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

JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING

In the Matter of the
2023-2024 EXECUTIVE BUDGET ON
HIGHER EDUCATION

Hearing Room B
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York

February 27, 2023
11:38 a.m.

PRESIDING:

Senator Liz Krueger
Chair, Senate Finance Committee

Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein
Chair, Assembly Ways & Means Committee

PRESENT:

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

Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy
Chair, Assembly Higher Education Committee

Senator Toby Stavisky
Chair, Senate Higher Education Committee

Senator Joseph A. Griffo
Senate Higher Education Committee (RM)

Assemblywoman Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn

Assemblyman Michael J. Norris

Senator John C. Liu

2023-2024 Executive Budget
Higher Education
2-27-23

PRESENT: (Continued)

Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

Senator Kevin Thomas

Assemblywoman Rebecca A. Seawright

Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman

Assemblyman Harvey Epstein

Senator Andrew Gounardes

Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon

Senator Robert Jackson

Assemblyman William Colton

Assemblyman Robert Smullen

Senator Lea Webb

Assemblyman Al Stirpe

Assemblywoman Monique Chandler-Waterman

Assemblyman Kenny Burgos

Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Assemblyman Brian D. Miller

Assemblywoman Monica P. Wallace

Senator Dean Murray

Assemblywoman Phara Souffrant Forrest

Assemblyman Garett Gandolfo

Senator Iwen Chu

2023-2024 Executive Budget
Higher Education
2-27-23

PRESENT: (Continued)

Assemblywoman Chris Eachus

Assemblywoman Karen McMahon

Assemblyman Brian Manktelow

Assemblywoman Donna A. Lupardo

Assemblywoman Sarah Clark

LIST OF SPEAKERS

	STATEMENT	QUESTIONS
Dr. John B. King, Jr. Chancellor State University of New York -and- Félix V. Matos Rodríguez Chancellor City University of New York	11	28
Betty A. Rosa Commissioner NYS Education Department	152	158
Dr. Guillermo Linares President NYS Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC)	219	281

2023-2024 Executive Budget
Higher Education
2-27-23

LIST OF SPEAKERS, Cont.

	STATEMENT	QUESTIONS
Dr. James Davis President Professional Staff Congress/CUNY -and- Dr. Frederick E. Kowal President United University Professions -and- Andrew Sako President Faculty Federation of Erie Community College -and- James McCartney Director NYS University Police Lieutenants Benevolent Association President PBA of New York State -and- Andrew Dobbyn State President CWA 1104-GSEU	265	281

2023-2024 Executive Budget
Higher Education
2-27-23

LIST OF SPEAKERS, Cont.

	STATEMENT	QUESTIONS
Dr. Renaldo D. Alba President Association of Program Administrators for CSTEP and STEP, Inc. (APACS) -and- Samuel Rowser Executive Director On Point for College -and- Lola W. Brabham President Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU) -and- Liz Altman President Friends of the NYS Liberty Partnerships, Inc. -and- Deidra Nesbeth Director Fostering Youth Success Initiative	312	331
Emily Miles Executive Director NYC Alliance Against Sexual Assault -and- Niharika Rao Lead Organizer Reproductive Justice Collective New York -and- Robb Friedlander Director of Advocacy Swipe Out Hunger	371	381

2023-2024 Executive Budget
Higher Education
2-27-23

LIST OF SPEAKERS, Cont.

	STATEMENT	QUESTIONS
Dr. Melanie Bernitz Senior Vice President Columbia Health -and- Blair Horner Executive Director New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) -and- Donna Stelling-Gurnett President Association of Private Colleges (APC) -and- Nicole Livanos Director, State Affairs National Council of State Boards of Nursing	397	412

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Good morning.

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

Today we begin the 10th in a series of hearings conducted by the joint fiscal committees of the Legislature regarding the Governor's proposed budget for fiscal year 2023-'24. The hearings are conducted pursuant to the New York State Constitution and Legislative Law. And today our joint committees will hear testimony concerning the Governor's proposed budget for higher education.

So I will now introduce the members of the Assembly who are here. And then the cochair of today's hearing, Senator Liz Krueger, chair of the Senate Finance Committee, will introduce her colleagues. And then our rankers will introduce their respective colleagues.

So first we have Assemblywoman Fahy, the chair of our Higher Ed Committee; Assemblywoman Bichotte Hermelyn,

Assemblywoman Buttenschon, Assemblyman Epstein, Assemblywoman Forrest, Assemblywoman Seawright, Assemblywoman Simon, and Assemblyman Stirpe.

So, Senator Krueger?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much, Helene.

Good morning, everyone. I will be starting with Senator Stavisky, the chair of Higher Ed; Senator Thomas, Senator Chu, Senator Webb, Senator Gounardes, Senator Liu, Senator Hoylman -- sorry, he has a new last name. Sigal, Hoylman-Sigal. And Senator Jackson.

And I'm going to turn it over to the Higher Education ranker, Joe Griffo, to introduce Republican members.

SENATOR GRIFFO: And I would introduce Senator Dean Murray, who is with us here today too.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Sitting in today as our ranker on Ways and Means, Assemblyman Norris.

ASSEMBLYMAN NORRIS: Thank you, Madam

Chair.

And I would like to introduce the ranker of Higher Ed, Assemblyman Robert Smullen. We also have Member Jared Gandolfo here, and also Member Brian Miller. Thank you for being here.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So -- and people should know that there will be some of our colleagues joining us as the hearing proceeds.

So just some ground rules before we get going. Governmental witnesses will have 10 minutes to present testimony. Nongovernmental witnesses will have three minutes to present testimony. And actually, for the nongovernmental witnesses, if you have not checked in at the desk on the second floor, if you could do that once we get started so that we know that you are here.

In terms of asking questions, the chairs of the respective committees -- in this case, the Higher Ed chairs -- and Senator Krueger and myself will each have 10 minutes to ask questions. The chairs can

get a second round of three minutes. The rankers will have five minutes to ask questions, no second round. All other members have three minutes to ask questions.

And what is very important for my colleagues to know is that the time limits are both for the questions and the answers. So when the clocks -- and they're visible -- when the clocks go down to 20 seconds, don't say "I have one more question" and not leave time for our witnesses to answer.

Just as a reminder for both legislators and observers and witnesses, there are no PowerPoint presentations, placards or signs permitted in the hearing room.

