Governor has included some new positions in the budget. I'm wondering how that's going to be utilized and what kind of shortfall that continues to present to you.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

So in the proposed budget there were 11 positions that were in terms of looking at our vacancies and nine -- right now we are backfilling 11 positions plus nine more for recruiting.

But the fact of the matter is we also, as you know, have had to use our own funding for the 9 million for modernization to enhance the TEACH certification application system in order to reduce processing time. So the 11 positions that have been committed to are positions that obviously we will -- we have been raising our own funding.

And I'd like, at this time, Phyllis to give you -- and we will submit as well in writing -- the specific details of what it means in terms of those 11 positions.

Phyllis?

NYSED CFO MORRIS: So thank you, Commissioner. In terms of the office of teaching initiatives, the 11 positions that we asked for to help with teacher certification processing, we -- the Division of Budget has indicated that we are to use our own -- the amount of money that was provided, basically underspending in other areas, to pay for those positions.

So that's not really a tenable way to fund those positions. We need dedicated funding to be able to support those positions.

I think your question might have had to do with OCUE, the Office of College and University Evaluation, with regard to the program approval question specifically. And we did ask for four additional positions, and we did not receive funding in the Executive Budget for those four positions.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay.

NYSED CFO MORRIS: And we can provide a comprehensive list of everything we asked for and what we did and didn't get.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I think that would be very helpful. I have heard from obviously various colleges that they have delays in getting responses. But, you know, I talked to the department and aside from shortfalls in your personnel, there are also the realities that not all information is always provided in a timely fashion.

So I think one thing that could be helpful is a more immediate response from the department to those who have submitted what I will refer to as insufficient information to allow you to do a full review. So I think some of it is that kind of feedback loop being a little bit faster.

The other thing that is deeply concerning to me is the Interstate Medical Compact. I do not believe that New Yorkers tend to travel to various states with lesser standards for their healthcare, and I'm wondering why New York State would accept professionals from other states that may not have the same degree of training and education to practice here.

Is that exactly what is being proposed?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: What's -- so we've been -- just so you know, we have been in extensive conversation and even through the process from the Regents request, we have been having conversations with the Department of Health. I know Sarah had a conversation today that was scheduled. I've been speaking with Commissioner Bassett over this issue and trying to find and discuss what are our major concerns with Social Security and some of the other issues in terms of adopting the standards and having a full understanding of what the implications are.

As I said, we are open to have the discussion with just -- right now, and we don't believe that this would be in our best interest. And so we are currently not supporting it without really seriously understanding what the benefits would be.

And I know some people say there are 40 other states that do this. But, you know, we do have the issues with -- that we do not

require, as I said in my introduction, the fingerprints and some of the other situations.

But Sarah, I know we've been in extensive conversation on this, so you may want to add the latest issue in discussions with DOH.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: Certainly. No, I'm happy to. I think that there's a lot of complicating -- and it's not things we're going to solve in a short conversation. There's a lot of complicating factors. There's a lot of information.

The fact that we do have different standards potentially creates two different pathways into licensure. That is problematic administratively but also problematic in terms of qualifying two different sets of people to do the same job and get the same credential. So I welcome an offline conversation about some of those details.

I would also say in my conversation today with the Department of Health, we are very mindful of the workforce shortage

concerns and the need to get more practitioners into New York and the real, very real challenges that are being faced. But I think that there are some opportunities to explore other ways to do that, including potentially extending some of the executive order provisions or variations on that, in a way that may make more sense in terms of addressing shorter-term solutions.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

It's -- it would seem to me that the department has a very broad purview in the budget. I'm just wondering whether or not your budget -- to what extent would you rate your budget request and what wound up in the budget? Is that a B minus, a C? Where are we in terms of seeing a -- a support for the department to do its multivaried tasks in a reasonable time frame?

I think that's some of the complaints that we have heard over the years that I don't think are necessarily fair given the short deck with which you've been dealt.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, thank

you. I think that part of what we've been trying to do is look at the fact that the state is flush with cash at this time. And since we have been in many ways -- we have experienced, as I said, growing responsibilities, impacted by what I already shared -- the freeze impact, the 10 percent sweep -- you know, the sweeps that we've had in OP for a long time, and not being able to invest that back into the hiring practices.

I would say that overall, and I'm going to do it on the P-20, because obviously we look at it across all the needs and all the demands, that I personally, along with my team, feel that the budget, when you think about 134 positions when we requested 302 to even get back to the 2008 number of FTEs of, you know, 3200 -- we really feel that this budget has not been responsive and as responsive as we obviously would be expecting, given the financial conditions.

So I'm not ready to give it a number. As a good teacher I have to think about your question and look at the complete composite.

But I certainly would not give it anywhere in the A category.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much. My time's expired.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And first to Higher Education Chair Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner.

First let me ask you about the shift in positions and the oversight from SED to the Department of Health. What are the quality -- if you were issuing a job search, what are the qualities that you would put into that search for people to deal with oversight over the professions, the licensure, et cetera, that perhaps DOH may not have?

I've heard the commissioner of Health testify that she was short -- she was understaffed, to use her phrase, and short I think it was 500 positions.

So what are the qualities that SED would look for? That may not be present in DOH.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I think that -- and again, for us the issue of the standards that we set in place for what we expect the public to have in terms of the various professions is critical.

I think the moral character of individuals is extremely -- our Regents meet, as you know, every month to deal with many of these issues that are sometimes looking at licensing issues in terms of restoration, revoking, all of the above. We want the very, very best quality of individuals that can in fact support the public, support our various communities by knowing that these individuals, not only from an educational perspective and the quality of the practices, but also in terms of when we review the credentials, that we in fact can stand behind these individuals as they move forward to do the work. Whether it's in nursing homes or it's in our hospitals, we know that we want

the very, very best individuals to do this kind of work.

And I know Sarah has done an amazing job working -- and still keeping the service-oriented approach, working -- trying to work with the Department of Health, they have meetings ongoing monthly -- I did chair those with Commissioner Bassett -- to really find the kinds of solutions, the kinds of support that we maintain the integrity and the quality of our professionals.

Sarah?

SENATOR STAVISKY: Oh, did you want to add? Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: I would only add that our focus in the Office of Professions is always on public health and safety. And with that focus, we have the luxury in some ways of not being as concerned about staffing numbers or reimbursement or financial concerns. Our focus really is on preparing and making sure that the educational qualifications and the full preparation of those licensees ensures safe

practice.

And so in terms of what do we look for and what is our focus, that is our focus. And so I think our focus is a little different than Department of Health. And those two things work well together as a balance to ensure appropriate long-term needs are met. So I think there is a very different viewpoint that we bring to that equation.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Getting on to the program approval, the changes that the Executive made in her budget -- and I know that it does not apply to the professional licensure or the master plan amendments, et cetera, but other programs as well.

How would this affect the students in terms of needing courses to graduate, et cetera?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay, on that one I'm going to tell you that of course it's going to affect the students in terms of meeting -- when we think about quantity, to

Sarah's point, versus quality, it is going to have an effect on the training, on the professional way that we prepare our students.

And some of this work we have been having internal conversations, particularly, you know, around our P-20 conversation. And I know Jim has been doing an incredible job in looking at this, as somebody who formerly was involved in -- as president of a higher ed institution.

Jim?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MURPHY: Thank you, Commissioner.

Senator, the potential impact on students could be quite significant. If a college were to submit a program and within 45 -- after 45 days commence that program, if we were to subsequently find that the program could not be approved, those students, the time that they've invested, would have been wasted. The initiative that they took to enroll in that program would have been misdirected.

And while there is a requirement that there be a refund of any tuition that was paid, there would also be implications for that particular student's financial aid situation, assuming that they had taken a loan or that they were in some other way receiving taxpayer-supported financial aid.

So while it sounds like a good idea, when you just step beneath that idea you realize that there are implications not only for the institutions -- because what it really does is deprive us and them of the opportunity to get answers to the questions that we pose when there are issues, and it also creates significant possible disruption in the educational process for the students who enroll in those programs.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Let me get on to a totally different issue. The Governor and the previous governor have issued a lot of executive orders allowing people to go way beyond their scope of practice, many of the professions to go way beyond their scope of practice.

How do you feel about requests that -- certainly there are issues that have come before the Higher Ed Committee -- that say, well, there have been no bad things that have happened, therefore let us continue and put into statute the executive orders that were issued by the Governor. How do you feel about that?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I think we were obviously -- I don't know that we're out of the pandemic yet, although I think that some people would like to think that, you know, and be hopeful that we're around the corner from this.

I always think when we have these kinds of situations that, you know, while some people may say having time for a feasibility study, having time to analyze the data, having time to really look at what worked and what didn't -- and that is critical in this kind of situation.

Rather than just to rush and say nothing happened, and therefore let's just, you know, adopt these decisions. I don't

believe that that is -- that that is the approach that I would certainly support or recommend.

I think that we really have to do a real deep analysis of the process and in fact look at a closer look as to, you know, what actually did work and have the data support those decisions.

SENATOR STAVISKY: The pharmacists particularly have been a major area of expansion of the EO.

In the remaining 90 seconds, do you have any problems with the Collaborative Drug Therapy Management program and the expansion of their functions in the budget?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, we've had conversations with some of the pharmacists. Sarah -- and I'm going to use the quick couple of minutes to say what some of our conversations have led to.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: So certainly, thank you. I think the answers to those things may be different, Senator.

Certainly there's a variety of

proposals out there, and I think that each one needs to be looked at individually to determine whether or not pharmacists are educated, tested and appropriate to do things on a long-term basis that they may not have in their current scope. We welcome those conversations with you. Happy to participate in that.

I think as far as CDTM, the current -- making current -- making permanent the current provisions is nothing that we have any objection to. Expansion is something we certainly should talk about and we're happy to collaborate on anything that is helpful to you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Well, there's only 15 seconds, so we thank you for your testimony today. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Toby.

Assemblywoman.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Walczyk, the ranking member, for five minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Commissioner, wonderful to speak with you again.

Commissioner, the teachers are aging out in our system and we're already facing a teacher shortage. This is one of the questions that I didn't get to with the chancellor. But I was wondering what you could tell me about the Governor's budget in regards to, you know, assistance or incentives to incentivize, you know, high school kids to get into the teaching profession.

Because we know it's already an issue now, and everything that we've learned about our teaching colleges and comprehensives is telling us that it's going to just be an expounded issue in the future as we face a greater teacher shortage.

So I was just wondering what you could tell me about the Governor's budget in that respect.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

So first I think we have looked at the issue even prior to the Governor's budget, knowing that we are in a crisis, right, and that we're in a crisis that has been really exacerbated by COVID.

And we also know that we're trying to also, through DEI, as you know, trying to create a diverse, you know, teaching force. And we're trying to also -- really using all the different tools and resources, whether it's through My Brother's Keeper, engaging young high school students early in being interested in education -- we're working with different stakeholders to really address some of these issues, and with superintendents.

We're also looking at -- for example, we know that there's some successful programs like the TOC II. And while we were disappointed that the funding wasn't there, we're hopeful that that is one program that we do receive the $5 million that we really truly believe will expand the program.

We have been also looking at residencies, right? Teaching assistants. If

you look, you will see that we've got to create a pipeline, we've got to look to places where we know that there's an investment in teaching assistants coming into the field. Let's use the residency programs to support those individuals with grants, with ways that we can turn them into the future teachers.

So I think looking at multiple ways, multiple pathways to support bringing people into the field, looking at individuals who have a particular core talent in this -- CTE teachers, teachers that are interested in working with students with special needs, and really working at trying to create flexibilities, as you know the department has done, and the Board of Regents. But also creating very intentional ways of bringing them into the field and engaging them in working with our communities and our students.

So we're using multiple ways of addressing the shortages and multiple ways of engaging all of our communities and

stakeholders to really make sure that our teachers -- our future teachers are coming from high school students who go through, you know, Teachers of Tomorrow, through My Brother's Keeper, through residency, through ways of incentivizing individuals that truly want to come into the field by making -- creating flexibility but also creating opportunities for them to be successful in these spaces.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Thank you, and I appreciate that. I know it will be a continued dialogue.

When are we going to allow schools the autonomy to make decisions on their day-to-day operations with their local health departments, instead of edicts from Albany, when it comes to masking, vaccination, testing policies, that kind of thing? When are we going to put that onus back on the local school districts?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I think that you know that we have been engaged with trying to really work -- even before

Dr. Zucker exited, the department really took a lead in trying to work with school districts in terms of specific needs.

The pandemic obviously has very specific mitigation strategies, that we're all making sure that we follow the science. At the same time, you know that the Department of Health has also been working with the local departments of health to ensure that the communities are safe.

We have been asking for metrics, as you know, to ensure that we have a destination in mind, with a roadmap, and with the metrics to get us there. And that has been for the department, for us, something very, very specific in terms of having that as a way of making sure that the field understands where we're going and how we're going to get there.

ASSEMBLYMAN WALCZYK: Commissioner, you know how to burn five minutes.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And we're joined now by Andrew Gounardes.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you, Senator Krueger.

Hello, Commissioner, how are you?

I have two questions. First, I want to talk about SED's role in oversight over the New York City Department of Education response to addressing its backlog of special education reimbursement cases. I know that there has been some movement on this over the last couple of months, that this has been an ongoing thing for years.

I have constituents who are -- literally have taken out $400,000 of debt waiting for their city to process their application, look at the application, and then get their reimbursement. Four hundred thousand dollars for a working-class family is unconscionable.

What are we doing to make sure that we are addressing this problem from the state perspective?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

So we will send you additional information because we have been, over the last -- as you know, the backlog has been in place for several years. And we have been trying through various chancellors and mayors, right, trying to address this issue of the backlog. Working -- working with advocates, working with the department.

At the same time, as you know, last year thank God we had the opportunity to have a bill, the IHO and also OATH, and we've been having very extensive conversations with the city, both the mayor's office as well as the chancellor, to really make this a top priority to respond to not only the needs of our special ed students but also -- in terms of services and placement, but also to respond to, to your point, to make sure that these issues are addressed.

And so they are working on full-time impartial hearing officers so we can move this backlog forward. And I know --

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: You know, I will give you a report of the latest conversation.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: I would appreciate following up with you after this. Thank you very much.

My second question, shifting gears a little bit, we have heard a lot during our budget hearings this year about a pending crisis in our mental health system, and that we don't have the workforce to meet the needs of children and families and individuals who are seeking help.

The last couple of decades there have been several exemptions that have been granted in several categories of mental health professionals to allow them to help step in and address this staffing crisis. But those exemptions are all expiring, I understand, this year.

There is some proposed legislation that I believe my colleague Senator Brouk has introduced to kind of help modernize all of these occupational requirements and licensing

credentials. And I just want to get your take as to whether you think that would be sufficient and that will help us address the staffing crisis that we're heading into by trying to take this approach of modernizing these professions.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I think that's one aspect of it. But I think, similar to education, we have to do a better job in recruiting, retaining, preparing, right, the profession.

And also one of the things that we've been -- we started to do early on was with the funding from the feds, we did suggest to the schools, along with working with the commissioner of Mental Health, to really invest, to really align and see the importance of trauma, the importance of mental health as part of the whole sphere of looking at the landscape of education and teaching and learning, so that it is a partner, it is a critical partner.

And so we want not only the recruiting, but we also want the flexibility,

to your point. But we need to increase the footprint of these individuals in our schools, in our community schools, and in our communities.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Epstein, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you, Chair.

And always great to see you, Commissioner.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So, you know, two years into a pandemic, is that a point where we need to just get rid of standardized testing and Regents exams because they're just so hard to take at this point?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, thank you for the question.

Since we did have a conversation with USDE last week, we are in the process of looking -- obviously, you know, we've been doing for over two years at this -- almost

two years, the grad measures to look at our graduation, what our diploma signifies. And we are looking at assessment and the importance of assessment and looking at multiple ways of assessing our students.

So we are in conversation. More than glad to share with you our latest with the department, USDE, and also internally some of the suggestions -- and I know Jim even had a conversation with some of the superintendents on Friday.

So we are definitely looking at multiple ways of assessing our students and making sure that we have a composite and not relying so heavily on our high-stakes -- and still maintaining the integrity of our standards work that you know is critical to student success.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And I appreciate that. And I look forward to continuing to talk to you about this, because it's something, as you know, that I care about.

So some of these schools that are CSI and TSI-designated institutions, you know, we

have really, really, really old data now. And we've talked about pathways out. Is there a way we can do that now for these schools that like have alternate assessments and we need a pathway out for them?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So thank you for that, because that was the main piece of this conversation, which is the accountability part, which is what you're asking about.

So the accountability discussion on Friday was exactly this, that we can't just turn the switch back on without, you know, data from 2019. The kids didn't take the test in 2020. Forty percent last year doesn't exactly tell us a great deal, and who was part of the test versus who was not.

So we are -- as you know, we put out the waiver, we were denied, and we're still challenging the issue of the waiver. And so our meeting on Friday was to continue to challenge this identification process.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Well, whatever support I can provide, I'd appreciate. I'm

happy to provide that.

And the last question -- I know I only have 30 seconds left -- is what institutions of higher education might try to access some of this TAP funding for students who are incarcerated, and what oversight we're going to have to ensure that anyone who has access to it. I know that's because you're going to oversee the TAP. But since you're going to oversee institutions, you know, I'm concerned that these are vulnerable students that are going to be maybe reaching at some straws -- how are we going to make sure that they're high-quality institutions that are working with them?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely. I'm going to turn this to Jim, as we've been having some internal conversations about the importance, to your point, of making sure that we really put in place a system that monitors this.

Jim?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MURPHY: Sure, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We're going to go back to -- the time's expired. We're going to --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MURPHY: We will -- we'll get you an answer.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Great, thank you.

We're going to send it back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Next, Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

Commissioner, good afternoon. And to all of your executive staff, appreciate all the work you're doing.

Understanding what you had said, you put in a budget request for several hundred positions, and you only got about 30 percent of what you really needed. Not good.

But I have a couple of quick questions. Do you support Tier 6 pension reform to help recruit and retain educators?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I will support -- and again, we have to look at

language, right? But I will support any -- any process that helps us to recruit and retain teachers as well as social workers and others.

SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. That's a good answer.

Then I have another simple question. Do you support CUNY and SUNY being the main providers in state facilities as TAP is restored for incarcerated students?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Jim, since you've been dealing with the incarcerated conversation. I think we're -- go ahead.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MURPHY: Sure.