With that, we are ready to start our actual hearing to hear from some of our witnesses, and we start with the chancellors of both SUNY and CUNY. You each will have 10 minutes, and then there will be questions from the panel.

So our new chancellor of SUNY, no stranger to New York in education, Chancellor

John King, Jr., and our chancellor of CUNY, Félix Rodríguez, who's been here a number of times. So since you're listed -- SUNY is listed first on the witness list, so let's start with SUNY.

And just for both of you but for everybody who's testifying today, your testimony has been submitted. All of the legislators have your testimony. It's been posted already on the Senate's website. It will be posted on the Assembly's website today if it's not already posted.

So please try and summarize or hit your high points. People think, particularly those when you have three minutes and you start reading, you never get past the introductions and then the clock runs. So we don't need a lot of thank-yous; we want to hear just what you'd like to tell us about the budget.

So with that, Chancellor King, if you can begin.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thanks so much. Good morning, chairs and ranking members.

I'm John King, and I have the privilege of serving as the 15th chancellor for the State University of New York. And I appreciate the opportunity to share the ways in which SUNY students, faculty and staff are benefiting from the investments made by the Executive and the Legislature in the last year, and to discuss Governor Hochul's Executive Budget proposal with you today.

You know, since I began as chancellor on January 9th, I'm often asked what drew me to this opportunity. Without question, it is the vision set forth by the Governor and the Board of Trustees to ensure that, with legislative support, SUNY is the most accessible, most affordable, and best state system of public higher ed in the country. As we prepare to celebrate our 75th anniversary, I'm proud that this Executive Budget reflects a once-in-a-generation opportunity to further SUNY's legacy of equity and excellence.

As some of you know, I'm only here today because of the role public education

played in my life. Both my parents were career New York City public school educators. They both passed away when I was a kid -- my mom when I was 8, and my dad when I was 12. In the time when it was just my dad and me, my dad was struggling with Alzheimer's, and home was incredibly difficult, scary, unstable. And the thing that saved me was school. School was the one place in my life that was safe, supportive, and nurturing. And from being a classroom teacher to serving as United States Secretary of Education for President Obama, I have always focused throughout my career on maximizing opportunity for all students.

Now it is my priority to empower all students to thrive on our SUNY campuses. To that end, four pillars guide our work: student success; research and scholarship; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and economic development and upward mobility for our students.

My remarks today will underscore how state investment lays the foundation for

SUNY's success. Among my highest priorities early on has been to visit all 64 campuses -- 16 down, 48 to go. Each stop has been an opportunity to spend time with students, faculty, campus leaders, employer partners, and community members.

Our students are extraordinary. It's been powerful to hear their stories, especially the stories of first-generation college students, about the difference SUNY is making in their lives. At campus after campus, I've heard from students who are participating in our Educational Opportunity Program or who've participated in our Educational Opportunity Centers, who describe the difference SUNY is making in their lives and the access it's providing them to economic opportunity.

Our shared success requires that SUNY rise to complex challenges, to ensure opportunity for all of our students, to compete for world-class faculty who represent the diversity of our students, to expand our academic options at every level, to align our

programming with regional economic development needs, and to provide the wraparound services students need, not just to start college but to finish.

In her first State of the State address a year ago, Governor Hochul unveiled a plan for SUNY's transformation. With your partnership, the enacted budget included historic investments. For example, $60 million was invested in enrollment initiatives and student success, which is already translating into new initiatives on campuses, flexible seven-week schedules to help working adults complete their degrees, transportation support so that students can get to class; $53 million for new faculty that's helping us to attract world-class, diverse faculty members, and to reverse a longstanding trend of having to turn away students away from important programs like engineering and nursing because of a lack of faculty.

This year's Executive Budget builds on last year's foundation with bold investments

to encourage student success and ensure that SUNY provides the best possible educational experience. Vital investments in the Executive Budget would include the $53 million for faculty hiring and the $60 million for enrollment initiatives continuing; $75 million for a Transformational Initiatives Fund that will help support innovative workforce development programs; $200 million for a Digital Transformation that will help provide a long-overdue investment to improve the student experience, make it easier for students to enroll, to transfer credits, to access financial aid and other resources; a $1.5 billion research endowment for University Centers, which will bring tremendous returns in additional federal research dollars and new economic development opportunities; the important community college funding floor, which has been a life-preserver for many campuses; and increased capital funding.

The Executive Budget also makes two

proposals with respect to tuition that would yield $97 million per year. These proposals recognize that our campuses need resources at a time when costs are rising and students need more support than ever. There are two parts to the proposal. One is rational and predictable tuition for our campuses, which will help to provide academic programs and wraparound services. The second component is differential tuition for our University Centers, which recognizes their unique needs as they recruit world-class faculty to provide world-class research opportunities for students and contribute to the state's economic development.

I want to emphasize that no one offers as high-quality an education as affordably around the country as SUNY and our partners at CUNY. Indeed, 53 percent of all SUNY students attend tuition-free, and half graduate debt-free. The Governor's proposal will sustain that figure because the Executive Budget provides that TAP and Excelsior would increase to cover additional

tuition costs. So those SUNY students who receive full TAP awards or Excelsior scholarships will not pay any additional tuition.

SUNY respectfully asks our champions in the Legislature to accept all the SUNY investments proposed in the Executive Budget. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the needs of SUNY's students, faculty and staff with you today. I thank you for all the measures you've championed over the years to ensure that every New York student finds a home and success at SUNY.

And I'd be pleased to answer any questions.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Chancellor Rodríguez.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Is this on?

Good morning, chairs and members of the Assembly and the Senate, staff, guests, my good friend Chancellor King too. Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify this morning. I'm especially excited to

testify in person after two years of virtual Executive Budget hearings.

I am extremely humble and honored to lead the premier and largest urban public university in the United States, now celebrating our 175th anniversary, with a community of over 220,000 degree-seeking students, over 150,000 students in adult and continuing education programs, 18,350 faculty, and 21,800 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 sustained support.

CUNY continues to distinguish itself and be recognized for our quality, affordability, and inspirational record as an engine of upwards mobility for our students and their families and, by extension, the city and the state. Recent accolades include Hostos and Kingsborough community colleges have reached the final round of 10 in their quest for the prestigious 2023 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, regarded by

many as the highest recognition for community college achievement in the nation. We will celebrate in April when one of them wins the prize.