I mean, I think we have to be sensitive to the fact that SUNY and CUNY can provide that service in many parts of the state, and may be interested in doing so. But we also have a number of not-for-profit institutions throughout upstate New York that are also certainly very well suited to providing those services in their regions and in their locales.

SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. And I can

appreciate your response. I'm more concerned about people in our state being employed and carrying out the services.

So as long as it's within New York and not going to another state and getting people to come in -- huh-unh. I'm not in favor of that right now.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.

SENATOR JACKSON: And my third question is can you comment on your stance, Commissioner, against the healthcare workers licensure transfer from State Ed to the Department of Health?

Did the Governor consult with you on this proposal? And have you spoken with the DOH about this proposal? And what funding amount do you need to support your staff to enhance licensed accreditation?

And I understand, based on your budget, that you're short-staffed, you didn't get the numbers that you wanted.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So no, there was no -- we found out during a budget briefing.

And -- but I do have to tell you, subsequent to that my conversations with the commissioner -- you know, the commissioner of Health has been amazing. We have really been sharing information and sharing our concerns as to why we opposed the situation and the staffing issue, and as well as the sweeps that were taking place prior to that.

So Dr. Bassett and I have been in extensive conversations.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you. My time is up.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you, Chair Weinstein.

Commissioner Rosa, good to see you.

My question is of the -- you said you would lose 42 positions from OP to go to the Department of Health. How much revenue does OP bring into SED? And how much revenue do you stand to lose if these 42 positions go to DOH, to Health Department supervision?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, there

are more than 40 positions.

But I'm going to let Phyllis give you the exact number and -- the 59, and then also the issue of the 2.8 million sweep that will also go over. Which, by the way, we've never been able to keep that.

So in terms of time, Phyllis. And then Sarah, if you want to add anything.

NYSED CFO MORRIS: So what the Executive Budget proposes to do is eliminate the $2.8 million sweep that the commissioner has referenced, and also raise the appropriation and spending authority for OP so that they can spend all of the revenue that they bring in.

And then there's language that talks about the ability for some portion of that revenue and the appropriations and the staff to be transferred. And it's unclear exactly how much money would be transferred. It's unclear how many staff would be transferred.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: How much revenue does that -- how much revenue does OP bring in? That's what my -- my --

NYSED CFO MORRIS: So it's over -- I can get you the exact number. It's over $50 million per year, and a portion of that is already transferred to DOH for certain functions. So this proposal would transfer additional revenue over, presumably.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And we can get you the specifics.

The other thing is that you -- that I want you to -- I want everybody to know is that we're already in -- we have embarked on the modernization of OP, and there's been investment in that. So it would be very challenging to all of a sudden have this modernization, and then what. You know, we've made an investment already.

So let us make the investment, let's work through what we need to work through, rather than taking these -- you know, this responsibility disposition over without any full understanding of what are the positive outcomes, potentially.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. Thank you, Commissioner Rosa.

I just want to say thank you to the staff that always responds to the inquiries, Jennifer Trowbridge. Thank you very much.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: As my camera drops.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Were you done?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senator Krueger.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I hope we didn't actually lose the Assemblywoman, just the camera. Thank you. Oh, good, she's back. She's alive. Good.

Thank you, Commissioner Rosa. I think I'm the only Senator left right now. You know, it's extraordinary that you keep coming back here for different hearings and laying out for us other things that your department is supposed to be doing.

So I'm very torn between the Governor's proposal to move the health professionals to DOH or not to. I hear you. I've been here. You were underfunded

forever, so you didn't have the staff to do what you needed to do. I get that.

You've taken on more assignments for yourselves since you became the commissioner than I've seen SED ever try to do. So I worry that you're, you know, spreading yourselves too thin without adequate staff.

But I know that when I look at questions about responsibilities for physicians, physician's assistants, nurses licensing, particularly when it comes to is anybody tracking did they do anything wrong, should they not be issued a license, should they not be reissued a license, have they been caught up in criminal activity, sexual attack on their patients activity -- that both of you have some responsibility, DOH and SED, and people seem to fall between the cracks.

And I'm just wondering, if this wasn't really a question of your losing revenue and staff, would you actually objectively oppose having one agency that's responsible for the qualifications, licensing and investigations

of healthcare workers?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I would still -- Senator, I would still object. Because I think when you think about the department's authority and you think about the responsibility of separating out quantity and quality -- and as I said in my opening remarks, to put it all under one umbrella where you don't have the checks and balances -- and to also, when we think about the disciplinary issues that we do look at, I do believe that there's a role for both of us to play. But we have to maintain the integrity of each other's work.

And the fact that we've been able to do the kind of work we've been able to do without the financial support -- I think having the financial support I think will clearly have an incredible outcome, I think, for our profession and the field.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And again, from the perspective of patient/consumer safety, which is a serious one for me, you know, who has that responsibility for the website that

keeps track of have you been charged with anything? Are you currently being investigated for anything? Have you, you know, lost 10 medical malpractice suits?

Is that you or DOH or is there -- is that a dual role and everything doesn't always get done?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay, there -- to your question, I think that there are different situations. When we get the information about these charges, we obviously work through with the Department of Health. And I'm going to ask Sarah, because this is one of these internal conversations that we've been having about -- the public safety is something that I would probably say is non-negotiable.

But Sarah?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: Certainly. So by law the oversight of physicians, physician's assistants, and specialist assistants, who we license, their disciplinary authority lies with the Department of Health.

The other 52 professions that we license we also have the oversight and disciplinary authority.

Pursuant to law, if there is an investigation or a complaint, that is confidential. So to your question about who posts information about a complaint, no one does. It's only once there's a finding and the Regents have taken a final action that that information is posted on our website for the professions that we discipline. The Department of Health, likewise, posts information about physicians.

There are also some ancillary professions, not -- you know, what we would consider unlicensed persons, but people who may have certifications or other qualifications through the Department of Health, that they would also be responsible for.

But we do work back and forth. For example, if we have a finding of a nurse who is guilty of misconduct because of short-staffing or some other facility

consideration, our folks very closely reach out to DOH and say, Hey, there may be a problem with this nursing home or this hospital because we're seeing, you know, complaints come out of that location. And so there is some back and forth there.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. Changing topics, with your discussion about the interstate compacts and whether this is a dimin -- it would decrease our oversight over these professions or whether it would expand our ability to get more healthcare professionals when we need them, tell me what your opinion is when it comes to telehealth.

Because there's lots of discussion about I think the potential for telehealth to expand, getting providers to where patients are, particularly, you know, upstate New York and Western New York. But how does what we do with these compacts impact what we are able to do with telehealth?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. So we'll start with the fact that we have seen some benefits, obviously, to the telehealth

that we clearly -- but they -- you know, again, they do not take -- you know, it's almost -- the telehealth is helpful and the telehealth has its place, but there's nothing like in-person. Right? I think we all would agree to that.

Having said that, I think this is one that, again, internally we have been doing some serious exploration.

Sarah?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: Sure.

So telehealth is already permitted in many -- many situations. The criteria, though, is that you have to be licensed in New York. So you can be anywhere as long as you're licensed in New York.

Pursuant to executive orders, you didn't have to be licensed in New York. I think the question with how that intersects with licensure compacts is an interesting and somewhat complex answer in terms of more people would be licensed in New York but would they have any other nexus to New York? Would they take business away from New York?

Would they charge less than a New York practitioner would? There's a lot of considerations that I think need to be thought through carefully before deciding that's the answer to something that is a valuable resource and certain something that may need to expand under the right circumstances.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Thank you both.

See, I still am perplexed on both, but at least now I know they were complicated questions I was asking.

With that, I turn it back over to the Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we have two Assemblymembers. So we'll start first with Assemblywoman Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

And welcome, Commissioner, good to see you again.

I have -- first of all, I just want to say I agree with Assemblymember Epstein in

the questions he was asking and the issue about testing. And one of the concerns I have is what are we doing to address the fact that a lot of the annual testing is federal. And how do we deal with that, and how do we advocate with the federal government for that to -- for some fundamental change there? So I'd like to know about that.

I also want to know when the last time we modified the substance or the content of the teacher licensing test. I know we went through the whole edTPA thing, but it's not clear to me whether it was just because of the Common Core, you know, and how that is working.

And then I just want to disagree on the OATH thing because we do not have to deny people and make people sue every year, and we didn't have to not pay our impartial hearing officers. In a lot of ways we could resolve this besides what I believe to be an approach that is illegal if not highly problematic.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay, so I'll start with the -- from the educational

perspective.

We have been in communications, as I shared and I will share with you and others that are interested, this whole conversation that we're having about assessment and accountability on both parts. And we still continue to address not only the issue of our participation in the assessment component, but the implication that it has for accountability.

So we've been really strongly, as you know, speaking to our stakeholders, but also speaking to the USDE about, specific to New York State, what our concerns are about the assessment.

And then so we can get that information to you. I think that would be the best way to address this, because it is -- it's been ongoing. We spent seven months just on accountability and how to -- you know, how do we help with this issue of identification, as you all know.

On the OATH issue, we agree to disagree. And I'd love to continue the

conversation with you privately to explain how, by the way, it is making a difference in the backlog. It's already showing a decrease. But again, you know, we will be more than glad to share that information with you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: What about the edTPA or the content of the teacher test?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. Sure.

The edTPA -- and I'm going to have Jim -- but we've done some amazing things with the edTPA because we've had conversations with the higher ed, we've had conversations about how to fold in the edTPA information into our design of higher ed programs.

And Jim, do you want to just quickly --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MURPHY: Very briefly; I know the time is ticking.

We have embarked upon a review of the teacher certification requirements. We have already modified them. We recognize that we have made it too complicated and too

expensive to become a teacher. And we are committed to moving that review forward.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I do not believe there are any other Senators, so we'll go to Assemblywoman Griffin for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay, thank you very much.

And thank you, Commissioner Rosa, for being here with us today.

I had a question. In your testimony you describe that we need much more services for students with disabilities, and I completely agree. And I just wondered if you could briefly describe what services you would make available if you were -- if you got that much more funding for this group of individuals.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. So you know that, for example, students with disabilities, I think particularly in -- you know, when we think about New York State

colleges and universities, we have approximately somewhere about 80,000 students. And when we think about a budget of 2 million to support these students, it comes out to something like $27 per student.

And we -- you and I know that this is really a population that needs a tremendous amount of support in order for them to be successful. They need all kinds of modifications, and they need -- a higher ed institution needs to have built-in support systems for our students with different disabilities to really -- to really, truly advance.

And so, you know, we really support the opportunity of also -- when we looked at the request we made through the Board of Regents of 50 million -- you know, when you get 2 million, you're somewhat -- you're okay, but you're disappointed. And we just really truly believe that enhancing supporting services for our students with disabilities is essential.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Yeah, I

completely agree.

And another question I have is in regards to canceled programs where, you know, the Governor's proposal is there's a refund provided. But it seems like a little precarious because I know different students have been at a school and they -- sometimes arbitrarily a program gets canceled and people might have been there, might be planning to go there.

So what do you suggest -- what should be happening in this situation with programs -- like how should that work?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, our concern is that -- as we indicated, and I know Jim spoke to this issue -- to have a program approval that, you know, 45 days into it that -- when in fact it's going to affect students. Why not, you know, look to make sure that these are programs that we don't have to even be involved in refunding students?

But also not -- you know, it's the time that they spent.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Right.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So it's not just the financial refund, it's also very frustrating for students to have to go through this period of time and then find out that the program is not approved.

That, to me, is not a good use of what we would consider students' time as well as financial.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay, thank you very much. Appreciate it. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Thank you, Commissioner Rosa, for being with us again this -- again today. There are no further questions from either the Assembly or Senate, so -- and we thank you.

Oh -- yes. I got nervous, Liz, when you waved.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, I'm so sorry, I just was going back on camera to wave. Thank you very much.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So thank you.

So now we're going to go to our final government witness, our former colleague, Dr. Guillermo Linares, from HESC, New York State Higher Education Services Corporation. Guillermo is the president.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Good afternoon, Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky and Glick, and all my former colleagues in the Senate and Assembly. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the Governor's 2022-2023 Executive Budget recommendations that impact the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, HESC.

I'm Dr. Guillermo Linares, president of HESC.

In 2020-2021, New York State's higher education institutions educated nearly 1.2 million students, nearly one quarter -- or approximately 300,000 -- of whom received HESC-administered state financial aid.

The 2022-2023 Executive Budget recommendations reflect Governor Hochul's strong commitment and support for higher

education programs and offer a comprehensive plan that will both continue to make higher education in our state more affordable and accessible and help two-thirds of New Yorkers earn a post-secondary credential by 2030.

Building on the more than two dozen financial aid and college access programs that in 2020-2021 provided more than $900 million to support the higher education costs of approximately 300,000 New Yorkers, the 2022-2023 Executive Budget proposes to expand TAP eligibility for students enrolled in college part-time, authorize the use of TAP for workforce credential programs, and removes financial aid barriers to once again allow incarcerated individuals to get critical job skills.

Expanding access to part-time TAP. The Executive Budget includes $150 million to expand TAP to students enrolled in six or more credits at a SUNY, CUNY or not-for-profit college located in New York State. The Executive recommendations remove the requirement for a year of prior full-time

study, which currently makes the program largely unavailable to students studying part-time, allowing the state to annually support 75,000 additional New York State students in their pursuit of a college degree.

Expanding TAP for high-demand workforce credential programs. Post-secondary education is crucial for economic success, with 70 percent of new jobs requiring some post-secondary credential. But roughly 2.4 million New Yorkers between ages 25 and 44 lack a post-secondary degree or credential, putting them at risk of being left behind as the job market continues to trend towards more skilled hires.

To make the state more responsive to these post-secondary workforce needs, the budget further expands part-time TAP to cover students enrolled in non-degree workforce credential programs in high-demand fields at CUNY and SUNY community colleges.

To ensure the program focuses on the highest-growth areas, Empire State

Development and the state's Regional Economic Development Councils will recommend which courses of sequence would be eligible for state funding, based on an analysis of regional industry trends, workforce needs, and existing program offerings.

Moving on to restoring the Tuition Assistance Program, TAP, for incarcerated individuals.

Since 1995, New York State law has prohibited incarcerated people from being eligible to receive state financial aid. The 2023 Executive Budget proposes to reverse this ban and expand educational opportunities within correctional facilities and help incarcerated individuals get critical job skills. This legislation repeals the prohibition against awarding TAP to otherwise eligible incarcerated individuals.

In conclusion, Governor Hochul has proposed a whole new era for New York, one in which we work together to ensure that New Yorkers have both access to a college education and an understanding of their

financial aid options to support their pursuit and attainment of a post-secondary degree or non-degree credentialing.

Under the Governor's leadership, New York continues to lead the nation in expanding access to a quality and affordable college education. The Executive Budget includes a $619 million increase, or 8.3 percent, in funding for higher education.

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 attain the economic and social benefits that accompany a college degree or non-degree credentials in high-demand fields.

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

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, so we go to -- thank you, Guillermo. We go to our Higher Ed chair, Deborah Glick, for

10 minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much for being here. It's always a pleasure to see you.

Can you inform us of how many students have been assisted by the DREAM Act?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I can provide you the exact number.

But we have been highly successful in ensuring that all of the students that have applied for the program, and qualify, have been admitted and have -- are benefiting currently from all our offerings, including TAP, the Excelsior Scholarship, and other scholarship programs that we have.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you. So we'll get that number from you.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: And when you say who have applied and who have been successful, what is the outreach that the department does in order to ensure that everyone eligible knows that they have that option?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, we work closely with both CUNY and SUNY, but we also rely, from the very beginning and inception of the program, on a vast network of nonprofit institutions that work closely with Dreamers -- because they are trusted, they were part of the effort to make the legislation a reality, and they have been instrumental in rolling out and the success that we've had with the DREAM Act implementation.

So we rely on them, but we also work closely with the department -- all the high schools, BOCES and superintendents throughout the state to ensure that where students may be out of status, they know that they have an opportunity to enter college and apply for financial aid through the DREAM Act.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: How will the department structure and administer part-time TAP? I know you said that it removes the one-year requirement, but if I read it correctly, you have to be taking at least six credits and no more than 12.

So how will -- and what is the -- perhaps your staff at some point could tell us what that would look like in terms of how much support a student would receive if they are in part-time status.

So I don't know that you have a -- usually there is sort of a chart of how much somebody is eligible for based on their family income and whether they're the only ones in their family going to school.

So how are you going to structure that and administer it?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, we'd be happy to follow up with you on some of the specifics.

But I can explain to you how excited we are that the Governor has proposed adding 75,000 new students to have access to part-time TAP. So this is welcome news, and we look forward to working with the key stakeholders, both CUNY, SUNY and the for-profit private institutions, to really engage on this effort, as we also intend to do with the State Department of Education.

But we are excited, and we believe that this will go a long way in, you know, giving access to students that otherwise could not have access to an education because, you know, they have this impediment with full-time -- one-year full-time. We are excited about this, and we're looking forward to having a successful rollout.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Once the budget is passed, assuming that this is included, of course, how long will it take the department to develop regulations or procedures?

Do you anticipate being ready, assuming an April 1st deadline for the budget? Will you be ready -- when will you be ready to take actual applications and review them? Will it be for the fall semester? Will it be available for summer?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, I think we have some experience rolling out initiatives such as this one, even though this is quite a significant one.

But, you know, I took this position when we rolled out Excelsior, and we were

able to really get to the finish line in terms of crafting the regs and also making sure that we are prepared to reach out to all those who will be interested.

And I think that we will be ready and able to do that looking at the fall semester, from past experiences, I can say. But again, we will be diligent in making sure that we make this available as quickly as possible once the budget is approved.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I'm of course among those that's very happy that the Governor has included TAP for the incarcerated individuals, which of course we had prior to the Pataki administration.

So -- but obviously these are individuals who are in our prison system, and so is that going to be -- how is that going to be administered? Obviously these are not individuals who have a particular income. And is this something that you will be working with individual colleges and they will be directing students to you? Or what do you envision being the process that

incarcerated individuals who are interested in availing themselves of this benefit -- how will that proceed?

I believe it's important so we have less recidivism, that people who are ready to reenter society do so with some education behind them. We have had private colleges that have raised money in order to do this, and their success rate, in terms of once individuals have left the prisons, there is a great track record.

But it does seem to me that it's a little more complicated than people applying to you. So I'm wondering what conversations you've had about how to administer it.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, thank you for your remarks. I share your, you know, enthusiasm in terms of the program. And I believe that this will be on the positive side of the equation in terms of our mission.

The implementation of the program will be handled administratively by DOCCS, the Department of Corrections. And we have

cleared the way for awards to be made within Education Law moving forward. And we will coordinate with DOCCS and others that will be involved in the process, partnering in the process of identifying the institutions that will be serving this population.

Clearly we have, you know, efforts within CUNY and SUNY and with other in-state institutions that have experience on this. But this is quite exciting to see that we're going to be able to do, by this population, giving them access to higher education.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thanks very much. One last question.

You administer a lot of different scholarship programs; some of them perhaps did not get increases. But there's one that is administered through the Department of Health, Doctors Across New York. And I'm wondering why that is in DOH, where all of the other things that provide educational resources to students seeking to improve themselves, why Doctors Across New York is at DOH, that has no particular experience with

scholarship programs.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: It's something that we'd be willing to look into. But we do have programs, as we discussed in previous hearings and with you directly, to really help address the health needs of New Yorkers.

So that's something that we can look into and further discuss with you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Well, thank you very much. And I have already requested that additional dollars go into the Pat McGee Nurse Educator Scholarship. It seems odd that we are not providing more resources there.

Thank you very much.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Much appreciated.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: To the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Dr. Linares, good to see you again.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Same here.

Same here.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Welcome home.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Let me ask you about a couple of the programs that HESC administers, and that's the Excelsior, the DREAM Act, and the Enhanced TAP awards.

In terms of the Excelsior, because that seems to be on people's minds, what's been happening? In other words, how many students are applying? Have you found that students are defaulting? Would you discuss it in terms of whether students are meeting the four-year requirement, the 30-credit requirement, how that has impacted the numbers?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Sure. Let me give you a quick overview.

Currently we have 31,000 to 32,000 students that receive the scholarship --

SENATOR STAVISKY: Can you break that down by public and private? I'm sorry, it doesn't apply.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: It's

Excelsior, for CUNY and SUNY.

SENATOR STAVISKY: For CUNY and SUNY, right.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah. So with that, you know, current number, if we look at the past several years we see that an average of approximately 45,000 students apply every year. This is on an annual basis. And of those who apply, about 50 percent of them are eligible, found eligible to receive awards.

This is similar to how we experience the process for TAP. So overall I say this is looking very well. I think we've seen a lot of positive outcomes with students participating in the program. I think that a key element with Excelsior is an emphasis in getting students to complete their degree on time so that they can save money and not have to borrow, and at the same time be able to enter the workforce in a timely basis. So that's a driver.

And also the fact that so many families that would otherwise have to pay out

of pocket to cover tuition now have this program to allow them to help pay, you know, their students' -- or their kids' college education through tuition.

So overall I say we see success in terms of completing on time, we see success in terms of the students that are able to carry the 30 credits, given the 365 years -- days that we give throughout the year for a student to be able to complement credit deficiencies they may have. They can take spring or summer -- winter or summer breaks to be able to take those classes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: In terms of enhanced TAP for the independent colleges, how many colleges have agreed to accept the ETA awards? And are they providing the requirement matching funds? And how many students are using the ETA?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah, thank you for the question.

In the last three years we've seen a reduction in terms of the number of participating colleges. We have gone from

40 participating colleges down to less than 25 colleges. That is the current number that we have. And when you have a smaller number of colleges participating, a smaller number of applicants, students, will participate. And therefore you have even a smaller number of students that are also receiving the award.

But looking specifically at the numbers now, as they are, according to the 2020-2021, there was just 2,600 students receiving awards, totaling 4.6 million that is matched by the participating colleges. So the number has reduced primarily because of the number of participating colleges.

SENATOR STAVISKY: And how would you remedy that decline? Or would you suggest that it's not cost-effective?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, we -- there was a lot of enthusiasm in the beginning. I think -- part of what I think is the biggest challenge for participating institutions is the fact that they have to come up with a match --

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: -- that they have to put up to the funding that we provide. And that is something challenging for some colleges, making it difficult.

If they didn't have the match, I think that we could see a change in terms of growth in the number of colleges participating.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, some of the colleges are in danger of closing. I know that.

Let me ask you, in the remaining time -- the DREAM Act. How many -- what are the numbers there, and where are they coming from? And whatever you can tell us about the Dreamers, the students -- the undocumented.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, the DREAM Act implementation has been a resounding success.

I said to Assemblywoman Glick that I would get back to her with the specific numbers that we have. But I can tell that every single student that has come and applied and has qualified to receive the

support of all of the programs that we have available for them, have received state aid through the DREAM Act, thanks to the efforts that we have in collaboration with CUNY, SUNY, and also the private institutions, higher ed institutions that we have.

And again, I highlight the close collaboration that we have -- which is ongoing, by the way -- with a vast network across the state of nonprofit institutions that serve immigrant populations and work very closely with Dreamers.

And by the way, we work very closely with the Dreamers themselves.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Good.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: It is a resounding success.

SENATOR STAVISKY: That to me is very important, coming from Queens County -- or representing a district in Queens County.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Lastly, the Executive Budget holds harmless various -- some of the Excelsior financial programs.

How has -- have you found that the students are receiving what they're entitled to receive? Did you need -- did you have to create new proposals and so forth?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: No, we were fortunate to have the flexibility necessary for us to be able to hold harmless students, particularly in the spring and fall of 2020 when so many students were impacted, the flexibility that the federal government and the state government, Department of Education, both levels, provided was instrumental in making sure that the vast majority of students were able to complete both terms and they were held harmless.

And on top of that, the budget now includes another layer of support to make sure that any student that may have been impacted by the -- by COVID-19 would not lose eligibility of the awards that they're entitled to. So we're in a good place in terms of the impact of the pandemic.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

And with all due respect, the students

are in a better place.

(Laughter.)

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay, thank you very much.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. Assembly?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Ra, our ranker, Ways and Means, for five minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Good afternoon. Always good to see our former colleague here.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Same here.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I wanted to ask a question about a program that I've asked you about I think the last couple of years, the Child Welfare Workers Incentive Scholarship and the Child Welfare Worker Loan Forgiveness program.

I know last year you were able to tell me that they were fully subscribed. It is a relatively small program. It's something that I would like to see expanded. So would you be able to tell me if it is fully being

utilized this year?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: It is. I mean, every single penny allocated for it is being utilized to -- according to my information. And I tell you that the challenge we have is we would love to expand, if we can, in the context of what's ahead. And I think that this will be welcome news.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. And if you could follow up, and if you have any information just regarding numbers in terms of how many people are applying for the program that might assist us in the Legislature that want to, you know, push for additional funding so that more people could take advantage, since we know there is absolutely a need to get people into this field.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Absolutely. I'd be glad to follow up with you.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, thank you.

The other issue I just wanted to mention is another -- well, a newer program, and I know -- I think the window to apply

just closed over the weekend -- but this Nurses for Our Future scholarship.

I'm just wondering how the applications are going to be evaluated, whether it's -- you know, is it income-based, is it performance-based, is there some other way that they're going to be evaluated? And specifically, do we know how much funding is being allocated to this initiative?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, the initiative has been a success. We have received about 7,000 applications, approximately 7,000 applications.

And as soon as we proceed and have the process in place, we will be announcing the winners -- you know, it's a thousand of them -- via a lottery.

So we're excited about the initiative. You know, 750 of those applicants, once they're selected, they will receive a scholarship to get a Bachelor of Science in nursing, and 250 of them will receive scholarships to get an associate's degree in nursing. So we're excited about that.

You know, in terms of what the budget will be, I think that that's something that we can follow up with you.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

Thank you, Chairs.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

I believe we're up to Senator Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Dr. Guillermo Linares, my long-time friend. How's your family doing? I hope they're doing well.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: They're doing well, and I hope yours as well.

SENATOR JACKSON: Very well, thank you.

I've just got a couple of quick questions. Do you have an opinion on UUP, United University Professions, and PSC, Professional Staff Congress, requesting about $253 million each in operating aid to support students, educators and their institutions

get to where they were and where they need to be. Basically they've been cut, cut, cut, and now, instead of being cut, they're being increased in the budget, but not enough for them to bring back to where it was.

So they're requesting about $253 million each, for a little bit more than a half a billion dollars, understanding that our Governor had said that she's proposing a budget surplus to put into reserves of about $15 billion.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, I appreciate the question, Senator. I -- you know, you and I go back a long, long way to the school board days and many other steps beyond that. And I know your passion for education, especially funding.

I believe, you know, looking at the times I was in the Assembly to recent years when I've been in this role, there's been always a struggle to try to increase the funding needs in higher education -- in K-12 as well, but higher education in this particular case.

You know, I'm gratified to see that notwithstanding all of the challenges we've seen in the last two years, that Governor Hochul is committing such a strong effort to increase funding to new levels to help us move in the right direction. The needs are great, but I think that this is a very firm step in getting us to address critical needs that we have. And I'm glad to be part of that effort.

I know that it's not going to get us where we want to be, but we can build from what this budget has presented under the Governor. And I -- you know, I'm excited about that.

SENATOR JACKSON: I'm sorry, I only have 38 seconds. I've got two quick questions.

How much money does the higher education program that you work in award to private-institution students yearly, if you know? And if you don't know, my team will be following up. And how much is awarded to public-school-institution students?

So that's the questions that I'm going to ask -- not to respond on that, but my staff will follow up.

But do you think that extending TAP for five years, restoring eligibility to graduate students, and/or allowing optional semesters, quarters, in determining eligibility for awards will result in enhanced student achievement, as you stated for part-time and incarcerated students of TAP programs?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I think any initiative that enhances the opportunity for students to get back into higher education, particularly at this time, is welcome and exciting, for New York State will benefit all around because of those initiatives.

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, thank you. My time is up, sir.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

I believe the last questioner will be Assemblywoman Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you, Chair Glick.

Hi, it's good to see you again. I just wanted to -- my questions are regarding the -- you said post-secondary education is crucial for economic success, but I notice that in the Governor's budget, which you are excited about, that the part-time TAP is only going to SUNY, CUNY and not-for-profit.

There are many institutions of higher learning that exist in the State of New York that we regulate, but they've been excluded. Do you know why?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I couldn't answer you.

I can share with you that HESC, my agency, works very closely with the for-profit institutions that serve many of our students through our TAP program and other programs that we provide. So we are in partnership with them, but I believe this particular context, while it's exciting, is a little bit above my pay grade.

But again, we look forward to continuing to work closely with this particular sector. And again, it -- it's

something that I, you know, would not comment on at this point because it's been decided that it is those three sectors, CUNY, SUNY and -- and the for-profit colleges is something that would have to be brought in the context of the discussions moving forward within the budget.

We work with all of the directives that come from the process that involves the Governor and the Legislature, and we simply implement. We would welcome any effort to work closely with any of our partners. And that includes the for-profit colleges that provide services to our students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Right. because you audit institutions of higher education that receive state funding. And if you found discrepancies or inaccuracies, they would be required to make payment, or sometimes if they can't do that, they close. And sometimes there are prosecutions. So I know the scope of your work, I just thought you may have some insight into that.

Thank you. It's always good to see

you. Thank you.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Sure.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Senator Krueger, you have --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Hello, nice to see you, Guillermo.

I don't think we have any other Senators asking questions.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. Thank you for being here.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thanks for the opportunity.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We're going to be moving on now, just to remind members, to the public witness portion of the hearing, and we have it -- the rest of the hearing is arranged in several panels -- actually, four panels we have today, which will have a number of people in each panel.

Each panelist will have three minutes

to present their testimony. We already have the testimony circulated to members, so you don't have to read it exactly. And then any members who wish to ask a question of the panel will have three minutes to ask both the question and to be able to get the answer. Because we really want to hear from the panelists who are here and make sure we still can pay attention when we get to the last presenter in the panel.

So -- and you'll see the panels are sort of grouped by subject matter.

So we start off with Professional Staff Congress of CUNY, James Davis, president; UUP, United University Professions, Dr. Frederick Kowal, president; NYSUT, New York State United Teachers, Andrew Sako, president of the Faculty Federation of Erie Community College; and University Police Officers, Christopher Lacosse, director.

So let's start with PSC.

DR. DAVIS: Thank you.

Good afternoon, Senate Chairpersons Krueger and Stavisky, Assembly Chairpersons

Weinstein and Glick, and committee members. It's good to see you. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and for your stamina today and your support, as always, for public higher education.

The PSC comes before the committee this year in a different situation than last year. We're entering year three of a pandemic that continues to impact CUNY -- our students have been among the most hardest hit by COVID. The communities in which many of them live were disproportionately affected. And CUNY's faculty and staff have worked tirelessly, as you know, to keep the university running.

We do have ongoing health and safety concerns, and course cancellations have impeded student progress in too many cases and left adjunct faculty without income and in some cases without health insurance. But we appreciate you standing by our side during this difficult time.

To reverse the current enrollment trends at CUNY and to continue providing

high-quality education, we must offer students the support they need and they deserve in traumatic times. And as you know, our students have a distinctive profile: Half of CUNY students come from households with annual incomes below $30,000; 80 percent of our students are people of color; 44 percent are the first generation in their families to attend college; 13 percent are supporting children; and 35 percent are foreign-born.

So an investment in CUNY is a matter of racial and economic justice, but investment in CUNY is also -- clearly pays clear dividends for the state. Nearly 80 percent of CUNY grads stay in New York. CUNY graduates working in New York State in 2019 earned, in the aggregate, $28.6 billion more than they would have without a postsecondary degree. And CUNY graduates working in New York State in 2019 paid an estimated $4.2 billion in state income taxes.

Last year the Brookings Institution ranked 12 CUNY colleges among the most

successful in the country at propelling students into the middle class.

Now we're very pleased that Governor Hochul has taken public higher education seriously in her Executive Budget. Her approach to enhancing CUNY's academic program without raising tuition is a welcome departure, and the efforts that you all have made to close the TAP gap, for example, and to stabilize community college funding are also reflected in Governor Hochul's proposals.

And so those commitments are essential, and we applaud them. However, we believe that this is the year not only to fund public higher education, but to make it a key legislative priority. So PSC is asking the Legislature this year to pass the New Deal for CUNY and urging you to enact a final budget that will begin to support the New Deal in fiscal 2023.

New Deal for CUNY is a five-year, $1.7 billion framework for reversing decades of underinvestment in CUNY. It will

establish robust staffing ratios, 65 full-time faculty per 1,000 full-time-equivalent students, one academic adviser for 250 full-time-equivalent students, one mental health counselor for 1,000 full-time-equivalent students, and it will create pay parity for adjunct faculty and rebuild CUNY's aging infrastructure.

And I see I have already exhausted my time.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I was about to ask if you could just, you know, complete --

DR. DAVIS: I will. I'm going to cut directly to the chase.

We do feel this year is a unique opportunity to make these major investments in CUNY. There's been a dramatic decline in funding since the recession in 2008 -- in the senior college operating aid, 18 percent alone. We have a deeply committed faculty, and we have a student body that is driven to succeed whatever the obstacles.

So thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today. Appreciative of the

Governor's plan, which is a springboard, we feel, to do even more and to seize the political moment.

Thank you, and look forward to your questions.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Now we go to UUP.

DR. KOWAL: Chairperson Krueger, Chairperson Weinstein, distinguished members of the Senate Finance Committee and Assembly Ways and Means Committee, and the Senate and Assembly Higher Ed Committee. My name is Dr. Fred Kowal, and on behalf of the 37,000 members of United University Professions, I thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I would also like to thank you for your commitment to a fairer and more just New York. I applaud your tireless efforts and steadfast support on behalf of our students and our patients.

The 2022-'23 Executive Budget is a step in the right direction to bolster the SUNY system as a cornerstone of New York's

communities. Eliminating the TAP gap, increasing funding for opportunity programs, and committing to the hiring of full-time faculty and staff are steps in the right direction. After 15 years of austerity budgeting, such steps are long overdue.

However, the resources SUNY campuses need means that these steps fall short of what is necessary. The simple fact is that if funding for SUNY had been maintained where it was in 2007, accounting for inflation, SUNY would have $7 billion more for the teaching, research, and patient care that our state desperately needs.

It is a fact that with 15 years of underfunding, enrollment is down. That is what happens when there aren't enough resources provided to educate and guide students through their college careers. Without funding, students aren't attracted to campuses. They perceive that the costs they must pay are too high and, if they do attend, they far too often drop out before completing their degrees.

In my written testimony I detail how the decade and a half of underfunding can and must be undone. We know we can't get all $7 billion, but what we do expect is the funding needed for operating costs that campuses face. Consider it a down payment on the $7 billion.

More importantly, it's a down payment on economic opportunity and social and racial justice. Without the over $100 million SUNY campuses desperately need right now, the income and wealth gap that worsens daily in our state and nation will be exacerbated.

Worst of all, the Executive Budget remains silent regarding the SUNY public teaching hospitals. None of us can allow another year to go by, another year of a global pandemic, and have New York State not fund these incredibly important institutions. The work that has gone on there has kept all of us safe from COVID.

UUP members have carried the burdens of care while also training the next generation of health care professionals. The

financial burdens these hospitals have borne over the past 15 years of budget cuts are mind-blowing, and COVID has brought them to the brink of ruin.

SUNY Downstate, which Governor Cuomo declared to be a COVID-only hospital, has lost over $150 million due to their inability to treat other patients, provide other services, and maintain their full presence in Central Brooklyn. Without funding immediately, Downstate will face a financial cliff as early as June.

SUNY'S other teaching hospitals are also stretched to the limit. If we as a state truly want to face the healthcare staffing crisis in our state, and if we really want to ensure all New Yorkers have access to the highest quality health care, the state budget must respond to these challenges.

We're in a pandemic. The needs are desperate. If not now, when? We have the resources, we have an obligation to each other and our common future. I urge you to

take up the challenge of rebuilding our SUNY system and make it viable for the 21st century.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We now go to NYSUT. There you go, Andrew.

MR. SAKO: Oh. Good afternoon Chairperson Krueger, Chairperson Weinstein, and honorable members of the Legislature and distinguished staff.