Six CUNY senior colleges were among the top-performing public colleges in the northern United States in the 2022 U.S. News rankings, and seven CUNY colleges were among the top 20 public universities.

Ten CUNY colleges were among the nation's best in promoting economic mobility, according to Third Way, a public policy think tank that is creating an Economic Mobility Index for students from low- and moderate-income families.

At the same time, CUNY continues to demonstrate the transformational impact we have on almost every aspect of life in New York. To cite just one recent example, Chancellor Banks and I announced a groundbreaking $14 million partnership to train thousands of current and future public school teachers to deliver practical computer science and data literacy skills to their

students. We believe it's the largest effort of its kind in the nation.

Often overlooked, meanwhile, is CUNY's excellence as a research powerhouse propelled by more than 10,000 researchers with staff, with growing support from public and private funders. Our recent grants through the first half of the fiscal year already amount to $417 million. If this trend continues, we will end the fiscal year with the largest amount of external research funding in our history. All told, we have more than 2,100 research grants for projects that are being carried out by our faculty and staff.

All this is even more impressive because of CUNY's diversity. In 2022, the City of New York Graduate Center was found to be the second-most gender diverse of the nation's Research 1 institutions. Additionally, 20 percent of the Graduate Center's full-time graduate students identify as underrepresented minorities. CUNY is clearly a national powerhouse in educating diverse Ph.D. students.

CUNY, like so many institutions of higher learning, has faced enrollment challenges consistent with nationwide pandemic trends. We have all hands on deck working on this area, doubling down on CUNY's long history of expanding access to higher ed. We opened the semester with a wonderful announcement about CUNY Reconnect, our initiative to reengage thousands of New Yorkers who began college but stopped out before they completed a degree.

The initiative was championed by City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams and funded by the city, and I am happy to report that more than 16,000 students have signed up for classes through the program this academic year, surpassing our goal of enrolling 10,000 returning students.

CUNY Reconnect and various enrollment analytics have taught us a lot about what works and how our systems can be improved to increase enrollment and retention. Those lessons led us to create a large advertising campaign with the tag line "Degrees Without

The Debt," and this is running on subways, buses, billboards, ferries, and taxis with impressive results in the numbers of visitors to our CUNY Apply website.

Another initiative that will help address enrollment and retention is the enhancement and expansion of CUNY Online, the university's in-house solution to increased online educational opportunities. CUNY Online will provide a robust, high-quality online program portfolio in high-demand areas with online wraparound student services.

The initiatives I have described above are all being undertaken to realize CUNY's fullest potential to uplift New York. CUNY is indispensable as we recover and rebuild communities, especially those that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Nearly 80 percent of our undergraduate students are students of color: 23 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander, 26 percent are Black, and 30 percent are Latino. More than 80 percent of CUNY's graduates stay in New York and contribute to

the city's economic, civic and cultural life. Half of our undergraduate students come from households with less than $30,000 in annual income, 45 percent of our students are the first in their family to attend college, and 50 percent work while going to school.

We have increased our focus on equipping students to engage the workforce and strengthen our career pathways. We are forging new public and private partnerships like the CUNY Inclusive Economy initiative, which aims to connect 80 percent of CUNY graduates to careers by the end of the decade. And of course we know the impact that paid internships have on our students' success -- more students who graduate sooner, who have job offers and earn higher wages.

We have expanded all these opportunities with private support and funding from the state and the city, but we need your help, as more still needs to be done.

CUNY students and graduates staff some of our city's most critical workforce

sectors, including nurses and teachers. Each year CUNY graduates about 1,800 nurses -- about half of all new nurses in the city in a typical year. The university also awards more than 5,000 degrees and certificates in education and supplies a third of new teachers for the New York City Public Schools. According to a recent report from the Center for an Urban Future, in one year, 2019, CUNY graduated more Black and Latino students with tech degrees than all undergraduate degrees awarded by our sister institution Columbia University in that year. CUNY's impact on New York City's talent base simply cannot be ignored.

Because we educate the workforce of today and that of the future, we recognize the need for additional financial support to educate STEM students. Educating students in these vital and fast-growing STEM and health care areas is more expensive than educating students in other areas. In 2021-'22, about 42 percent of CUNY's enrollment was in STEM or health disciplines. Faculty costs are

estimated at 33 percent higher in those fields. Other costs include lab equipment, lab sections and higher faculty-student ratios.

We are also modernizing the university and transforming our operations through enhanced technology. We are replacing and migrating our core Enterprise Resource Planning functions to modern cloud solutions. We are also replacing and migrating our learning management system and implementing a new CRM system. Even as we transform, we'll engage in a multifaceted cybersecurity initiative to identify and protect against potential risks that threaten the university's IT assets.

I would be remiss if I did not deal with the structural deficits CUNY is facing. They are primarily due to decreases in enrollment and related tuition revenue, as well as historic underfunding of mandatory cost increases. We are doing our part to help mitigate these deficits.

One example -- among many -- of our

efforts is the Efficiencies for Reinvestment and Innovation, designed to produce greater efficiencies and cost savings for CUNY. So far, the first phase of this initiative involved automating previously manual processes, resulting in savings of over $14 million. A second phase, which is still being implemented, is expected to bring in as much as $39 million in additional savings.

I am extremely optimistic about the future of this great university, especially considering the challenges we have overcome and the lessons that we have learned since the pandemic. Thanks to you and Governor Hochul for your continued support of CUNY. Your investment directly results in a stronger, more vibrant New York, one that is inclusive and benefits all New Yorkers regardless of race, socioeconomic and immigrant status.

In our complete written testimony, which we have submitted for the record, we comment on the Executive Budget and share additional highlights of our accomplishments,

impact and scale. And I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you both.

Before we go to questions, I just wanted to acknowledge that we've had a number of Assemblymembers join us: Assemblywoman Lupardo, Assemblywoman Clark, Assemblywoman McMahon, and Assemblyman Eachus.

And we go for questions to our Higher Ed chair, Assemblywoman Fahy, 10 minutes on the clock.

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

And thank you to both chancellors. Welcome back, Chancellor King. Welcome back to New York. And Chancellor Matos Rodríguez, thank you again for being here.