I'm Andrew Sako, president of the Faculty Federation of Erie Community College. I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the proposed Executive Budget for higher education. I'd like to also thank you for your ongoing commitment to community colleges.

Last year's budget contained a funding floor of 98 percent, which gave community colleges an additional $4.4 million. That was really a lifeline. I can't think of what could have happened here at Erie Community College had we not had that.

However, due to both COVID and changing demographics, community colleges saw a decrease in funding due to mostly lost enrollment. Most community colleges lost well over 20 percent due to both COVID and fears of COVID. This has created the perfect storm for community college funding.

For nearly 50 years, the state has not fulfilled its statutory obligation to provide community colleges the 40 percent in the statute. To make matters worse, despite declining enrollments, our funding continues to be based on a totally inadequate full-time-equivalent funding model which does not insulate campuses from enrollment fluctuations like we've experienced in the past year.

Faced with declining and uncertain enrollments, community colleges are forced to either raise tuition or cut programs. This is not -- this will not help us to attract students or continue our mission to be economic engines for our region.

This year's Executive Budget proposal

for community colleges contains 100 percent of what we received in the 2021-2022 year. While we are grateful for this support, it does not resolve our issues. By giving us 100 percent of the amount received in our worst year, the problem is only going to get worse. We need to really think about other ways.

We are asking you to consider allocating 100 percent of the 2018-'19 pre-COVID year, which would provide SUNY community colleges with an additional $37.5 million. This would help us guarantee that our institutions will be recognizable and open for business to meet the needs of our students.

And that is the most important thing: Meeting the needs of these students. We serve students, that it's their first chance, second chance, and sometimes last chance.

And I just want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity today to speak to you, and I want to thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the

last panelist, University Police Officers.

OFFICER LACOSSE: Good afternoon, Madam Chairperson and esteemed board members.

My name is Chris Lacosse -- and pardon my voice, I'm just getting over a bit of the flu. My name is Chris Lacosse. I'm a police officer with the State University Police at Albany. I represent the 400-plus University Police officers and investigators that work on the 29 State University campuses across the state.

I want to say thank you, first and foremost, to the Legislature for their overwhelming support last session, and the passing of our 20-year retirement bill. That bill represented something that would have given us a very good leg up on the local municipalities and other state agency that currently has 20-year retirements. That is something that is near and dear to our hearts.

Unfortunately we are in the middle of a very bad time in our existence. We are losing very good members to agencies all over

the state to better retirements, better pay, and that's what we're here to talk about today.

And New York represents a very large population of police officers. Approximately 97 percent of those do enjoy a 20-year retirement with their agencies. Currently our agency has a 25-year retirement, although it is an upgrade from what we had when I started my career 18 years ago.

It does not help keep people in our job. They are coming in and leaving at an alarming rate, and to the point where we're having a hard time actually even answering the most routine of calls at times. We do not have a small contingent of people that we police on a daily basis -- we're talking about some 1.5 million people in students alone. So that is no small number.

We asked for the Legislature to help us seek the passing of this through the budgetary process this session. The Governor was kind enough to offer that as a possibility, and we would be very grateful

and appreciative if that could be the case. This could not only in the long run save the SUNY system money, but actually draw more qualified and well-trained officers into our ranks.

With that, I say thank you for having me today, and I'd appreciate any questions that you may have.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, let's see.

Deborah Glick, why don't I call on you first as the chair of Higher Ed.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much. I will address a few of the panelists individually as quickly as I can.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'd better explain to Helene -- I just see you --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I'm sorry to interrupt. We'll restart the clock.

But the panel is only three minutes?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That is correct.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Right. So we have to -- I'm saying that out loud so our clock person, timekeeper, will hear. They don't seem to be hearing me say that. So let

me --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: There we go.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, now Assemblywoman.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: All right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay. Quickly, Jim, how many full-time faculty have been lost over the past decade? Do you have that number? If you don't right away, you can provide that to us.

And if in fact you're looking for a five-year plan, I -- as I understand it, you want certain ratios. That's 1.5 billion additional each year of five years?

DR. DAVIS: Sorry, I want to make sure I understood the second part of your question.

Thanks for the question, Chairperson Glick. So we have approximately just under 7,000 full-time faculty now in the CUNY system. And if you go back to -- so we have a ratio now of approximately 35 full-time faculty for every 1,000 full-time-equivalent students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay.

DR. DAVIS: So moving to the kind of ratio where we have 65, which is closer to the national norm --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Right.

DR. DAVIS: -- will require that sort of a major investment.

Could you repeat the second part of your question?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: In terms of your New Deal, you say it's a five-year plan and it adds to the operating budget 1.5 billion in order to achieve these different ratios?

DR. DAVIS: The piece that goes towards establishing the staffing ratios, we've costed it over five years at approximately 540 million for the full-time faculty and also creating pay parity for adjunct faculty.

And on the mental health counselors and academic advisors side, we've costed that around 78, 79 million over the five-year phase-in. But of course there are many, many fewer mental health counselors and academic

advisers --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Right.

DR. DAVIS: -- that need to be hired to meet those ratios.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay. I'm running out of time. Let me just -- thank you very much, Jim. We'll be continuing to talk.

Fred, if you could just tell me a little bit about obviously the school -- all of the schools' teaching hospitals lost elective surgeries and elective services. Do you know what -- you referred to Downstate, but do you have the number or an aggregate or can you get us an aggregate for that for all of the hospitals?

DR. KOWAL: Certainly can. Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: And -- and if there was to be a debt, we're not picking up the debt service, right?

DR. KOWAL: That's correct. It was proposed by SUNY. But yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: So if we picked up the debt service, would that come close to

assisting with what had been the subsidy in the past?

DR. KOWAL: It would -- it's approximately $87 million for that debt servicing --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Okay.

DR. KOWAL: So it's pretty -- it's very close to where that subsidy was -- or we call mission funding, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Right. Well, I think it was -- actually, when I started, it was 160 million.

DR. KOWAL: It was.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: But the last time I saw it, it was like 61, and then it vanished.

DR. KOWAL: Correct.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you very much.

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

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. And we'll start with Senator Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, I'd

appreciate the short answer and not the essay.

First, James, real quick, what is your number one and two priorities on the New Deal?

DR. DAVIS: Well, you know, that's a difficult question to answer at this point. Because, of course, what we would like to see is each of the pieces. And we understand there are so many competing demands on the Legislature at this point, and all of them are important. We don't like to be pitted against health care, housing and the rest.

SENATOR STAVISKY: I know.

DR. DAVIS: But the reason why I want to emphasize that the construct here is a five-year phase-in is so that the Legislature could work to move in each of the pieces -- the staffing ratios, the pay parity, and the movement towards returning CUNY to its tuition-free-for-undergraduates basis.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Dr. Fred, you're -- one question. Aside from the debt service, which is paid

by -- for all the other agencies, you mentioned the mission funding for the SUNY hospitals. And the hospitals we know have been neglected for quite a while.

Would you explain what the mission funding would resolve in terms of helping the SUNY hospitals through this difficult period?

DR. KOWAL: Yes, thank you, Senator. It's -- what we're talking about is at least going back to where we were I would say approximately 2015, 2016, when what was then called the subsidy of $87 million would be reinstated.

In part, this would cover the fringe benefit costs, because the hospitals have to pay the fringe benefit costs, unlike any other campuses within SUNY. They are unique in having those costs. Furthermore, it would help to make up for the losses in those elective surgeries and those other important services that they have not been able to provide.

We need to get back to funding these important institutions for what they are.

They are public institutions who at present are not getting public support. It is absolutely necessary that it be there. And that's why we want to see both the debt servicing taken care of and critical mission funding reinstated.

SENATOR STAVISKY: I know we've spoken about Downstate and the hospital across the street. Would you compare what difficulties Downstate is facing?

DR. KOWAL: Well, I did notice it was just several weeks ago that the new mayor announced that they were going to be pouring in over $100 million into the H+H hospitals, the public hospitals in New York City, which we applaud. That's exactly what we need to have happen in terms of SUNY'S state public teaching hospitals, remember. And it is a case where, you know, the resources this year are available and they need to be placed where they're needed.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you, and thank your members for their service.

DR. KOWAL: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Back to the Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Ra.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Sako -- Sako -- I apologize if I'm pronouncing that wrong.

MR. SAKO: No problem.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I'm just wondering if -- do you know, specific to your institution, what your share of that $37.5 million would be?

MR. SAKO: I would have to get back to you on that. I do not.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay.

I'm down in Nassau County, and I think we're -- we're in the -- at least ballpark in terms of enrollment, so --

MR. SAKO: Yeah, we're about the same.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: -- a similar number.

But I think your point is very important and, you know, I had the opportunity to raise it with the chancellor this morning, that it's great to have 100 percent, but when you're basing it off of

a really rough time in terms of enrollment, I think it's appropriate that we go back to pre-pandemic.

So thank you for that point. And I would be interested if you could get that information.

MR. SAKO: Yes, I'd be happy to. And thank you for acknowledging that. That's --

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Well, you're back (inaudible overtalk).

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Right. Quick.

Senator John Liu.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the panelists for their great work for our students and state, and congratulations to James Davis for I guess -- is this your first budget hearing, or second?

DR. DAVIS: It's the first of this joint committee. Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR LIU: Good to see you.

So rather than Senator Stavisky asking the question that we all wanted to ask -- which is, like, if you don't get the whole

New Deal, which part of it do you want the most -- let me ask, when we say decades of disinvestment in -- specifically in CUNY and SUNY, so I guess this question is for you and Fred -- what would be a vivid example of that disinvestment by the state?

DR. DAVIS: Thanks, Senator, for the question.

Look, I mean, the bottom line -- I'm going to give the thumbnail version here, right? We're talking about trying to match quality, educational quality to educational access. Right? We've done a decent job in New York State and the city on access. We could do better. But what we're also talking about is trying to enhance the quality of the student experience.

So a vivid example, you know, if the CUNY system were still funded today at the rate that it was funded in 1990 from the state, our senior colleges would have a billion dollars more in operating aid than they have today. Right? So there's been a 38 percent decline in -- when adjusted for

inflation, in per FTE student, full-time-equivalent student funding since 1990, and an 18 percent decline in that same category since the recession.

SENATOR LIU: Okay. That's helpful. So if the state had kept up its rate of support for -- this is just for CUNY, right?

DR. DAVIS: Right, for the CUNY central office and colleges.

SENATOR LIU: -- the state allocation for CUNY should be $1 billion more today than it is, even with the Governor's proposal.

DR. DAVIS: Correct. The Governor's proposal is a good, good starting point for this year. I'll be candid, we haven't seen a strong budget --

SENATOR LIU: Yeah.

DR. DAVIS: -- since the recession of 2008-'09 coming out of the Executive. So I want to be clear on that too.

But yes.

SENATOR LIU: Yeah, I keep pressing CUNY for that number, but they just won't give it.

How about you, Fred? What would be the equivalent for SUNY if the state had kept up its pace of operating support for SUNY since 1990?

DR. KOWAL: Yeah, for 1990 I don't have. But I know that just since the Great Recession, it's $7 billion, adjusted for inflation. That is billion with a B.

And here's where I think --

SENATOR LIU: Wait, $7 billion additional per year? Or $7 billion total per year?

DR. KOWAL: Total. Over the time period of 15 years.

And where we see the real impact is in enrollment. It is a false statement to say, Well, enrollment is down and so therefore the institutions don't need resources. The causality is the other way. If you don't invest in the institutions, students will not go.

SENATOR LIU: Yeah, I don't know if you were -- I don't know, Fred, if you had seen the testimony this morning by the

interim chancellor. She cited a whole host of possible reasons why enrollment might be down, but she didn't bring up tuition and the fact that it's gone up quite a bit. She also didn't think that the faculty-student ratios matter to students or potential students.

DR. KOWAL: Well, that's just false. They do matter. They matter extensively, as does the ratio to professional staff that support the process of getting people through college.

It is absolutely necessary for the resources to be there to attract and then retain students throughout their careers.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you. Thanks for your information.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

And thanks for sticking with us. You know, I know it's already been a long day for you all.

So I just want to just go further down the line to what Senator Liu was asking you about. And obviously we want as much resources as we can get to SUNY and CUNY. And you know, what we have been hearing a lot from students is how hard it is, you know, how hard it is to keep staying in school, how hard it is to, you know, stay as a full-time student, to keep your grades up.

So I know we need to change the faculty, the staff ratio -- to student ratio. You know, we need to do more resources. But I have also heard a lot around like mental health issues we're talking about, but also like food insecurity, housing insecurity.

Are you hearing that from the students as well? Are there specific things besides just additional funding that we really need to target to ensure students can stay in school and get the help that they need?

DR. KOWAL: I think absolutely, Assemblyman.

I think what we're seeing is two public university systems -- and I will

include in this the community colleges, that really are just barely getting by. We have so many institutions in SUNY where I represent the faculty and professional staff that are in such dire financial situations, and it's always blamed on demographics.

It's not the case. The case is the situation where the resources have not been there. And students are really struggling. We have students who literally can't pay bus fare.

And there was an article about one of the students going up to SUNY Poly -- it was in the Washington Post last week -- was not going to be able to attend the start of her college career -- his college career -- because they didn't have the bus fare, okay?

And when there aren't the resources to support all aspects of a student's tuition but then also the fees, it means they're paying these other areas where then they can't meet their basic needs of food, housing, and so forth.

And that's what we're talking about.

That's why nationally 20 percent of college-aged students choose not to go, because they perceive it to be too expensive. We are missing one out of every five students because they can't afford to go. And that's because tuition and fees are too high.

And so the resources are needed to bring them in and retain them.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: James, do you have anything to add?

DR. DAVIS: Thanks, Assemblymember.

The only thing I would add -- I realize the time is short -- is that, you know, I was attentive to what the chancellor was describing about the mental health counseling investment that has already been made with the federal pandemic relief funding. And I think that's been really important.

However, it's really critical that -- that's one-time money, and it's also -- it's only usable, you know, to hire people on a temporary basis. And I think the investment that we need now is for full-time mental

health counselors that are really going to be there and be available, that there won't be two-month, three-month waits to see someone.

So it doesn't address the full scope of your question, but I think that's a really important piece of wraparound services that we need to be providing.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We -- I see, Senator Krueger, you have a Senator?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I believe we have two Senators left. We have Senator Jackson -- there he is -- and then later Senator Borrello.

Thank you.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

I'm going to ask a couple of questions, and I only have three minutes, so if your answers can be as concise as possible, I would appreciate it.

So do you support Tier 6 pension reform to help recruit and retain educators? And if you have experienced that, then say

so. I'm going to ask each one of you to respond quickly, yes or no, and why.

DR. KOWAL: Yes. Because it will absolutely help with recruitment and retention of qualified faculty and staff.

SENATOR JACKSON: And you're speaking on behalf of UUP, is that correct?

DR. KOWAL: That is correct, Senator.

SENATOR JACKSON: Okay.

James?

DR. DAVIS: Yes. Same answer from the PSC, Senator Jackson. Thank you.

SENATOR JACKSON: The police officer? Okay -- Christopher?

OFFICER LACOSSE: Yes, Senator, I absolutely agree with that.

SENATOR JACKSON: Yeah, Christopher, I'll ask you a quick question.

Why are people leaving? Is it because of the 25 years versus 20 years? Or is it more than that?

OFFICER LACOSSE: Quite honestly, Senator, it's -- it is not a young man's job. It is long hours, it is bad conditions at

times. There are unsavory people we have to deal with. It does age the body.

We are -- statistically, we do not make it very far through retirement, unfortunately. A 20-year retirement gives an officer the ability to say "I am done when I'm done." Twenty years in this job can be many lifetimes in others.

SENATOR JACKSON: Okay, thank you.

OFFICER LACOSSE: We definitely don't wish to stay.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Christopher. I've got to move on with the questions. I appreciate it.

NYSUT, New York State United Teachers.

MR. SAKO: Yes, I'd like -- I'm Andrew Sako from the community colleges, and I believe also the Tier 6 would help our reform -- would also help attract faculty and support staff to the community colleges.

SENATOR JACKSON: Okay, here is a question for UUP.

The Governor has proposed closing the TAP gap. Is that enough to help SUNY

campuses dig out of the deficit from previous years, and do you have the resources to attract students? And I'm saying that, asking you as a union president.

DR. KOWAL: It helps. It is important for campuses like Brockport, Morrisville, where there's a high percentage of full TAP awardees, but it does not cover the full financial gaps that are faced by these campuses. We need operating funds directly to campuses.

Please, to all of you in the Legislature, direct funding ear-marked directly to campuses -- that's the operating money that they need.

SENATOR JACKSON: Where do you come up with -- when I say you, PSC. I was at a press conference this morning, and UUP said 253.9 million, $253 million of CUNY operating and for SUNY. Where do you get those figures from?

DR. KOWAL: The correct answer, quickly, is that it involves both what I referred to in my answers to Senator Stavisky

about the hospitals, that's about 150. The other 100 is intended to make up the gaps that exist at campuses.

It's just proportional across-the-board to different campuses.

SENATOR JACKSON: PSC?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry -- thank you, Robert.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Next, Assembly. We'll go to Assemblywoman Griffin, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Thank you very much, and thank you to all of you who have testified. Oh, I forgot my video. Okay. Thank you very much to all of you who have testified.

I realize that even COVID has very much exacerbated all of the challenges to the universities for all of you, to campuses and to campus life. And so I, you know, completely -- you know, I'm supportive of these endeavors that you all, you know, are striving for, the Tier 6 and the pensions. I

realize that, you know, we voted that in in our vote last year for the State Police and how important that was.

I know it got vetoed, but I understand that's so important in keeping your officers working there, you know, instead of going to another police force and all the extra money we have in training when we have the continual cycle of so many officers leaving. I think it was 50 percent that was noted.

But I am -- I also think it's so important to really fund our teaching hospitals. That's crucial too, because once again we realized how this became more vulnerable once we started with COVID.

But one question I have for you, Christopher -- Director Lacosse for University Police. You mentioned in your testimony about the geographic jurisdiction, that you're limited to a hundred yards past the campus. And I do know in other states campus police have a lot more -- a lot higher jurisdiction. It goes to a greater area.

And as part of what you're asking for,

are you asking for more jurisdiction?

OFFICER LACOSSE: That is correct.

I will use my particular workplace, for example. In Albany we have the Uptown Campus on the west end of town. We have another piece of campus on the downtown part of Albany, which is about 2 miles away.