Yes, I am the new chair, so bear with me. And I know there are many, many questions, but I'm going to start with Chancellor King and then a few of these cross over, so feel free to chime in.

Tuition. We might as well just get it

right out there, it's probably the elephant in the room. It's probably been -- the Governor has proposed a tuition increase. Obviously it's tough timing. Both of you mentioned enrollment challenges, and I'd like to hear a little bit more on that. But if you would address why the support for tuition increases, particularly among the four university centers. You had mentioned privately how that may help with research dollars, and I think it would help all of us to understand, given the -- what is -- well, it's never good timing, but what could be certainly considered difficult timing with any talk of a tuition increase.

Thank you.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you, Chair. It's been a pleasure to have many conversations about higher education policy since you've taken on the role.

Look, fundamentally, SUNY is deeply committed to affordability. And we stand out in how affordable SUNY is by comparison to other public higher ed systems. That said,

campuses need a reliable, predictable set of expectations around revenue. The Governor has proposed a modest tuition increase across the system to try to provide that reliable revenue source.

That said, 53 percent of our students at our campuses today don't pay tuition because of the generosity of Pell, TAP and the Excelsior program. And that will continue to be true even with the tuition increase.

So that's one component, the reliability, predictability so that campuses can plan. We've held tuition steady since 2019, since the early emergence of the pandemic. It's critical that campuses have the ability to have that reliability.

The second piece is the differential tuition for the University Centers. Their cost structure is different. To be able to fund research faculty, to be able to fund the graduate students who conduct research with those faculty, to fund the operation of labs that bring well over a billion dollars in

federal research money to the state, they need more resources. And if you look at other states, they have a different tuition structure for their research institutions than for their other campuses.

And so that differential tuition piece is, I think, a really important policy step to make sure that our University Centers can be competitive with a UNC Chapel Hill, with a UC Berkeley, with the other research institutions around the country.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. And this can go to both of you, but Chancellor Matos, if you'd like to address it. I love that you -- I've never had a conversation that you don't mention how proud you are of the Economic Mobility Index and that you're one of the -- that you have 10 colleges with the nation's best. As somebody who's first-generation college and first-generation high school, that resonates a lot to me. I wouldn't be here without the access to higher education. So very much appreciate that.

I understand, in addition to the

tuition proposal, there is a serious need for funding. I know SUNY has a specific list of distressed campuses, and I know CUNY has more than its share of distressed campuses. Can you talk about what is being done currently as well as with any proposed funds in the Governor's budget, and what may be -- what is in the process to attract additional students to really try to address the enrollments.

And again, both of you can, but if you would, our CUNY chancellor.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So thank you for that.

Yes, the 40 million we received in strategic funds last year from the executive and then the approved budget is money that we have used particularly to address enrollment challenges, right? We have the CUNY Reconnect, which I mentioned in my testimony, has yielded a great not just number of students coming back, but also a lot of learning from us on how to keep bringing those students back. So we hope to continue to capitalize on that with additional funding

and support.

Our CUNY Online initiative is a way to capture a market that we have really not addressed in CUNY. So it's another way to bring in additional students to us in a modality that brings flexibility to particularly sort of working adults and -- which is important to us.

We've also began a transfer initiative, which is part of that. Transfer is a way to keep students enrolled and keep them progressing, saving some other TAP dollars and their financial aid. So we used a number of those investments directly to work on our enrollment, and we're beginning to see in the spring a flattening of the enrollment, so we're optimistic about what we can do in the fall.

I'd like just to mention briefly, to your question about the tuition increase, CUNY has historically supported the Rational Tuition Policy as one more tool in the arsenal to bring revenues to our campuses. We're very proud that even in years where

we've had the authority in the past, we have not always exercised that. There's been eight years of no tuition increases in the community colleges. Right? So we believe that we have shown that we are good stewards when we're given that authority by the state to do that.

And in the case of the proposed tuition this year, similar numbers to what Chancellor King mentioned about the number of students who, between TAP and Pell, pay no tuition. If you think about our community colleges, right, the tuition would still be under TAP. So probably around 80 percent of the students will not see a tuition increase in the community colleges, which is the sector that we're most concerned about because of enrollment.

So we believe that that tool, used wisely, is a good way to invest, and we have a good track record at CUNY of saying that even though we have the authority, we only use it when we think that the time is right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Great.

Chancellor King.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you. I would echo the gratitude that Chancellor Matos Rodríguez expressed for the enrollment funding. That $60 million has allowed our campuses to expand high-demand programs in areas like nursing, cybersecurity, mechatronics.

I would also say we are doing a lot systemwide to try to support our campuses around addressing the enrollment challenge. We saw a significant uptick in applications this fall in part because of a two-week fee-waiver period for applications and aggressive marketing so that New Yorkers know the great value proposition at SUNY.

We are also implementing something called cascading admissions, where if a student applies to, let's say, Stony Brook and Buffalo but doesn't get in, we will affirmatively reach out to them and say, You didn't get in there, but there is a place for you and a program that matches your interest at a Fredonia or a Brockport. That really

allows us to make sure that students who may only know of a few institutions that are more famous, get the opportunity to go to a SUNY campus.

We are also working with school districts to make sure that every twelfth-grader gets a personalized letter saying there's a place for them at their local community college, because we want students to know, again, that there are great opportunities for them at SUNY.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: I have two other questions, and I wanted just to add as well, as the new chair, really look forward to visiting many of your campuses. I'm well behind the schedule that you mentioned, Chancellor King, but look forward to at least getting to a few.

Two questions -- and again, for both of you, if you can split up the time. The endowment. The Governor has proposed an endowment for the four University Centers. Chancellor Matos Rodríguez, you have also expressed an interest in an endowment fund.

Can you talk about why that might be important? Certainly I've heard from colleagues and others that many campuses would like this. And of course there is a concern that it might affect other operating dollars.

The second part is a completely separate question, but if you can address it. Community colleges, there's been a lot of concern about the way the funding formula is based now, the FTE. If you can both address that -- if you support looking at a slightly altered formula or if there's something we should be considering there.

Thank you.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: First on the endowment. You know, the Governor has proposed a $500 million state investment that would then attract a billion dollars in private philanthropy. The revenue from that $1.5 billion would allow our University Centers to go out competitively to recruit faculty, to build out their research capacity. The Governor has called for

doubling the state's level of federal research dollars, which is achievable only if the University Centers have the resources to invest there.