When I'm traveling to and fro, back and forth, I lose the ability to do anything about simple infractions, traffic or otherwise. Picture me sitting at a stoplight, and somebody blows it, and I'm just sitting there and doing nothing. People say that -- What is he doing? He's just a security guard, he's just sitting there.

No, I literally have no jurisdiction over that particular incident. It's a simple add to our jobs that makes us a little more, in my opinion -- it gives us some more legitimacy and makes us a better community partner. It is 400 more cops on the road, basically.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Right. It does seem important, especially if you have a

lot of off-campus students that live a lot further away but could use the protection that the University Police could offer.

OFFICER LACOSSE: Absolutely, 100 percent.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: That makes sense.

Well, thank you to you all, I appreciate your testimony. Thank you.

OFFICER LACOSSE: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate, we do not have any other Assemblymembers.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We have one more Senator, George Borrello.

SENATOR BORRELLO: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My question is for Mr. Lacosse. First of all, thank you very much for being here, thank you for your service. I have several SUNY campuses in my district. I grew up in the Village of Fredonia with a SUNY school.

First of all, I agree with you, you know, the whole concept of closest car -- you guys should be in that mix when something

needs to be done.

But my question is about the legalization of recreational marijuana. I spent 10 years in county government. One of my concerns and the concerns of law enforcement in general is the lack of drug recognition experts. And I'm curious, does SUNY University Police Officers -- do you have drug recognition experts? And how many?

OFFICER LACOSSE: We have two at my agency.

SENATOR BORRELLO: Two out of how many officers?

OFFICER LACOSSE: My officers, who I have currently, about 23 or 24.

SENATOR BORRELLO: Okay. Do you know -- do you happen to know the rest of the University Police departments?

OFFICER LACOSSE: In the system? Unfortunately, I do not. I could get you those numbers. I do not know.

There has been quite a spike in the amount of DREs in the state. I think they're pushing for more on the road right now.

SENATOR BORRELLO: Well, that's my concern. I know in Chautauqua County, which is where three of my campuses, three SUNY campuses are, they have three drug recognition experts throughout every police agency in the county. Only three.

So with that being said, you know, I just want to speak to the fact that they're funding to increase -- it's a very expensive training, as I'm sure you're aware. You have to fly guys to Florida, and it's got to be renewed every year.

What is the status, in your opinion, of your preparedness for the legalization of recreational marijuana on colleges campuses?

OFFICER LACOSSE: Well, insofar as that goes, most of my officers do have ARIDE training. It's the prerequisite course for the DRE course. It's significantly shorter, obviously. It focuses on impairment as opposed to other factors.

But I definitely think we could use the bolstering in that regard. We are seeing an uptick in DWAI drug charges when it comes

to impaired operators. So it would definitely be something I would consider highly important.

SENATOR BORRELLO: So it's highly important, and we directly don't have any funding to increase drug recognition experts in University Police departments at this point. Is that essentially it?

OFFICER LACOSSE: Not that I'm aware of. Not that I'm aware of, sir.

SENATOR BORRELLO: Well, I just want to -- I think we should be on record for that, because I do think it is an issue. I brought up this whole idea of DREs. I was on college campuses -- you know, your job is to keep them safe, and, you know, especially rural campuses like where I am, where a lot of students are commuters, a lot of students have cars on campus, and it's a concern.

Every single one of your officers I assume has a breathalyzer if they need one, for alcohol?

OFFICER LACOSSE: We are all trained in -- you know, we're all trained in it, we

have the availability to take them on the road. We have a good number of them, yes.

SENATOR BORRELLO: So essentially you're -- all of your officers, 100 percent of them are trained to handle alcohol, but you only have two that are trained to handle drugs.

OFFICER LACOSSE: In the expanded form, correct. We all can take somebody into custody for the impairment. It's the observation after the fact. So yes --

SENATOR BORRELLO: Which is where the conviction comes from, really, is from those DREs. If you want it to stick, you've got to have the DRE.

All right, thank you very much. Appreciate it.

OFFICER LACOSSE: You're welcome.

. CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I believe that's it for the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: All right. So we want to thank this panel for being here with us, and we're going to move on to Panel B.

OFFICER LACOSSE: Thank you.

DR. KOWAL: Thank you very much.

DR. DAVIS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, everyone.

MR. SAKO: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we have with us Panel B: Association of Proprietary Colleges, Donna Stelling-Gurnett, president; Association for Program Administrators of CSTEP and STEP Programs, Michael Molina, president; Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, CICU, Lola Brabham, president. The next witness on the witness list is not able to be with us today, so the final member of the panel is On Point for College, Samuel Rowser, executive director.

So if we can go in that order, and we'll start with the Association of Proprietary Colleges.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Okay, wonderful.

Thank you, Chairs Weinstein, Krueger, Glick and Stavisky, and members of the

Legislature. Thank you for this opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of the Association of Proprietary Colleges.

My name is Donna Stelling-Gurnett, and I am the president of APC. As you know, the association represents the interests of 11 privately held --

(Zoom interruption.)

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I'm sorry?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, everybody please mute if you're not the one testifying.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Can I continue?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Let's try again.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. Please do.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: All right. I would like to begin my testimony by sincerely thanking all of you for your support throughout the year. You included us in public hearings and always made yourselves available to talk with us when needed, and I sincerely appreciate your efforts.

This year APC's legislative priorities

fall into two areas: The first, continued support for the Tuition Assistance Program, and the second, continued support for parity across all sectors of higher education.

I'm going to focus my remarks today on our first request, continued support for the Tuition Assistance Program. The Governor's State of the State address and proposed budget made clear her commitment to higher education and her support for TAP and 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.

Changes in the TAP program, like increasing the minimum TAP award or increasing the maximum income threshold, would have a significant impact on all students.

We are also pleased to see the Governor's proposal to expand access to part-time TAP by eliminating the 24 credit prior year eligibility requirement.

It's my understanding that in 2006, part-time TAP was introduced for students attending CUNY schools, and then in 2007 it was expanded to include students attending SUNY and nonprofit colleges. But unfortunately, students attending proprietary colleges have been denied access to part-time TAP.

The latest data shows that about 17 percent of students attending APC member colleges are attending part-time. However, the current reality is that as New York recovers from the pandemic, many students will find themselves needing to focus on family or work obligations and may only be able to attend college part-time. So I ask that the Legislature ensures that these students also have equal access to the newly expanded program.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to mention the APC Student Leadership Council. Again this year APC members have nominated two or three students to serve on this council, and we

have been working with this group over the past few months, discussing how the legislative process works both at the state and federal level as well as why it's so important to be engaged in this process.

This group of students has amazing stories to tell, and they are truly engaged, and I would welcome the opportunity for you to meet with them directly.

With that, I will end my remarks. I appreciate your time today, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Can we move on to Michael Molina.

MR. MOLINA: Hello, everyone. Let me first thank Senator Krueger, Assemblywoman Weinstein, and Higher Ed Chairs Glick and Stavisky for convening this meeting.

My name is Mike Molina. I'm the president of APACS, the professional association of CSTEP and STEP directors in New York, and also the CSTEP and STEP director at Fordham University.

I would like to start by thanking you

all, first of all, for giving us a 20 percent increase in our funding last year. It was the first increase we had had in over five years.

I'm here today to ask for an additional 10 percent increase besides what the Governor has proposed in her Executive Budget, so I'm here asking for a full 20 percent increase in funding for CSTEP and STEP and all of the opportunity programs.

So in addition to that, what we're asking for this year is that the bulk of these funds go to enable the programs to grow and develop and to be able to continue providing the services and resources that they have been providing for the last three years during the pandemic.

What we've learned over the last three years is that what we have been doing for the last three years is filling gaps, meeting our students where they are in terms of what their needs are -- whether it's technology, wifi, counseling, tutoring, academic support. Whatever it is, we are trying to meet them

where they are.

And the needs are many. Food insecurity has been a big issue, for example, for many students in both STEP and CSTEP, and I know it's been a similar issue for my colleagues in our sister opportunity programs.

So we're asking that any increase this year go primarily to helping the programs grow and expand what we're doing already. We're doing a lot.

I think there is no argument that the opportunity programs CSTEP and STEP and all of the opportunity programs in New York are the crown jewel of New York. They work. Why do they work? Because they provide support, and they provide community. And those are the two things that help students to be successful -- support services and community.

So in addition to all of this, what we're also requesting this year, frankly, is budgetary language that assists the State Education Department in ensuring that your legislative intent is carried out in any

funds that you provide for 2023. I mentioned at the outset that you gave us a 20 percent increase last year. Well, current CSTEP programs didn't see any of that. And, you know, we would like for that to not be repeated.

But -- and finally, two of the programs that we would like to ask for additional funding for are the opportunity to work with CSTEP graduate and post-bac students who we're not able to work with now. We feel like we're losing track of a large number of students who graduate as undergraduates but then take their Year 2 or 3 to get experience before they apply to graduate and professional schools. We want to continue to work with those students after they've left as undergrads when they decide to apply to grad school and professional schools.

And finally, we have a Summer of Science program that we conduct with Brookhaven National Laboratory for STEP students, for 8th and 9th graders, that has

been tremendously successful and that we would like to offer to all of our STEP programs and students throughout the state.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you, and we move on to CICU.

MS. BRABHAM: Good afternoon, Chairs Krueger and Weinstein and members of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committees.

My name is Lola Brabham, and it's my privilege to serve as the president of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to comment on the 2023 Executive Budget.

The independent sector of higher education in New York educates 40 percent of the state's 1.2 million students, including approximately 250,000 New Yorkers. CICU member colleges graduate 58 percent of New York's future teachers, 67 percent of future nurses and health care workers, and 67 percent of STEM graduates. Two-thirds of

students at CICU member colleges are from families that earn less than $125,000 annually.

Nearly 60,000 independent sector students receive TAP. COVID cost New York's private colleges nearly $4 billion as of June 2021. Federal relief aid covered less than 22 percent of those losses. This is the year to make historic investments in higher education.

The Executive has proposed long-delayed investments for SUNY and CUNY, and she's been very clear that the state is on very solid financial ground with no budget gaps projected through 2027. So now is the time to invest in a higher education ecosystem that supports all sectors.

The state must increase its support of the 500,000 students who comprise the independent sector, to the benefit of the great state of New York. You received my full written testimony last week, so I will just use this time to highlight a few key items.

We applaud the Executive's proposal to reopen TAP funding to incarcerated individuals and expand the program to part-time TAP. However, we also urge the Legislature to increase the income eligibility limit for TAP from $80,000 to $110,000 to expand the program to an additional 24,000 New York families. The income limit for TAP eligibility hasn't been raised since 2000, and the result is that every year fewer students are eligible for the program.

Bundy Aid is invested into student aid programs that help more students complete their degrees. It's been dramatically underfunded for decades. Currently it's only funded at about 18 percent of statutory levels. We're grateful that the Executive included level funding of $35 million, but we're appealing to the Legislature to increase Bundy Aid to $60 million.

We encourage the Legislature to take meaningful action to increase the number of faculty members from underrepresented

communities. CICU proposes establishing the Charles L. Riesen Fellowship Program to support undergraduate students with financial need who have demonstrated strong academic potential to succeed in doctoral studies and who are interested in pursuing a career in academia. The program is modeled on nationally successful programs and would provide financial support, academic advising, mentorship, and research opportunities to our students.

We're grateful that the Executive included a 10 percent increase for all of the opportunity programs, including HEOP, STEP, CSTEP, and the Liberty Partnership Programs. But to preserve the life-changing programs, the Legislature should increase funding by 20 percent.

We were very happy to see that the Executive Budget proposed $30 million for a new round of the HECap program. Because of the three-to-one match requirement, the state will see more than a 120 million in total investment as a result.

Additionally, CICU proposes that the state establish a $100 million Green HECap program focused on carbon reduction and sustainability. This would spur green investment in communities across New York and help the state achieve its goals as outlined in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

Centers for Advanced Technology and Centers of Excellence have proven track records of incubating technology and creating jobs and opportunities across the state. This year we encourage the state to increase that funding for each CAT and COE to $1.5 million.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Can you please sum up?

MS. BRABHAM: Absolutely. Then I will just hit this last point, thank you.

The Executive Budget proposes a significant investment in workforce development and includes a specific set-aside of $20 million for internships and apprenticeships that would be limited to only

SUNY and CUNY students. We urge the Legislature to ensure all college students are included in this effort.

Thank you. I'm happy to answer any questions that you have at this time.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

And we go to On Point for College. There you go.

MR. ROWSER: Thank you, Chairpersons Krueger, Weinstein, Glick, and Stavisky for this opportunity to talk with you about transforming lives and communities in the face of the pandemic by investing half a million dollars in New York's future workforce.

We know that education is an effective pathway out of poverty. Ninety percent of students who earn a bachelor's degree are lifted out of poverty, according to a Pew Charitable Trust study.

On Point for College is a three-legged support system for students to access college or post-secondary opportunity, succeed in college or that post-secondary opportunity,

and position themselves for a career.

You've gotten my written testimony, so I'd just like to share quickly three stories on those areas that we work in.

Access. We had a student that graduated from high school and had done really well, gotten two scholarships, $1500 and $150, went to the bank to cash that check because he needed that money to pay the rest of his bill. He got there and he didn't have proper ID. They told him if he had a birth certificate to go along with it, they would help him out. So he called his mom up, went to the county building to get the birth certificate, they said sure, we just need $30. The kid was dejected, came to us to say "I can't go because I don't have the $30."

Of course we wrote him a check for $30 so he could get that birth certificate and cash his check. That's our access part.

Success. We had a student that was a D1 athlete, also had gotten a Gates Scholarship, full ride to University of Buffalo, but had no transportation to get

from Syracuse to there. We transported that student for four years back and forth. She graduated with her nursing degree, decided she wanted to be a doctor, completed her four years of med school, just completed her residency, and we call her Dr. White today.

That's the success work that we do with students.

And the third leg is career services. We had a young lady that had completed her associate's at Morrisville, transferred to Stony Brook and got her bachelor's in health science, came back to Syracuse and was working at a minimum-wage job. When we talked to her about why she was there, she brought in her resume and we saw that on her resume she never indicated that she was a Gates Scholar. When we asked her why, she said "I didn't want to brag."

That's where you do the bragging, that. And so we worked with that student to redo her resume, and she ended up at an environmental protection firm making the money that she should be making.

So we realize that our students need that support. They need that help to get to where they want to be. So while they're going to college and being successful and doing all of those successful things, there is still an additional support system that they need, and that's what On Point for College practices, that support system.

We believe that by providing the half-million dollars of state funding for On Point programs, we'll impact thousands of students' lives.

There is an article in the Washington Post on January 30th, 2022, that talks about the work that we do with one of our students from our Utica office. If you have an opportunity to, read it. We believe that if everybody keeps it on point, we can get there.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

And we're going to go to Assemblywoman Glick for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you. The

race to beat the clock here.

Michael -- STEP, CSTEP, great programs. Do you have an idea of how many students move through in each year?

MR. MOLINA: Well, there are about a little bit over 18,000 students in the programs each year, so we know how many there are in the programs each year. And I would gather that between CSTEP, when students graduate -- you know, I can't give you an exact number. I could probably check and get back to you with those numbers.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Yeah, that's great, yes.

MR. MOLINA: Let you know who graduates, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: That's great.

And so you're -- I think what you're indicating is that it is crucial to get the budgetary language in that allows the current programs to expand. Right, now if there's more money, it only goes to start new programs?

MR. MOLINA: Well, you know, you will

have to ask the New York State Education Department about that. But yes.

And what -- the problem is that they use solely an enrollment-based funding formula that takes into account nothing else. It doesn't take into account what actual costs are. This formula is obsolete, it's outdated, it's been in use for over 10 years. So it hasn't changed. So it doesn't really fund you for where you are and for what you're actually paying for different -- for personnel, for services, and so forth. So that's the problem we have.

And in addition to that, the state had put into their RFP a provision which they chose to interpret a certain way which, on the CSTEP side, was why they decided to fund only new programs last year in the middle of a funding cycle, as opposed to supporting both the current programs and funding new programs.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thank you.

Lola, if you had to -- you have quite an array of things that you would like to see

in the budget. Are there like the top three?

MS. BRABHAM: Yeah. Actually there are.

I think that what's important is an expansion of TAP. You know, we are asking the Legislature to, you know, move forward, to increase the income threshold so that we can capture another 24,000 New York students that would be eligible for the program. And we think that that's very important.

Secondly, we would like to see an increase in Bundy Aid. Currently the program is funded at $35 million; we were happy to see that in the budget. But we're asking for an increase to $60 million so that we can better support student needs.

You know, Bundy Aid is the only program that we have -- the only unrestricted source of funding that we have that we can use to provide direct student aid and provide --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: We're out of time. So number three?

MS. BRABHAM: -- wraparound services

that students need to graduate. So that's very important.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: So number three?

MS. BRABHAM: I think number three -- you know, the other thing that we're looking at is -- you know, we were happy to see that there was $30 million in the budget for HECap.

We'd like to see a $100 million round of green HECap which would really well-position the schools to be able to undertake projects that help them reduce the carbon footprint and also, you know, do things like electrify their fleet of vehicles and things that help the state meet its climate goals.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: So is that 30 plus 100, or is 30 included in 100?

MS. BRABHAM: That would be 30 plus 100, and the --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: I see. Okay. Thank you.

MS. BRABHAM: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thanks a lot.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate, do you have any questioners?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I just -- Senator Stavisky?

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Stavisky. Thank you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you, Senator Krueger.

Donna, real quick -- how have the proprietary colleges weathered the pandemic, and what happened to your enrollment?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: They have weathered it, you know, with the focus on their student's safety, as always. Right? When the pandemic first hit, they transitioned everyone smoothly to an online program.

As we have moved through the pandemic, you know, their priority has always been focused on their students and their safety, their faculty and their safety. This past year we have started to bring students back on campus. They're of course following all

the same state and federal protocols: Masking, some are requiring vaccines and boosters, and some are just strongly encouraging. But they've really done a great job, I would say, overall.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Obviously, you know, with their student focus it's kind of hard not to. But --

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

I want to thank Monroe particularly for their work during that terrible fire in the Bronx. They really stepped up and made such a contribution. It's appreciated.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Thank you.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Lola, can I ask you a number of quick questions?