So we think this is an important opportunity really to build for the long term. If you compare our institutions to other state universities around the country, one of the places where we're not as competitive is in endowment resources. University of Michigan, for example, has a $16 billion endowment.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Can you give a few seconds to your colleague? Thank you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So there will be a different structure for us, right, because it wouldn't be -- we don't have the same flashy centers as them.

But we think it's a great investment. Those dollars remain being reinvested, reinvested, no matter what is happening in the economy in terms of the budget that we might receive. And it's a way to encourage more philanthropic support for our campuses,

which is something that's going to continue to give. So I think that it's a good idea.

And on the FTEs, I think my recommendation would be that until community college enrollment stabilizes, to be tweaking with the formula might not be the right time, because nobody quite has a crystal ball to know how things are going to pan out in the future.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Very helpful.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Higher Ed Chair Toby Stavisky, 10 minutes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Good to see you both.

Before I ask my questions, I just want to mention the fact that I'm delighted that the Governor's budget includes the -- transformational, I think is the current word we use, for the improvements and increases for SUNY. And I truly wish that CUNY had

been included in that transformation.

But let me ask the tuition question a little bit differently. Both institutions I believe, certainly the community colleges, are experiencing declining enrollment. How will a tuition increase help reverse the trend of declining enrollment and bring the students back to SUNY and to CUNY?

And I ask that question of both of you. But let me add, for CUNY, there have been 100,000 students lost, declined, in New York City Department of Education records. And that really affects, I believe, CUNY.

But Chancellor King, will you start?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Sure. Look --

SENATOR STAVISKY: Mine is a very specific question. Particularly, let me add, during times of inflation.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yes. Yeah. So, you know, even with the tuition increase that the Governor has proposed, our SUNY campuses will be dramatically more affordable than campuses in neighboring states. We're

committed to affordability. As we both mentioned earlier, a large percentage of our students, 53 percent for SUNY, don't pay tuition now because of Pell, TAP and Excelsior. That will still be true.

We think the quality of services that campuses can offer is really important to being competitive and attracting students. Whether or not we're able to offer robust academic programs in areas that students are particularly interested in, whether or not we have adequate mental health services and other student supports, matters for attracting students.

So in the end, we think that a tuition increase over time, a modest tuition increase, will help us actually position the campuses to better attract students.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Yup. So I begin by bringing greetings on behalf of the 9,938 students from CUNY who are in your district.

You have 29, Assemblywoman Fahy, I forgot that.

(Laughter.)

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So thank you for your support.

On the community college, I mean, as I mentioned before, between 70 and 80 percent of the community college students will not see the tuition increase because they will be taken care of by either TAP or Pell.

Chancellor King mentioned the importance of services to be able to attract students. I want to take it one more point. We need services to keep students enrolled. Right? If we had done a better job at retaining students, five, 10 percent, some of the enrollment challenges that we face would not have been as severe. So the services that -- the funding that this will attract would allow us to be better at making sure that students stay on track and get retained. So it's not just attracting students, but be able to retain the students that we have. And we think that the investment -- and that we will have ways to support the students that might need the help with private

fundraising.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Chancellor King, you mentioned the 19 SUNY distressed campuses, but I didn't see any mention -- and in response to the Assemblymember's question, but I did not see any reference to the three university hospitals that traditionally have been underfunded and done such a wonderful job during the pandemic.

What do you -- how can we help them to get back on their feet?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you for raising that. We very much need additional support for the hospitals, for two reasons. One, they play a crucial safety net role in their communities. In the case of Downstate, SUNY Downstate, 85 percent of their patients are Medicare, Medicaid, and uninsured. So they play a crucial role serving the community.

But they also play a crucial role in training the workforce that we need. SUNY Downstate, for example, is one of the biggest providers of a diverse healthcare

workforce -- not just in the state, but around the country.

So we desperately need additional resources. Last year the Legislature added nearly $70 million for debt relief for the three hospitals. That was hugely helpful. We've proposed a funding formula that would go back to a tradition the state had years back, of subsidizing the state hospitals to help address the difference in fringe benefits costs that the state hospitals experience.

We also know that SUNY Downstate will have a $133 million operating deficit in the coming year. And we would be very grateful for assistance there, to make sure that these institutions can continue to serve their communities.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Chancellor Matos Rodríguez, does CUNY itself have an endowment? And if so, how much is it?

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So the endowments are had by the individual foundations of the colleges. So -- and I

think that if you combine that, it comes close to like a billion dollars. But again, they're held by the City College Foundation, the Brooklyn College Foundation, the Queens College Foundation. So those are the ways the endowments are built in in our structure.

And can I take advantage of this second to -- we don't have a hospital, but a plug for the CUNY Medical School, the most diverse medical school in the country that is not in HBCUs. We're requesting 7 million in support. If we want diverse physicians, primary care physicians, that's what our school is providing. So I take the opportunity to make that comment too.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Chancellor, one more question. In terms of the individual colleges' debt, some of them are running at quite a debt, particularly -- well, I'm not going to mention the individual institutions, but there are -- I understand that Baruch is debt-free and both the Labor College and the Law School -- the Labor College and Journalism School, sorry, are very minimal

debt.

How do you propose to reverse those trends and help the institutions get relief from their debt?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: So a number of ways. And thank you for that question, Senator.

First, we're working with each of the campuses -- and I think many of you saw that this year we asked all the campuses to engage in 2 percent of savings. We've added that to between 5 and 7 percent, depending on the fiscal health of each of the campuses, to sort of bring back that structural deficit. So taking our own measures to address that.

And we're working with each campus individually, both in the revenue side -- helping them with enrollment, for example. We've been helping some campuses that had some of the larger enrollment losses with advertisement support from the central office, and marketing, so they can attract more students. So we have some individual support to all the campuses.

That's why in our budget request, too, additional operating dollars in helping us to address the higher cost of STEM students is one of the requests that we have in our budget request, 53 million, so that we can put that into our operational dollars, but to be able to support the higher number of STEM students that we have.

SENATOR STAVISKY: For both chancellors, may I ask the question I always ask, and that is what is the ratio of full-time faculty and part-time faculty.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: For us it's about 53 percent full-time, 47 percent part-time. The part-time is more common in the community colleges than in the four-years.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Systemwide we are 40 percent full-time, 60 percent part-time.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Last year we provided record increases in higher education, particularly to the public colleges and universities, and there was

funding in there to hire additional faculty, hopefully to choose the adjuncts for those positions, assuming that they're qualified.

Real quick, what are you doing -- what are the numbers there? Are you taking the adjuncts? And how many positions are unfilled? That's really the question I'm asking.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We are very grateful for the $53 million for additional faculty. And we expect that will translate into between 325 and 375 new positions.

Those plans from campuses have been approved, and they are going through search processes as we speak. And I'd be glad to keep you updated on the outcomes of those searches.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So we started hiring earlier, so we hired 250 faculty members of the 600 faculty that we'll be able to hire from that also very generous funding. Eighty percent of the 250 hires so far are adjuncts, so we're very proud of that conversion rate. And the

distribution of faculty to the campuses was made looking at faculty full-time to part-time ratios.

So to your question, Senator, one of the things that we addressed when we gave out the lines was to help the schools that had the worst ratios.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We've been joined by Assemblyman Burgos, Assemblywoman Hyndman.

And we go to the ranker on Higher Education for five minutes, Assemblyman Smullen.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Thank you, Chair, I appreciate it.

Chancellor King, in your opening remarks you mentioned diversity, equity and inclusion. And I know that you've been Secretary of Education in the Obama administration as well as, you know, in the State Education Department.

How does that -- you know, as one of your first acts is you're going to mandate a class for all SUNY students to graduate to be -- to include diversity, equity and inclusion. What does that mean to you?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: So about -- thank you for the question. About 15 months ago or so the Board of Trustees completed a process of reviewing the SUNY general education requirements. And as part of those general education requirements, there is a requirement that students have a course experience that addresses issues of diversity, equity and inclusion. So, for example, a course in U.S. history or sociology or public health or communications.

And so each of the campuses will identify which courses satisfy that requirement. There's no additional course credit for students, no additional cost for students. This is just evolution of the long-standing general education requirements.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: So this is going to be a migration of existing curriculum to

ensure that it hits certain touchstones having to do with civics, ethics, public good, educational needs and roles?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Exactly. Well said.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Okay. Because I -- you know, one of the concerns about the whole DEI thing is that it's inserting, you know, various theories into public education that everyone doesn't agree with. And including things like critical race theory and a variety of things.

And the hope would be -- and I did question, at the Board of Regents interviews -- the Board of Regents says, you know, this is a SUNY thing, so they're -- they've said, Well, we don't have anything to do with DEI curriculum approval.

Who in the SUNY administration, then -- is it you that's responsible for the oversight and approval of such curriculum?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: As always with courses at SUNY, the faculty at each of the campuses are responsible for the curriculum

on their campuses.

Look, I would say it's important, we believe it's important for students who will enter a diverse society and a diverse workforce to be prepared. We think it's important that students in a U.S. history class, for example, would learn about the existence of the institution of slavery or the history of the civil rights movement. And that's the kind of requirement that we're envisioning that our faculties will embrace, as they long have. Thought it important for students --

(Overtalk.)

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Well, I certainly think they have. If you ask a SUNY professor, I don't think that they would describe themselves as inherently racist.

But what I'm concerned with is where this gets approved. So you're saying that the presidents of each of the institutions would be the ones responsible for the implementation and the oversight of this DEI initiative.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Again, it's the faculty at each of the institutions.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: But the president would oversee the faculty's sequencing of it and the knowledge modules within each course and how it would --

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, in the shared governance model the campus leadership team would work to support the faculty as they assess their existing courses, if there are any adaptations that need to be made, to make sure that they are incorporating issues of diversity.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Thank you for that.

I just need to very quickly follow up on the community colleges. Very important in the large rural areas that I represent, and many areas of upstate New York. One of the things that they tell me is that their funding goes up and down based on a countercyclical economic model. When times are good, people aren't in community colleges because they're working. And sometimes when

times get bad, then they go to community colleges to retool or retrain.

And one of the things that I thought would be helpful, and has the SUNY system looked at, is a 10-year model of enrollment and funding. It's something I learned in the Marine Corps, where you look at it from a broad, long-term perspective. And instead of having up and down funding based on the year before or what's next year, you look at it over a period of years.

Have you looked at that, or are you having your SUNY, you know, analysis team look at these community colleges? Because I'm here to tell you, they're really struggling.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Look, I appreciate the question. You know, community colleges play a vital role in workforce development as well as an access point for students to higher education.

We have a system workgroup that's been looking for some time at the community college funding formula. That work paused

during COVID, but will restart.

You know, the challenge is that the COVID period, the most intense period of the pandemic, exacerbated enrollment losses that we've seen nationwide for community colleges. But what's hopeful, and this was helped in large part by the $60 million, is that there's tremendous demand for programs like nursing, cybersecurity, mechatronics. So we're seeing that demand, we just need to move our campuses to address that demand.

ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Thank you very much, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

Joe Griffo, ranker for Higher Ed, five minutes.

SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you. Thank you, Chancellor Rodríguez, thanks, Chancellor King, for being here today.

We talk about the declining enrollment obviously within the systems and some of the

struggles and challenges you're facing, the competitive choices that exist at this point in time. Is either system considering or contemplating closures or consolidations of any of the campuses?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We are not, because we think SUNY has a deep commitment to the 64 communities where our campuses are located. We think that each of our campuses, with the right support, can adapt their programs to meet the regional economic development needs.

You know, there are 2 million New Yorkers who have some credits and no degree. We've got to make sure we get those students back. There are young people, 18 to 24, who didn't go straight to college but haven't yet figured out their plan. We've got to make sure those students know there's a place for them at SUNY.

So we feel, with the right level of resources, we can make sure that all of our campuses are able to thrive.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And

our campuses are anchor institutions in the boroughs where they're located, so we are not contemplating any such movement.

Also, greetings from the 18 CUNY students who are in your district, Senator.

And -- but one of things we're doing -- it goes back to the question about community colleges -- is that we've, with the funding we received from the state last year, began to redesign some of the applied associate's degrees, which are the two-year degrees, which are not transfer-based, some of those programs were set up for things that were in demand 30, 35 years ago, maybe not so much now.