Bundy Aid. Would you remind us who the beneficiaries are who receive Bundy Aid?

MS. BRABHAM: Bundy Aid goes directly to support student aid, directly to the students, you know, to help them meet the cost of their tuition, to provide tutoring services, all of the support services that

students need to get to graduation.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. I mean, obviously I knew the answer, but I think people don't realize who benefits, and that's the students who need the money most.

MS. BRABHAM: That's right.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Secondly, Enhanced TAP. Linares testified that fewer than 25 colleges have applied. Do you see any remedies down the road?

MS. BRABHAM: Look, you know, the problem with the enhanced tuition awards, Senator, I think is that --

SENATOR STAVISKY: It's a match.

MS. BRABHAM: Right, it's the match.

But it's also that it's poorly timed. You know, it's my understanding that awards don't come out until the fall, after students have already made their decisions about where they're going to go to college. So that's not part of the kind of -- that's not part of what they get to incorporate when they're thinking about where they're going to go and how much money they're going to have.

There's also a lottery component to this program which acts as a disincentive for students to apply because, you know, although they may be eligible --

SENATOR STAVISKY: One more question in -- I don't mean to cut you short -- real quick.

MS. BRABHAM: That's fine.

SENATOR STAVISKY: The closing of colleges just bothers me, because several have closed. What do you recommend? Are there more down the road, and what do you recommend to remedy?

MS. BRABHAM: Well, I will -- it would be irresponsible, you know, for me to comment on -- or, you know, on any colleges that I think might close down the road. I don't have any knowledge of any schools contemplating that right now.

But the best thing that we can do is provide, you know -- increase the amount of student aid that the students need in order to pursue their studies.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Now we go to Assemblyman Epstein, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

And just to both of you, what percentage of your institutions have publicly available charging stations on their campuses?

MS. BRABHAM: Senator {sic}, I know that we have charging stations. I cannot tell you what percentage, but I'd be happy to get back to you with that.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: That'd be great.

MS. BRABHAM: Yes.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I was going to say the same thing. I know we have some, but I'm not sure exactly how many. So we'll get that back to you.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Yeah, and what are the barriers, if any, to getting more stations put in? We have put a lot of state money aside to help, and if your campuses have people who are driving, we need charging stations. That would be great.

And then just a second question, just

on the vaccination requirements. You need to let us know what percentage of your institutions have a vaccination requirement versus ones that don't.

MS. BRABHAM: Well, for the independent sector, 94 of our 110 members currently have a vaccination requirement for students, and another 84 for faculty.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I was going to say from the APC's perspective, I want to say probably seven or eight of our 11 member institutions have actual requirements, and the others are strongly encouraging.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great.

And the last is last year we put in $2 million for students with disabilities to get additional resources. We heard earlier today that that $2 million hasn't been allocated, but SED also requested a $15 million increase -- an increase of $13 million.

Do you support that increase? And what would you do with those resources for those students with disabilities on your

campuses?

MS. BRABHAM: We definitely -- the independent sector definitely supports SED's request.

You know, I was listening to the testimony earlier today where, you know, the commissioner said that the system has about 80,000 students who require this type of support. We're in full support of that, you know. And if that money was to come to fruition, I would imagine it would be used for, you know, a number of things, including student mental health services and for, you know, vulnerable students that have physical disabilities and other kinds of disabilities to provide adaptive equipment, and things like that.

So we're in full support of it.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: APC is also in full support of the request for the additional 15 million. Our use of that really would go more towards faculty training, you know, the whole gist behind it is to supplement, not supplant, already

offered services to folks with disabilities.

So faculty training and helping to help identify those students I think is where we would be looking to use those funds.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you all.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

We have Senator Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: Good afternoon, everyone. Good to see you. It's been a long day. I've been standing up for several hours, and now I'm sitting down again. And so I hope are you doing okay.

So first let me thank you for coming in and advocating for the students that you represent.

And I have a question about -- the Executive Budget prohibits the practice of withholding transcripts for failure to pay student-related debt, fining institutions $500 per violation.

Are nonprofit colleges ready and

willing to cease transcript withholdings? CUNY and SUNY have both announced an end to the practice. And what prevents independent colleges from taking the same action? Can you each comment quickly whether or not you have or you have not?

MS. BRABHAM: Senator, speaking for the independent sector, I will say that we understand the idea behind this initiative.

But I think that, you know, our position is that it would -- you know, we would like to have some protection for both the students and for the schools in the form of having the ability to call students in for a meeting, to counsel them so that they understand exactly what their debt is, that they understand some of the longer-term ramifications of carrying debt long-term or not paying it at all, and also having an opportunity to sit down with the student and try to put a payment plan in place.

We do recognize that sometimes that's not going to be possible, and schools would move forward with releasing transcripts to

employers or for military service or -- and, you know, for official uses.

SENATOR JACKSON: I appreciate your response.

Anybody else on this?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I was going to say, from the proprietary sector, I completely agree with what Lola said.

You know, we are happy to do whatever the Legislature finally decides, but it is an opportunity for us to have contact and engage with the students, you know, and work with them on financial literacy and student loan counseling.

So we do think that's important.

SENATOR JACKSON: Yeah, I agree, to sit down and communicate -- but the most important thing, these are individuals that are struggling in order to get a degree and to get a job so they can pay back the loans and whatever, but they need a transcript of -- a lot of them -- to be employed, and this is a block which is blocking their way.

Anybody else, quickly, if you don't

mind?

Okay. Do your institutions currently have course offerings at any of the correctional facilities in the State of New York? Where, and how many students are served? Anybody can answer. Quickly, please.

MS. BRABHAM: Yes, Senator, the independent sector, I believe we have 12 institutions that currently participate in programs or run programs that provide in-prison education.

In fact, you know, renowned programs. If you look at Bard, that has a national and I'd even say international reputation for the wonderful job that they do.

SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. And others, my staff will follow up.

Sadiya -- I was looking at that, I said, Wait a minute, that's not my daughter. My daughter's name is Saadya spelled with two As, S-A-A-D-Y-A, named after her great-grandmother. As-salamu alaykum, sister.

All right, thank you, everyone, my time is up.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Simon.

We're not hearing you, Jo Anne. Right. We still can't hear you. Have you tried muting and unmuting yourself? Otherwise --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Check on the lower right-hand side whether you have a light on on your screen on the hardware. If you have a light, knock it off.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: How is that?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Better. We got you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay. Thank you. I had no idea what that little light meant.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: So I appreciate it, and I thank you all for your patience.

This issue of money for students with disabilities, I'm pleased that all of you are supportive of that additional funding. And I

think that, you know, the testimony from the APC that the -- Gurnett said that what you would do with it, the issue about identifying students with disabilities and making that accessible to them is a huge dollar figure.

Having represented students for years, I know just how much that costs. I'm not sure if the $15 million would be able to do it, and certainly the proprietary schools are not the only ones. This is a huge issue throughout higher education.

So I'm glad that you raised that issue. I think we need a whole lot more money to do that. And -- but I do believe that there is a lot to be done in training faculty to understand rights and responsibilities and know how to accommodate.

I'm curious about how your institutions have their disability services set up. In some places it's a part-time thing, and some places it's a dean. How is that set up on -- both in independent colleges as well as the proprietary schools, if you have an answer.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Well, for the proprietary sector, I can tell you they're very hands-on with their students, so I think it's done in a lot of ways.

Most of them do have an independent department that works with students with disabilities, but really it goes well beyond that. Other faculty, staff members that recognize students with disabilities, you know, can direct them in that direction. So that's how we handle it.

MS. BRABHAM: Senator, yes, you know, our campuses all have offices for students with disabilities, but then of course they work collaboratively with other offices across campuses to make sure that students' needs are met.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Back to me.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, if you have --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: We do.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We do have another Assemblymember. But --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. I just have a very quick question.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Sure.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: These are for On Point for College. I'm not familiar with you, so how big is your annual budget?

MR. ROWSER: The annual budget, $2.5 million a year.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And that's privately raised? There's no government money now?

MR. ROWSER: There is some government money. We get some county money, some federal money, we get individual donors, corporations -- a smorgasbord of fundraising that we do.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: How many students do you work with per year?

MR. ROWSER: We have about 500 new students, between our two offices, that go off to college. We have about 2500 that are in college. And we have another 600 or 700 that we're working with that are doing career service opportunities.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And do you do, looking at longitudinal success, how many of the kids you work with do go on to college, complete college, et cetera?

MR. ROWSER: Well, we work with them to go to college or another post-secondary opportunity. Right around 80 percent of our students persist -- that's the rate that's easiest for us to keep right now -- from the first to the second year of college.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You don't follow after that?

MR. ROWSER: Oh, yeah, we continue to follow. It's just that our students transfer a lot, so that persistence rate changes a little bit.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And on the website you have a lot of sites, but you say there's just really two offices?

MR. ROWSER: We have two main offices. We work in seven counties. But we have an office in Utica, an office in Syracuse. And then we work in Cayuga County, Cortland County, Oswego County, Madison County,

Herkimer County. And we have two partners in New York City, one in Manhattan -- Goddard Riverside -- and one in the Bronx.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: How do the kids find you?

MR. ROWSER: Well, a lot of it is word of mouth. We probably have about 700 new students each year that come to us, between our two offices. We do very little advertising. Much of it is going out doing presentations at high schools, doing presentations at GED sites.

And we also have a SCOPE program -- Second-Chance Opportunity Program -- working with individuals with a criminal justice history and substance abuse.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Thank you, Helene.

MR. ROWSER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So we move on to our last questioner, Assemblywoman Buttenschon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Thank you, Chairs. And thank you to the panel.

I just want to reconfirm the importance of our students with special needs that my colleague Simon had discussed.

And Senator Krueger asked the questions to Sam. On Point is in the district that I represent, and I know that -- so many students I meet that have gone through your program.

Is there anything we could do to assist with the tracking? I know that those are always great questions. When you say it's an 80 percent rate, have you seen any models so that we could track the great work you're doing from institution to institution?

MR. ROWSER: Well, we started -- probably about three years ago, we got funding to hire a data analyst. So we're working on developing those programs right now. That's how we got to our persistence rate. And we're locking it in.

And now we're trying to expand that service so that we can tell, you know, from beginning to end how many students are being successful.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Thank you. Because I know that's a problem with many institutions that I meet with.

So thank you very much to you and to the panel.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So we have no further questions. Thank you, panelists, for being with us here today.

So we're going to move on to Panel C --

MS. BRABHAM: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: -- New York Public Interest Research Group, NYPIRG, Sadiya Hoque, chairperson of the board; Student Borrower Protection Center, Winston Berkman-Breen, policy counsel and deputy advocacy director; New Yorkers for Responsible Lending, Carolina Rodriguez, cochair, Student Loan Workgroup; Legal Assistance of Western New York, Anna Anderson, supervising attorney; SUNY Student Assembly, Bradley Hershenson, president;

Hispanic Federation, Tydie Abreu, policy analyst; and the last member of the panel, the president of United Students Government at SUNY Buffalo State College, James Speaker.

If we could start with NYPIRG.

Just to remind the panel, before you go -- just to remind the panelists, three minutes each. Your testimony has been distributed to all of the members here, so to the extent you could summarize, that would be great.

And then there may be some questions, and the members will ask questions. We'll have three minutes to both ask a question and for you to provide your answer. So if people could be concise in those answers, we can get through more questions.

Thank you all. And again, starting with NYPIRG.

MS. HOQUE: Good afternoon. My name is Sadiya Hoque, and I am the chairperson of NYPIRG's Board of Directors. NYPIRG's board is made up entirely of college students.

I'm currently a senior at Brooklyn

College. I actually left my class early, and I'm sitting in the BC library to join this hearing. So thank you, Professor Freedman {ph}, for that.

There are 17 colleges that have NYPIRG chapters, spanning CUNY, SUNY, and independent colleges. NYPIRG engages young people in policymaking debates and supplements our classroom experience with a unique civic engagement experience.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Governor Hochul's proposed higher education budget. There is a lot to like in it -- its continued freeze on public college tuition, its elimination of the so-called TAP gap, its expansion of the TAP with incarcerated individuals and more part-time students, and its increased support for childcare and opportunity programs.

We encourage the Legislature to support these important plans. However, and as you will see in our written testimony, we do not believe that the budget offers enough financial support to provide the state's

higher education sector after years of disinvestment.

Higher education plays an important role in boosting the economy of the state. Institutions of higher education are also regional economic engines. State investments in higher education generate economic activity such as hiring staff, spending in the community, higher income, and tax dollars. Yet for years the state has underfunded higher education to earmark other, flashier economic strategies, some that have succeeded and some that have failed miserably.

Investments in higher education always pay back far more. But state investments have stagnated, and at the same time student enrollments have suffered. In our testimony, we estimate what it would take to give all sectors of higher education the boost it needs. We use sagging enrollment to measure that need.

As you know, as enrollments dwindle, revenues to colleges drop off. Since

colleges have fixed assets, the only way to offset the losses are through reduced services, workforce reductions, or tapping into reserves. While the Governor's budget provides some relief, we think a lot more is needed.

Our testimony estimated that CUNY and SUNY need hundreds of millions of dollars in aid beyond what the Governor has proposed, and we urge restoration of the Bundy Aid to its 1990 levels. The state has the money now. Now is the time to act and act boldly.

We understand that enrollment declines can be the result of other factors as well -- changing demographics, a weakening economy. However, Governor Hochul's budget is simply too limited to provide the resources necessary to turn around higher education and help uplift the state's economy. We urge a state rescue package that not only stabilizes higher education but provides the resources to have them expand and flourish.

Additional recommendations for this rescue package are included in our written

testimony.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you, and thank you for following the time restrictions.

We move on to Student Borrower Protection Center.

MR. BERKMAN-BREEN: Can you hear me?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes.

MR. BERKMAN-BREEN: Great. All right.

Well, good afternoon, Chairpersons Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky, and Glick and members of the committees. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in this joint hearing and for all of the work that you're doing for New Yorkers.

My name is Winston Berkman-Breen. I'm the policy counsel for the Student Borrower Protection Center, a national nonprofit policy organization committed to ending the student debt crisis.

Prior to joining the SBPC, I was the student loan ombudsperson for the State of New York and a legal services attorney

representing low-income New Yorkers struggling with student loan debt in debt collection cases.

I'm here today to testify about two critical opportunities for the Legislature to support New Yorkers. The first is to complete the work that is already underway to end transcript withholding at all institutions in the state. The second relates to commonsense consumer protections for students and their families with private student loans.

There is pending legislation that, if passed, would make huge improvements in both of these areas. Both are important factors in what it means for us to set our students and graduates up for success, especially our low-income students, and especially now when education and employment are critical to recover from the pandemic.

Since my written testimony goes into greater detail, I'll be brief on both points and would be happy to answer any questions.

First, transcript withholding.

Especially when students have account -- so essentially, transcript withholding -- when students have account balances at their schools, virtually all schools will withhold the student's transcript until the account is settled. This has an unintended but very harmful effect of putting students in a catch-22 situation. They can't get their transcript until they pay their debts, but they can't afford the payment until they finish their degree and get a job, which often requires the very documents being withheld.

We know this disproportionately affects low-income students. This is a national issue, and we're seeing national action. California and Washington have already ended this practice. In December, U.S. Secretary of Education Cardona called on schools to stop withholding transcripts.

Just last month, Governor Hochul ended withholding at SUNY and CUNY and has proposed legislation in the budget to cover all schools in the state. Several other states

have introduced similar bills, including Maine, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and Colorado. S5924A in the Senate and A6938B in the Assembly would prohibit transcript withholding in New York.

It is not a debt-cancellation bill. Schools will continue to communicate with students and to collect on their accounts. We heard from schools earlier tonight how important that is. Nothing in the bill would prevent them from doing that. The bill would merely stop the use of this one tool because of its unintended harmful effects. Again, if we want our students to succeed, we have to let them succeed.

For private student loans, these loans have both lacked the protections found with federal student loans and have a track record of abuse: Misrepresenting cosigner release provisions, accelerating the entire loan amount even when payments are current, and filing lawsuits and obtaining judgments for loans that creditors cannot prove they own.

Last year, the Student Borrower

Protection Center and its partners on tonight's hearing issued a report on these creditors' collection activities in New York State courts specifically. The findings show a disproportionate number of filings and harmful practices in majority-minority communities. I have included a copy in my testimony.

Here too there's a bill, S5136/A6226, that would address these issues specifically in a very tailored way.

So I'll end now because my time is out, but I do encourage the committee to pass both of these, which overnight would pave the way for students, particularly low-income students, to move on and to succeed in New York.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

And now New Yorkers for Responsible Lending.

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you so much for opportunity to testify today. Good afternoon. I know we have spent a long day.

My name is Carolina Rodriguez, and I am the cochair of the Student Loans Workgroup for New Yorkers for Responsible Lending, commonly referred to as NYRL.

NYRL is a statewide coalition of more than 160 member organizations across New York State that promote economic justice. In our student loan work we have attorneys with 20-plus years of experience and advocates with firsthand experience about the challenges New Yorkers face when trying to obtain a higher education.

As a result, and as my fellow advocate just mentioned, NYRL also supports the ban of transcript withholding across all higher education institutions. Higher education institutions have the ability to communicate throughout the entire process, from the time a bill is generated -- and even prior to that, when they're generating financial aid packages -- to discuss this very sensitive situation.

From our experience, NYRL's experience, it is students who certainly

cannot pay that are being harmed by this practice.

In addition, we also support consumer protections for private student loan borrowers. In New York State, about 12 percent of graduating college students end up with an average of $40,000 in private student loans. That is on top of federal student loans. As you can imagine, there are entire family members risking their own financial security in order to provide a pathway to a higher education and better opportunities.

One more point here. We also, as NYRL, support the funding of $3.5 million for the Education Debt Consumer Assistance Program, a program run by the Community Service Society -- and I should disclose that I am the director of that program.

NYRL has been supporting this initiative prior to it being in effect in 2019, and that is because it is providing student loan borrowers the resources and information they need in order to manage

their higher education debt.

The rest of my testimony is going to focus on a key NYRL policy priority, which is the passage of the Consumer and Small Business Protection Act, which you might not have heard a lot about, but you will in coming weeks.

This bill will reform our General Business Law and not only ban deceptive business practices but also unfair and abusive practices. Thirty-nine other states in the U.S. have already done so. They have this law in effect.