So we began to re-look at some of them, update them, get rid of the ones that are not really current, and also begin to insert items like apprenticeships, which have proven to be very, very valuable in some of those programs, so that we can get students getting working and learning as they go. So it's another way to bring additional value to what the community colleges do.

SENATOR GRIFFO: So that's a good point to segue on. What can we do to address some of the shortages that exist right now in nursing, we talk about healthcare shortages; in education, for teachers? What is the plan right now, knowing that those shortages exist and that you have a key role in trying to develop the workforce to meet the need?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah. So thank you for that.

And we desperately need more nurses as a state. We have shortages really across the healthcare workforce. There's a proposal for increased funding for the high-needs nursing program. That would be very helpful to us, because one of the challenges is recruiting nursing faculty. And so having additional resources to pay people to be able to attract nurses to teach in our programs is critical.

There's also a bill that Assemblywoman Lupardo and Senator Stavisky have that would allow 30 percent of the clinical hours for nursing to be done through simulation. We think this is extraordinarily important,

because the lack of clinical placements, the difficulty of clinical hours, is a real obstacle to training the nurses we need. That bill setting 30 percent as a simulation maximum would be very, very helpful.

We also think that investments that the Governor talked about, the 75 million in transformation initiatives, will help us develop programs that match some of the emerging needs that we're seeing -- in renewable energy, for example.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And, I mean, similar challenges on our end in terms of the clinical placement for the nurses to be able to complete their education and being able to have more flexibility in the things now that -- we've learned a number of things because of the pandemic in terms of how we can use virtual or remote training for them.

Another additional flexibility in -- we have both not that many students going into nursing, but sometimes we have more students going into nursing that complete the

programs. And we should be able to steer them into other allied health-related fields where we also have shortages. So funding for that would be helpful too. And -- but I echo the comments from Chancellor King.

SENATOR GRIFFO: And last, again on tuition, are you concerned that these tuition increases that are proposed could potentially fall predominantly on the middle-class families? Because you have the Excelsior award, you have other means for others. Is there a concern there that that not only would it fall on them but also make SUNY and CUNY more noncompetitive?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Well, look, we're very committed to affordability. I'd say if you compare SUNY's tuition to peer institutions, we're about $3,000 or so lower than that tuition.

The increase the Governor has proposed would translate into a couple of hundred dollars a year on campuses. I realize that's challenging, any increase is challenging. But we've got to have a way to pay for things

like mental health services, student supports.

SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We now go to Assemblywoman Bichotte Hermelyn, three minutes, question and answer.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BICHOTTE HERMELYN: Thank you.

Thank you, Chancellor King and Chancellor Rodríguez, for being here today and for all your hard work. I represent the 42nd Assembly District in Brooklyn, the home of CUNY's Harvard, Brooklyn College, and I am also a proud alum of Buffalo State College University and University of Buffalo.

I have three questions. One, the first one is pertaining to the SEEK and the EOP programs. Both were instituted by legends, Black legends -- we're in Black History Month right now -- Shirley Chisholm and Arthur Eve. And these programs are being reduced, being proposed to be reduced by

1.3 million and by 1.1 million. These are programs that historically have helped students of color and those who are seeking financial help.

The second question is we know that CUNY had money for mental health counselors, and they were hired on a part-time temporary basis. Now, at this juncture, what is the plan to hire these counselors as full-time, permanent workers?

And lastly, childcare centers. I'm a new mom. I'm excited to hear that this is being implemented; want a little bit to know how many children would be serviced.

Thank you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So let me -- and again, on behalf of the 3,569 CUNY students in your district, I bring you greetings and thank you for your support.

A number of things. The mental health services, that's where we need the operating dollars to be able to convert. In our case, we put -- in each campus we used 2 million of the stimulus money to be able to support

mental health. So we have to get additional operational dollars so we can then, the personnel that was hired, be able to keep them to be providing those very important services.

I can get you a breakdown of the childcare by campus, because I don't have those figures off the top of my head. But clearly the Governor's money was very, very helpful in increasing capacity in some of our centers and adding one new center at Queensborough Community College.

And on SEEK, again, a very important program. We want that money restored. Enrollment was hurt in those programs during the pandemic because the students coming to the SEEK program tend to come from some of the areas that were hardest hit by the pandemic.

One item that we want to suggest is also the number of SEEK students that are STEM majors is low. We want to continue to diversify our STEM fields, which would also maybe target some of the SEEK investment into

supporting additional STEM majors in SEEK, and we have a proposal for that.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Quickly, we are very supportive of a restoration of funding for EOP, believe deeply in the program.

And on childcare centers, we are at 47 currently across 43 campuses, and we have seven more that are in the process of operating, which will bring us to 54 childcare centers on 49 campuses.

One of the challenges is having the level of resources to make the childcare services more broadly available. We have lots of waitlists.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you, Chancellor.

We go to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And we go to Senator Gounardes.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: (Mic off; inaudible.) There, that's on.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Some of them work better than others.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: In case you didn't

hear me, good morning, gentlemen, good afternoon, gentlemen.

At the outset, just to hit the tuition increase drum again, a tuition increase is a tax increase by another name. And it doesn't matter if we're holding harmless a percentage of kids who are going to have to pay it, it's a tax increase by another name. And a lot of people are concerned about asking students in this state to pay more for what should be, in an ideal world, a free, quality, public higher education.

I want to turn to Chancellor Rodríguez first. You know, as Senator Stavisky highlighted, I think the budget that's proposed for SUNY is fantastic. I wish that you had gotten the same budget. I think it's offensive that in a state where we have two phenomenal public institutions, we have seen such disparities in funding proposals. And we have done a really great job over the years to not pit SUNY and CUNY against each other. But by my measure of the Governor's budget this year, you're only getting

35 percent of what's being proposed for higher ed, which is deeply concerning.

Now, the Governor is proposing $94 million. You asked for 313 million. Some of us want to see that significantly higher. You're putting out memos about cutting budgets and impacts in schools. If you only got the 94 million, what's that going to do for hiring more teachers, what's that going to do for class sizes, what's that going to do for campus maintenance, what's that going to do on the product that you're delivering for a quarter-million students in New York City?