Why it is important in our higher education student lending system? Well, I can tell you, and as some of you have already pointed out, there are predatory lenders who are literally issuing loans to some subprime borrowers. In other words, these are lenders that are targeting communities of color's first-generation college students and offering them student loans with the most egregious terms and conditions, knowing very well that they're unlikely to complete their

degree -- that even if they complete the degree, it's not going to be worth it.

We also have a long track record of student loan servicers who have truly wronged borrowers by cheating them of the information and resources needed to actually pay down their student loan debt. Most recently, attorney generals from across the U.S. have had to sue these servicers.

In New York -- I will wrap it up -- again, if we are able to pass this law, we will be able to equip borrowers to fight back and get the relief they need without having to rely on attorney generals who advocate on their behalf.

Thank you so much for your time.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Legal Assistance of Western New York.

MS. ANDERSON: Hi, yes. Can you hear me? Great, thank you.

I'll be the first one to say "good evening," because it's officially dark outside my window.

For those of you who don't know me, my

name is Anna Anderson and I'm the supervising attorney of the Consumer Unit at Legal Assistance of Western New York, which is a nonprofit civil legal aid firm that serves 14 upstate and Western New York counties. And currently, LawNY does not receive any funding to help students and borrowers with their student loan debt burden.

So I want to thank you all today for allowing me to come here and speak in support of increased funding for EDCAP, which is something we certainly need across the entire state.

As you know, and as Carolina just mentioned, EDCAP was created with support from the State Legislature in 2019. And since its inception, EDCAP has helped hundreds of New Yorkers, primarily in New York City, navigate and manage $38 million of student loan debt, and saving these borrowers $2 million to date.

While this is certainly just amazing outcomes for students, it is not currently enough. There are 2.4 million New Yorkers

who have student loan debt that totals close to $100 billion. It's clear, based on that alone, that we need more funding for EDCAP to ensure that New Yorkers across the entire state have access to reliable and free help with their student loan burden.

Today we are asking the Legislature to fund EDCAP at $3.5 million. These funds will allow EDCAP to establish a first-of-its-kind statewide network of community-based organizations that will provide free one-on-one counseling to borrowers in need.

Managing student loans is increasingly complicated. This is where EDCAP comes in and helps borrowers by figuring out what are their best repayment options, how they can possibly apply for loan forgiveness and discharge, how to get out of default, to stop garnishments and Social Security offsets, and how to resolve their issues with their lenders.

Currently there are few if any resources for New Yorkers outside of the city to access this kind of assistance from

reliable resources. And if we've learned anything from the recent Navient settlement, we know that these borrowers cannot rely on their loan servicers to provide them with this type of advice.

The student loan crisis is affecting everyone across all socioeconomic categories, and this is something that, as a state, New York is in the best position to step up and help borrowers with this fight. We're asking today that you fund EDCAP at $3.5 million to establish the statewide network.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Now the SUNY Student Assembly. Bradley?

MR. HERSHENSON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Good to see you here again.

MR. HERSHENSON: Yes. Great to see you.

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, members of the panel, for having us here

today.

My name is Bradley Hershenson. My pronouns are he, him, and his. I'm a white male student with a blue shirt, a pink tie, and glasses. I'm also a doctoral student studying information science and emergency management at the University at Albany, and I'm the president of the SUNY Student Assembly.

We look forward to working with you and Governor Hochul to carry out that bold vision for the future of New York State that invests in our public higher education system.

Our future needs legislative investments in critical job sectors, student-oriented services that help students graduate on time and successfully and then enter the workforce in New York State. We need investment in childcare while not having to pay an arm and a leg. We need investment to address accessibility of products on campus for menstruating students, year-round accommodations for housing-insecure students,

and aid for mental health. That is critical.

And we need to support and hire psychologists who, for example, are individuals of color, or therapists who identify as LGBTQ+, so folks have the opportunity to speak with a counselor of their choice. We can only do that with your investment.

We need to finally close the TAP canyon immediately. For far too long, student aid has been a last resort, and students have had to take thousands of dollars out in loans where aid could have been accessible to them with proper funding.

We need critical infrastructure upgrades to our 64 campuses. And we have an obligation and an opportunity to be leaders within the field of environmental sustainability. Upgrades to our physical spaces on our campuses will enhance our learning experiences through environmental and universal design, safer and inclusive living conditions, and much more.

We also need your help to end the

discrimination that student leaders face at SUNY. We receive a measly $57,000 a year, allocated through the State Budget, to represent every single student across SUNY. S5436 and its Assembly counterpart, A7054, would establish a student activity fee of just $1. The only fee we will ever advocate for will help pay student leaders a proper wage, increase our diversity as students within our activities, and allow for more involvement of students within our activities.

The current system does not work. And if we just had funding sourced from student activity fees like our counterparts at CUNY, we could address this issue and more.

Lastly, I want touch on the skyrocketing cost of tuition. In fact, tuition cost is above the stratosphere. We are still in a pandemic. We have bills to pay, families to take care of, textbooks, housing, transportation, food -- these are the real costs associated with pursuing a degree.

So we applaud the Legislature for freezing tuition for three years, but we must do more. It is time for a New Deal for CUNY, it's time for a New Deal for SUNY, and we must enact free tuition.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for your presentation.

And next, Hispanic Federation.

MS. ABREU: Thank you, Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky, Glick, and all of the other committee members for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Tydie Abreu, and I am a policy analyst for the Hispanic Federation, a national nonprofit organization seeking to empower and advance Hispanic communities through programs and legislative advocacy.

The degree attainment for Latinx students in New York stands at 27 percent, versus 53 percent for white students. To heighten the number of Latinx college students enrolling and completing their degrees and to help them enter the workforce,

Hispanic Federation strongly urges the Legislature to include and prioritize the following recommendations in the budget.

First, we urge the Legislature to maintain these Executive Budget proposals: Part-time TAP; the 10 percent increase to the opportunity programs; appropriation for CUNY and SUNY apprenticeship programs at community colleges; and, lastly, the prohibition of transcript withholding.

Additionally, we ask the Legislature to ensure that the budget also includes these additional policies and investments. The first is linguistically relevant and culturally appropriate mental health supports.

As the pandemic continues, the intensity of long-term trauma is still prevalent for many students, but especially for Latinx and underserved students. It is urgent for the state to invest in hiring more support staff and focus on trauma-informed mental health workers for colleges and universities, and ensure that they are

culturally relevant and linguistically diverse. This makes a difference in long-term goals for success in post-secondary and career opportunities.

The second ask are investments to develop and train bilingual educators. A recent data report from the State Education Department highlights that the state experienced a nearly 10 percent increase in multilingual learners over a three-year period. The budget should include appropriations to attract, support, and incentivize candidates by eliminating barriers to entering the teaching profession or changing career pathways by doing the following: funding partnerships between colleges and universities and K-12 school districts to develop these career pathways; creating mentorship programs for bilingual educators to support their career growth; and creating loan forgiveness and tuition assistance programs specifically for bilingual educators.

Lastly, maintaining the Executive

Budget's policy to end transcript withholding at all higher education institutions. Unsurprisingly, transcript holds mainly affects low-income students of color, placing a significant roadblock to their economic advancements.

We call on the Legislature to ensure that private institutions follow in CUNY and SUNY's footsteps to cancel transcript withholding, which leaves students with debt and no degree.

I thank you for your time, and we emphasize the imperative of these investments. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

And now, United Students Government at SUNY Buffalo.

MR. SPEAKER: Oh, yes. Can everyone hear me okay?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. Yes. Go ahead.

MR. SPEAKER: I am here to testify in favor of -- first of all, thank you to the chairs and the committees for allowing me to

testify today in favor of the Senate Bill S1151B, the Hunger-Free Campus Act.

As some of you know, I'm the president of the United Students Government here at Buffalo State College, and I'm really proud to represent a diverse group of students in terms of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

But one of the great struggles that I haven't heard much spoken on today is the food insecurity that many college students here in SUNY and here in New York State face.

The Hunger-Free Campus Act is a piece of legislation which has already been passed in five states across the union, and it goes to address food insecurity on college campuses, supplying campuses not only the food but the resources financially -- resources in terms of infrastructure to address food insecurity for students on campus.

Here at Buffalo State and many SUNY schools across the state we do have some infrastructure in place, and there has been

funding dedicated to fighting food insecurity on college campuses. But it is far and few in between -- not enough to keep up with the struggles before COVID, and it's not enough to keep up with the struggles that food-insecure students will have at college campuses post-COVID and as we move on from the pandemic.

I'm very proud to support this piece of legislation and hopefully see it as a piece of Governor Hochul's budget this year. It's very -- it's a bill that is very personal to me on multiple levels. As the son of parents who were on food stamps for most of my life, and as a student here at Buffalo State College in a city with a poverty rate of 30.1 percent, per the most recent Census, I understand what hunger can do to families and students.

There is vast unanimous medical research proving that students do not operate at their full capabilities when they are hungry, and most of that research is done at the elementary and middle school levels.

However, you can find that that is also true at the college levels as well. Those students are not able to perform to their highest ability when they are facing a financial challenge such as food insecurity.

This bill would go very far in terms of supplying the infrastructure and needs that our campus needs to fight food insecurity. And in states where this bill has already been passed, states such as California and Minnesota have been able to supply tens of thousands of pounds of food to food-insecure students and to address the needs of those students and supplying them information about other pieces of infrastructure, such as SNAP and WIC benefits supplied by the government.

I personally understand why some of you may be hesitant to invest a very large price tag of $10 million for this program of competitive grants, but it is foundational that we make this investment in the students. Hunger is really one of those core elements of what a student may face and what may be

holding them back, and this is one of the greatest investments that this budget can make in our college students today.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Thank you all.

Assemblywoman Glick, did you raise your hand?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Yeah, I just wanted to thank each and every one of our speakers for raising different issues.

You know, you can't really have a substantive conversation over issues you have raised in -- you know, six people, three minutes. It's, you know, late in the day, and I'm not enough of a speed talker. It's like speed dating.

So I look forward to having more conversations in the future about -- and my office stands ready to talk with you and meet with you on issues of concern.

And I certainly think that the private loan issue -- the predatory loans are a very big issue. And while we thought we had done something about that some years ago, I think

they managed to get around it. So we definitely will be following up with you, Winston, on that issue in particular.

And I thank you all, and of course -- probably now -- EDCAP's great, we know it works. So thank you all for being here tonight.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We're going to send it back to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Toby Stavisky, do you have anything to share?

SENATOR STAVISKY: I can't find the unmute button.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: There you go.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Okay. There I go.

I too want to thank all of the people who spoke today. And I too am concerned about the student debt. And that, to me, is the best argument for the public higher education system.

But we recognize that there are other avenues that students can pursue, and I too will be happy to discuss any of these issues

in the days ahead before we come to the April 1st budget deadline.

Thank you -- in 30 seconds.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Back to the Assembly. Do you have anyone else?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, we do. We have Assemblywoman Griffin.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay. Thank you.

I just want to thank all of the panelists for your advocacy and your passionate testimony today and for all of your work.

Being that we don't have much time, I'm just going to ask Bradley some questions about the SUNY Student Assembly.

I know I have had visits from the Student Assembly many times, and I don't think -- I think what you're asking for is very reasonable, a dollar for the funding. I think that's a very reasonable request, and I just wondered how -- what other ways do you get your funding?

And how are -- are people like yourself and others on the, you know, the high level, are you compensated in any way for your trips around the state or for the time that you are, you know, working on all of these many things for the SUNY Student Assembly?

MR. HERSHENSON: Well, thank you very much, Assemblywoman.

First I want to say it's great to see some SUNY alumni and SUNY grads on the line, so thank you very much.

(Laughter.)

MR. HERSHENSON: Our funding comes from the state, so as the Student Assembly we represent students across the entire system, and our budget is a line item in the State Budget. That allotment comes from the SUNY budget request, and unfortunately the current system does not work.

Our students have stipends that range from, let's say, $50 a month to a few hundred dollars a month. And even in the short time that we have been elected -- for example,

myself and my other officers, my vice president, our treasurer and secretary have been working since June 1st, and we haven't received a single paycheck. We haven't even received any money in our bank accounts to be able to pay the bills that we need -- transportation, food, housing.

The current system does not work. And that $1 fee that would allow us to have representation across SUNY is really what's important for us. It's the same thing that the CUNY students have -- in fact, it's even less. The CUNY students have $1.45 per student, and we're just asking for $1.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay. Well, thank you very much, and I appreciate your answer. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And we have Robert Jackson left.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And we have someone also.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay.

SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. First let me thank the panel for coming in and paying

their costs. I just have a couple of questions.

What do you think the impact would be for students if TAP was expanded for five years, eligibility was restored for graduate students and/or optional semesters, quarters, or terms became eligible for the awards? How can such TAP expansion enhance student achievement?

If you have any quick comments -- I only have two minutes and 30 seconds to hear your answers. And I'm going to ask any one of you to speak and let me hear what you have and pass it on, the baton, to somebody else.

MR. KLEIN: Hello, Senator. This is Dylan Klein, director of government relations for the SUNY Student Assembly --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I'm sorry. I'm sorry, you're not on the witness list.

Bradley? You're not -- can Bradley please speak?

SENATOR JACKSON: Hershenson, speak up. Come on.

MR. HERSHENSON: Sure. I'd like to

take the question.

Thank you, Senator. It's important for us that we have investments. And one piece you mentioned was graduate students. Graduate students right now are literally selling blood plasma so they can afford tuition, so they can afford housing, they can afford textbooks -- it's really important that we expand our aid programs to students.

Putting money directly into the pockets of students is what's going to be helpful to us right now.

So thank you, and I will yield the time to the rest of the panel.

SENATOR JACKSON: Anybody else?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, I just want to speak on that issue --

(Zoom interruption.)

SENATOR JACKSON: Go ahead, Simon {sic}.

MR. SPEAKER: Any financial alleviation, especially regarding TAP, would make sense in this case and would greatly help SUNY students, not only closing the

TAP gap or TAP canyon, but supplying TAP for those five years. And including financial alleviation to graduate students as well, who do face many challenges that SUNY students do face -- and even worse, as President Hershenson has described. Supplying them with financial alleviation would go very far. So --

SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. Thank you.

The chancellor earlier today said that the average student debt is about -- at SUNY, it's about $24,000. Can you give me some figures in your schools, if you can, real quickly? Anyone?

MR. SPEAKER: To my knowledge, at Buffalo State the average amount from the research I found is about $13,000.

But again, regardless if it's 13 or 20 or more, the financial damage that this does long term to a student in terms of financial independence, the ability to build a credit score, among other financial needs in terms of personal investments and saving for retirement and building a family -- the

issues are compounding, and it is greatly past time that New York State address this issue in the budget in terms of tuition.

SENATOR JACKSON: Anyone else, real quick? My great-nephew attends Buffalo State right now. And -- anybody else?

Well, thank you. My time is up. Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Back to you, Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes. We go to Rebecca Seawright.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you, Chair.

I have two quick questions, one for James Speaker. Could you expand about the importance of addressing food insecurity on your campus?

MR. SPEAKER: Yes. So here at Buffalo State we do have two current programs in place to address food insecurity. We do have Milligan's Food Pantry, which was formerly run by the student government but is now run by the administration.

And we also do have a program set up with our dining establishments where students who are in need can contact the college, and they are placed on a list where leftover food or food which is not sold for the day is sent to them, and they are told, Hey, come and pick up these leftovers, we will feed you. We'll give you drinks, whatever you need that's left over.

But a bill such as S1151B, the Campus Act, it would go really far in terms of building a further investment in infrastucture here on campus. On top of the food pantry, on top of the dining program we already have, Buffalo State would have resources to go into education about WIC, SNAP, and other programs that students can join, to become educated about how to gain access to government support.

But also Buffalo State would be supplied with the financial resources to give these students food, even in times when we do not have food to give out. We would have further resources to place an investment into

the food that we could supply them.

But also this is a holistic issue, in that this will greatly impact the students' ability to be in the classroom as well. Obviously, as I mentioned in my testimony, there is a plethora of research out there showing that students do not operate at their full capability when they are hungry or facing food insecurity among other financial challenges that many on the panel here discussed today.

Passing this bill and making it a part of the budget would go a far ways in terms of making that investment in students and taking another one of those little small issues that continuously compound with other issues in their life, such as student debt, to make matters even worse.

So if we take one of those issues away, something like hunger, with these competitive grants colleges can supply students these --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you, James. I don't mean to interrupt you, but I

have just one more quick question for Brad Hershenson.

When you look at the University of Texas system, the California system, and CUNY -- other public university systems that are near the size of SUNY -- why is it so important that you get this dollar funded for your student association like these other public universities have?

MR. HERSHENSON: Thank you. This is a matter of discrimination, and the students of SUNY are discriminated against. We are calling for equality. We want to be exactly like the students of Texas and Florida and other states. For example, even CUNY.

Having this funding to support our students will allow for our students to attend regional conferences, support our activities, and it'll increase the effectiveness and diversity of the students that are involved in what we do. And that's representing students across all 64 campuses at SUNY.

So thank you for the question.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. I think that is it for the Senate.

But for the record, we don't want to be like Texas -- even if you have family members who came from Texas, Mr. Hershenson. Thank you.

Thank you, Assemblymember, and I want to thank everyone on the panel tonight.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. And, you know, I too want to thank those who have spoken here. We do have your written testimony, and we will be reviewing the additions that you have there beyond what you have conveyed to us this evening.

So we are going to move on to our last panel, Panel D.

One of the panel members is not here, so we're going to Bard Prison Initiative, Max Kenner, executive director; Fortune Society, Tawana Williams; College & Community Fellowship, Romarilyn Ralston, executive director; The Education Trust-New York, Dia Bryant, executive director; Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison, Sean Pica,

executive director; and Fostering Youth Success Alliance, Deidra Nesbeth, director.

So if we could go in that order, starting with Bard Prison Initiative.

MR. KENNER: Terrific. Thank you, everyone, for all your patience and perseverance today. It's absolutely wonderful to be here.

I will say that three minutes is both a privilege and also a terribly short amount of time to represent an advocacy agenda that I think everyone on this panel has held up for literally the last 20, 23, 24, 25, 27 years.

College in prison was once a central part of what we did in our justice system across the United States. It was known to reduce violence, to reduce crime, to reduce recidivism, to increase the likelihood of employment, to increase the likelihood that an incarcerated person is in touch with their family post-release, and to be the most radical form of higher education opportunity in the entire country. It did all of those

things with more cost-efficiency than anything else we did in our prison systems.

And yet these programs were eviscerated in 1994 and 1995, first at the federal level with the Clinton Crime Bill, and then here in New York State it was virtually the first thing that Governor Pataki did when he came to power in the middle 1990s.

My name is Max Kenner. I'm the executive director and founder of the Bard Prison Initiative, which was established in 1999. We have enrolled hundreds of incarcerated undergraduates in a diverse academic program over the last 22 years in nearly a dozen correctional facilities.

I am really thrilled that Governor Hochul has not only proposed this change in the law, but also done it at a time when she has proposed a radical increase in investment in CUNY and SUNY. The elimination of college opportunity for incarcerated New Yorkers was a smoke screen for disinvestment in our public university system, and it's a

privilege that these things are being reinstated together.

As we take on this legislation, I want to say two things. One, we have an existing ecosystem of college in prison in New York, and it is the best system of college in prison in the United States. That is because from the grassroots level up, we have established a system of college in prison that most closely resembles our system of college in New York, as any other.

Second, when we do this, this is an equity issue. We should repeal the ban and nothing more. We don't need a new research agenda, we don't need to create a new bureaucracy, we know what this does. Let's not hold incarcerated students to a bizarre additional standard than we do any other undergraduates.

Let's keep it simple: A clean repeal of the ban on TAP. And I thank you for your time.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Let's move on to Fortune Society.

MS. WILLIAMS: Hi. My name is Tawana Williams. I'm an alumni of the WISH Program, the Fortune Society and Ritual4Return.

I'm going to be honest with you guys, I didn't do college in jail, but my -- {Zoom drop} -- sorry, my fiance did. But I am in agreement that they do bring back the colleges in jail. Why? Because it's bad enough that a person is stagnating in a life, and then when they come out of jail they have to -- it's like they have to start all over again.

When all they have to do is do the college -- which is the point to, I believe, life -- do the college in jail. Then when they come out, they just look for job. And everything I believe is surrounded by finances, so they'd already be established and up-to-date, at least with the financial part.

And I do agree with that, you know. So they're already getting Pell back. I would like them -- they're already getting TAP back, I would like them to give Pell

back. And that's really all I have to say.

You know, one more thing. I know when I came out of jail in like ninety-something, because I didn't do a lot of time, I remember a young lady came up to me and told me that she had just -- she had just -- was released from jail, but they didn't have college in jail, they had cut the program out.

Excuse me. Excuse me about the GPS.

They had just cut college out of jail, and she was devastated, because now she felt like I have to go all the way and do college all over again. And I just came out of jail when they could have just gave me college in jail. With no debt.

So now she has the debt, now she has to start all over again. And she had children. So it devastated her.

But I do have my fiance with me today, guys, and he is going to share his story of when he was in college in jail.

Actually, today I do have my master's degree, I'm going for my doctorate in human services, but it's on the outside, it wasn't

in jail. So yes, I owe over $153,000 in student loan debt. But that will be taken care of soon.

Here he is, Arthur Brown.

MR. BROWN: Hello. My name is Arthur Brown --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I'm -- I'm sorry, just because of being virtual, we can't have witnesses who aren't on the witness list, the tech folks don't have the ability to add names. So --

MS. WILLIAMS: Oh, I misunderstood. I apologize.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay. I mean, if you want to, you still have a -- okay. But please, other people can submit testimony. So if your -- the person who's there with you can send in testimony, that would be fine.

MS. WILLIAMS: All right, no problem.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Then it will be part of the record. Okay?

MS. WILLIAMS: All right. Thank you, guys.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Sure.

So now we go to College & Community Fellowship.

MS. RALSTON: Good evening, honorable committee members. My name is Romarilyn Ralston. I am the executive director of College & Community Fellowship, a New York City nonprofit that operates at the city, state and federal level, helping women and families most harmed by mass criminalization gain equitable access to higher education and combat the issues they face systemically through policy change.

The most prevalent barrier justice-involved people face is the denial of financial aid. New York is among a handful of states that bans needs-based financial assistance, also known as the Tuition Assistance Program, to those incarcerated. I come before you today as a formerly incarcerated person, understanding all too well the value of post-secondary education inside prison.

I spent 23 years behind bars. In

prison I learned how to advocate for myself, organize, and inspire other women to become leaders. It's also where I fell in love with higher education.

I had the opportunity to take my first college course in 1990, prior to the '94 Crime Bill, which eliminated Pell Grants for incarcerated students. In taking that class, I understood how I became incarcerated and what conditions within society work together to put people behind bars -- and I wasn't alone. There with me in this classroom were 30 other women, most of us serving life sentences.

Many incarcerated people want to understand how they became incarcerated and what systemic issues are at play to perpetuate cycles of incarceration, so they can dismantle them. This is especially true when you're looking around a prison yard and the majority of the people look like you.

When Pell was eliminated for incarcerated students, it left a void in our lives. We lost access to knowledge and an

identity we shared as students that followed us out of the classroom and into the prison yard.

But a seed had been planted, and change cultivated. Education reduces all types of harms because it transforms the individual. It should not be a matter of privilege or chance whether one has access. Ninety-five percent of those incarcerated will return to our communities, and research has shown that the more education one has, the less likely they are to recidivate.

Providing financial aid assistance should be seen as an opportunity to deploy our collective resources as a society into the minds of people who are hungry for change and understanding. That is why I'm asking you to repeal the 27-year-long ban on TAP. It's reprehensible that this bill to repeal was introduced in 1999 and has never made it out of committee.

We thank Governor Hochul for recognizing the importance of TAP in her Executive Budget. By turning on the TAP, you

send a strong message that New York is committed to educational equity for all.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We move on to The Education Trust.

DR. BRYANT: Good evening, everyone. And thank you very much for allowing us to offer this testimony.

I am Dia Bryant. I am the executive director at The Education Trust-New York. We are a nonprofit, nonpartisan research, policy and advocacy organization that focuses on education equity, beginning at birth, through college, and into the workforce.

Today I want to talk a little bit about a few data points that we've learned even before the pandemic, and things that have surfaced most recently.

There's a few things that our REACH NY network works on that sort of set the context, and we would like to see some urgency to improve educational equity throughout New York, specifically in the post-secondary space.

The first is to address equity gaps in post-secondary outcomes. One of our most recent reports reveals that white residents are almost two times as likely to hold a post-secondary degree when compared to American Indian, Black, and Latinx residents of New York.

Further data revealed that white students are 1.6 times more likely to complete their certificate or degree than are American Indian, Black or Latinx students at two-year public institutions.

A similar pattern of inequity emerged at four-year institutions where completion rates at institutions with the lowest share of Pell recipients are 1.6 times greater than institutions with the highest share of Pell recipients.

Much of this has been highlighted by some of my colleagues earlier, so I will not go into the extreme details that are in the written testimony. However, I will highlight a couple of elements within the Executive Budget that we believe are key investments to

improve access and affordability in higher education and increase preparedness for our future workforce, particularly as we begin to think about the impact of infrastructure bills on where we should move our state.

The Executive Budget recognizes the incredible toll that the ongoing pandemic continues to take on New York's people and its economy. To get New York back on track, the state has to focus on a few things.

Committing to increased statewide attainment. Focusing on 60 percent of New Yorkers age 25-64 having a post-secondary degree by 2030 will require a commitment to wraparound services for post-secondary access and to really bridging the attainment gap across racial lines, geographic lines, and also around income lines.

Improving access to financial aid. The Executive Budget includes several key investments that have been highlighted by my colleagues tonight, and we hope that those remain. The additional $24 million that has been allocated to support historically

underserved students is an opportunity for us to continue to make gains.

Much of the details are still in my testimony. And since I have just a few seconds left, I thank you again for this opportunity and welcome any questions on things that you see inside the testimony.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

And we'll move on to Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison.

MR. PICA: Good evening. Thank you so much for having us. With our speakers, thank you so much, guys, you did great.

My name is Sean Pica. I'm the executive director of Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison. I'm also the vice president of New Beginnings, which is a construction initiative partnering our students upon return to the community with local contractors. I work on the Governor's Task Force, and I'm also a part of the Advisory Committee for the Department of Corrections.

I was also in the ninth grade when I

got sentenced to 24 years in prison, during a time when teenagers were still sentenced as adults. I entered the prison system thinking my life was over. Quite frankly, when you give a teenager 24 years in prison -- more time than they've been on this earth -- you really just think that it's a done deal.

I entered my first cell block in a maximum-security prison with not much hope. The men that I lived with, the officers, the staff made sure I finished high school. They made sure I took pre-college and college back in the '80s when there was college in many of the prisons I lived in.

I lived in nine different maximum-security prisons over 16 and a half years. I was released early; I didn't serve the whole 24 years. But when I walked out of Sing Sing, I had more time in prison than out.

As a young man coming back to the community, not really believing the college that I attained was real, knowing that the only reason I had gone to college while

inside was not to better myself, but because I wanted to give my parents something positive while I was in that pretty negative place. My mom and dad were retired New York City cops, and talking about the prison yard -- well, it just wasn't going to be what I would talk about.

When I walked out, I really wanted to reaffirm that the college I had done inside, not really understanding what I had received -- and I signed up for a CUNY school, at Hunter. I got my MSW, the two-year full-time intensive program. I was really scared when I got called. I didn't really believe what I had gotten on the inside was real. But I walked through that two-year program like it was nothing. And as someone that always struggled in school, knowing that everything that I had gotten was real -- I was the valedictorian speaker at my own graduation, and now I'm back in grad school working on another degree.

Everything that these guys talked about that are operating in the New York

State Department of Corrections is legit. It's the real deal. We need more of it. These students like myself that are going through this, this is our second chance at life. The programs, the curriculum, it's identical to what's being offered on the traditional campuses. In fact, it's not identical -- it's harder. Because these professors know they have to give us legitimate work.

Thirty-four percent of our students go on to graduate work upon release. We have a 98 percent success rate, a 2 percent recidivism rate.

The work that's being delivered is real and it's saving New York taxpayers millions of dollars a year for something that the colleges are paying for. We need to spread it further.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Fostering Youth Success Alliance.

MS. NESBETH: Good evening, all. My name is Deidra Nesbeth, and I am testifying today on behalf of the statewide Fostering

Youth Success Alliance.

We would like to thank Chair Weinstein, Chair Krueger, Chair Stavisky and Chair Glick, as well as the honorable members of the committees on Higher Education, Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means, for the opportunity to provide feedback about the fiscal year '23 Executive Budget proposal. We'll specifically address funding for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative, or FYCSI.

FYCSI aims to bridge the gap from foster care to college success for the state's most vulnerable youth. There are currently close to 1,000 students who are on the path to college success, participating in FYCSI across more than a hundred public and private colleges and universities throughout New York State.

Since its inception in 2015, the program has served over 2,000 individual students. FYCSI funds have and continue to allow students to cover expenses such as tuition, housing, transportation, medical and

personal expenses. To date, the state has invested $34.2 million towards the college initiative to support the educational goals of young people with a foster care background.

We were ecstatic to see that Governor Hochul's Executive Budget proposal increased FYCSI funding by an amount of 10 percent, to a total of 7.92 million. This funding can be the difference between a student having one meal or multiple meals in a given day, or in dropping out of school to work for rent versus continuing on with their education.

In addition to this investment in funds, it is also important that FYCSI funds be easily accessible for youth to access. Through the Making College Success workgroup that includes partners from the Higher Education Services Corporation, State Education Department, Office of Children and Family Services, Administration for Children's Services, and SUNY and CUNY that FYSA convenes on a monthly basis, changes were secured to the Tuition Assistance

Program application that ensure young people can more easily disclose their foster care background at the time of applying for financial aid.

FYSA estimates that this change to the TAP application can increase access to the program by 400 to 500 youth with a foster care background beginning in September 2022. To accommodate for this expected increase, we are requesting an additional 10 percent increase in funding above what the Governor proposed -- for a total of 8.64 million -- now that New York State has made it easier for young people to identify themselves.

By championing FYCSI, the state is ensuring that all foster youth who come into the care of the state and want to attend college are able to further their education, become independent and make their own unique impact on society.

With that, we just want to thank you again for this opportunity to testify and welcome any questions that you may have.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So I want to

thank all of the panel for testifying here today, and particularly for those who shared your experiences within the prison system.

I'd like to call upon our chair of Higher Ed, Deborah Glick.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: Thanks very much.

Yes, I think what is important -- we've waited a long time for there to be the possibility of returning TAP to the incarcerated, and I think it's really important to have personal testimonies, because, you know, it's a crazy world out there and there will be pushback.

But I give the Governor credit for putting it in her budget. I think that will help make it a reality.

And Deidra, I just wanted to ask -- obviously FYCSI is personally important to me. It's something I pushed to get started years ago. So I'm wondering, with this change, do you have an estimate of how many more young people we might be able to serve?

MS. NESBETH: Yes. So we know that

there's a gap of about -- between 400 and 500 students who are not doing -- filling out the consent form, and therefore they're not able to access the funding.

So this means that students don't have that extra step, so they'll be able to identify themselves much earlier in the process.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GLICK: That's great.

And Sean, I think we met a couple of weeks ago. And I think that -- you know, I'd like to put you, you know, in an ad, because it's -- we get a lot of pushback for recognizing that people who, you know, have maybe gone through one of their worst days, that that's not their last day.

So, you know, I just want to thank you for all the work you've done. And, you know, I think we'll get it across the finish line, which is great.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Back to the Senate.

Senator Jackson, I believe you had

your hand up.

SENATOR JACKSON: Sure.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, everyone, for coming in. It's been a long day, but it's been successful listening to all of you, about your experience and what you're trying to achieve on behalf of the people that we all represent.

So I've got two questions. How can we ensure predatory programs do not emerge in New York State facilities as TAP is restored for incarcerated students? Just think about that for a second.

And then this other one, what is the best way to ensure that the programs and instructors for our incarcerated students are the same quality as the non-incarcerated?

So please comment, anyone that you can. Just raise your hand and speak it out.

Go ahead, Sean.

MR. PICA: I think whenever someone questions what we're doing in the facilities, the very easy answer is if you look on the

Bard/Cornell/NYU/Mercy College website, it will be the identical scheduling, textbooks, professors. We're not slipping in anyone that could actually do anything other than what's already being served on the traditional campus. If anything, the standards are higher.

SENATOR JACKSON: It's a coordinated, transparent process?

MR. PICA: Yes. There are adjunct professors that are in the system that can't be -- we can't just bring in somebody to teach a class because they like finance. It all goes through the college.

So legitimate, accredited, degree-granting work, every part of this.

SENATOR JACKSON: I had expressed concern in an earlier panel about wanting to make sure that New York State, SUNY and/or CUNY -- and someone mentioned you have community-based organizations that are involved in the education also, more so than people from Texas and California and what have you.

I want those jobs to remain in New York State, and I want the quality -- as a representative, the quality to be what we all rightfully deserve.

So anybody else want to comment on that? Yeah, go ahead. Go ahead, Max.

MR. KENNER: Romarilyn, I think you had your hand up first, so --

SENATOR JACKSON: Marilyn? Okay, who's Marilyn? I'm trying to look. Go ahead --

MS. RALSTON: I just wanted to respond to the question regarding predatory institutions.

California recently passed SB416 that addresses this issue. And I think it's a good model that we could possibly take a look at so that we can see that public universities that are nonprofit, who offer incarcerated students access to higher education while they're inside, utilizing Pell Grants, that lead to a degree, a credit-bearing degree, and transfers to one of our public university systems, is a route

that we should potentially take a look at.

SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. Anybody else, quickly? Go ahead, Max.

MR. KENNER: If I may quickly, just to remind everyone that just like Sean said, these incarcerated students are held to the same standards as students anywhere else. The professors and courses that they enroll in are approved by deans and provosts through the same process as anything that happens on campus.

If they're not held to those same standards, they should be removed from the prisons.

But our colleges are subject to a whole regime of oversight -- through the Regents, through the Middle States -- and creating anything in addition to that is in my view as likely to cause harm as it is to benefit. We should support those accreditation agencies and we should make sure that they're treating incarcerated students with the same dignity as anyone else.

But in my view, that is happening, and New York State should invest in these programs as it did for decades prior to the ban.

SENATOR JACKSON: Well, thank you. My time is up. Thank you all for coming in, please.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

MR. KENNER: Thank you, Senator Jackson.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Helene?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Yes, Senator Krueger, did you want --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, do you have another Assemblymember?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: No. No. I didn't know if you wanted to say something before --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, I skipped over our chair, Toby Stavisky, who does have something to say. I'm sorry.

SENATOR JACKSON: I'm sorry.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, thank you.

First let me thank Senator Jackson for

his sponsorship. It was his bill that the Governor adapted for the Article VII part of the prison TAP.

And Sean, thank you so much for your testimony. It's a lot more meaningful when we hear people talk about this than reading it.

I have two comments, and the question's really for anybody. I think we ought to have some kind of articulation agreement for the incarcerated so that when they leave the prisons, they can continue their education at another institution if they so choose.

And secondly, I think DOCCS has to do -- they have to pass some rules and regulations to make sure that this is going to be workable.

I really thank everybody for their testimony. This is long overdue. And if anybody wants to address the -- either the articulation agreement, where they can -- to help people who leave the prison system to continue their education -- and, secondly,

what should be in the rules and regs issued by the Department of Corrections.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Toby.

I also just want to --

SENATOR STAVISKY: You can just be in touch with the office, you don't have to answer now. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sorry.

I also, just in closing, want to point out that thanks to programs like the one Deidra's working with, we're going to send fewer people to prison to have to deal with this issue later anyway. So thank you for making sure that foster kids don't end up just on a train to a prison once they age out of foster care.

MS. NESBETH: Thank you all for your support.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

I want to thank all of this panel for being here, but all of the witnesses who've come here today to speak before the joint committees.

I want to thank all of the

Assemblymembers and Senators for spending time with us today.

And for those paying attention, the hearing is about to end and we welcome you to join us tomorrow morning. There will be a joint hearing with the Assembly and Senate Finance and Ways and Means committees on health.

So with that, I now call this hearing officially ended.

(Whereupon, the budget hearing concluded at 6:44 p.m.)