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So thank you for the question. So we are hopeful that the budget process will, through the conversations, highlight how CUNY can benefit from similar investments. The arguments about the IT needs is something that I mentioned in my testimony. We're already making some of the investments in that modernization. We can use the capital dollars for that.

Clearly our research labs, our science labs can also use an upgrade in terms of additional capital dollars, as is laid out in the budget. We have shown great ways in which we used the 40 million strategic funding last year. So a similar funding version this year is something that can continue to allow us to invest in enrollment techniques and retention techniques to support our students. So we can clearly make a case for that.

We touched on the endowment also. So in all those areas we can make a similar case for how that investment will be dramatically important to CUNY and to the 6,028 CUNY students in your district.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: I dropped a little bit. I used to be number one at 10,000 plus.

But if I'm hearing you, 94 million's not enough, is I think the takeaway there, something that I think we should all be mindful of.

Chancellor King, I want to talk about

Downstate as well. I'm concerned about the debt service payments not being picked up by the state. Downstate's in critical need of infrastructure upgrades. How is that going to impact your ability to deliver a world-class hospital?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Don't answer now, because you're out of time. We warned everyone this would happen.

So please, when you have questions you couldn't get back to us on now, you're going to put them in writing. If you send them to Helene and myself, we'll make sure all members of the committees get your answers.

Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go -- well, first of all, we've been joined by Assemblywoman Wallace; I wanted to acknowledge her being here earlier.

And we go to Assemblywoman Simon, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

Thank you to Chancellor King and

Chancellor Matos Rodríguez.

There are a number of things cleverly disguised in the Governor's budget as maintaining or -- that are really cuts. A lot of the Opportunity Programs, for example, have either been cut or are dramatically scaled back.

As well as, as I understand it, this issue about the endowment programs, which I think CUNY has argued persuasively would be very important to it as well.

Can you comment on those things that are actually cuts? I know you've made your testimony very positive-sounding, but it would be nice to know what is lacking.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Well, so, but, you know, we are positive guys, so that is -- shouldn't be surprising. We're in this line of work because we believe in the power of higher ed.

Clearly, in terms of the restoration, you talked about additional funding for the programs that support students with disabilities, something that I don't have to

even look to know that the chancellor is equally supportive as I am in terms of the return on investment for those programs. And also how important they are, particularly coming after the pandemic, to be able to support that growing student population in our campuses.

We're big fans of the Opportunity Programs, so we feel that they should be restored also.

As I mentioned in the case of SEEK, I hope that we can also tweak them a little bit and support STEM in that area. So again -- and that I mentioned in some of the comments to Senator Gounardes in terms of making a case for some of the investments that could be done in CUNY with capital dollars, is that they need funds too.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I would echo those points around the restoration of the Opportunity Programs, as well as additional funding for supporting students with disabilities.

I would emphasize -- and this

addresses the question, I think, that was asked earlier about the role of the hospitals. And they really were left out, and that happens I think often because they're seen as a higher ed issue, but they're both a health and a higher ed issue.

We need resources if we're going to serve patients and if we're going to continue to produce a diverse workforce. And that's the debt service for three hospitals, which is 70 million; it's the 133 million to address the gap for SUNY Downstate. And it's a long-term solution to the big gap in fringe benefits costs for our hospitals compared to their peer hospitals.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: I would also like to just compliment you on getting rid of Blackboard --

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: -- and suggest that the SUNY system might do that as well.

And also, please look at A4659, which is a bill that would address this issue about the way we teach our teachers how to teach

reading, which I know is an issue I've discussed with both of you.

Thank you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator John Liu.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

First let me welcome Chancellor King, as you have -- as has been done to you many times already this morning. Your predecessor never seemed to be interested in figuring out what correlation, if any, existed between enrollment and increasing tuitions. Tuitions have continued to rise over the last decade. Enrollments have continued to decline over the past decade. One could say there's probably a link.

Is there any effort on the part of your office to finally take a look at this?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: You know, look. The downward enrollment trends are true

nationally. We've held tuition at SUNY campuses constant since 2019. I will say that the Trustees made an ask for $120 million in operating support. The Governor's tuition proposal gets to about 97 million of that. We still think the resources for services and student supports are essential, and we want to make sure we get there.

SENATOR LIU: All right. I mean, the Governor might also be saying that -- might not necessarily be saying that you need to get the remainder from tuition increases. She might be saying there might be things you could do more efficiently so that you can make do with the 97 million that she's provided.

A question for both of you, though, because you're such positive guys.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR LIU: You know, for the longest time we've maintained this 60 percent/40 percent parity between SUNY and CUNY, and the executive proposal completely

throws that out the window. Are you still both really positive about that? Because you don't address that in either of your testimony. And for many of us, it's a huge problem. It's something that we've respected for a long time and that acknowledges the usage of CUNY and SUNY respectively.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Before you answer, Senator Liu, I'm sorry, you were only supposed to get three minutes, not 10.

SENATOR LIU: Oh, Madam Chair, I thought I was getting -- give me seven, I'll be happy with seven.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, I'm sorry. This had already been decided, so --

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Just put two minutes on the clock.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So we'll give you an extra plus. You'll get two more minutes for the answering of questions.

Thank you. Not 12, okay.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So first, thank you on behalf of the 7,928 CUNY

students in your district --

SENATOR LIU: Can I get a list of -- can I get that list?

(Laughter.)

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Yes, easily, we can get that.

You know, that has been the traditional allocation for higher education. As I mentioned before, in my testimony we made the case as to why we think that similar investments in capital in IT, similar investments in capital in the sciences, similar investments in the endowment of our campuses, and similar investments in strategic funds is things that CUNY will use well and needs.

And so that would be my response to the 60/40 question.

SENATOR LIU: So you're happy with what the Executive Budget proposes now, other than the ask for more?

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I mentioned that we could use the additional funding. And I outlined some of the things

which we could use it for.

SENATOR LIU: Okay.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'd just add, my mom went to Hunter. She was the first person in her family to graduate from college. I'm a huge CUNY fan.

My role is to advocate for resources for SUNY, but I'm proud to sit with my CUNY partner in advocating for resources for public higher education generally.

SENATOR LIU: The Governor proposed almost a billion dollars more for SUNY without a comparable increase to CUNY. I mean, how do you reconcile that? And how does that -- I mean, do we just abandon the 60/40 split? Is that obsolete now?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Well, one thing I would say about the Governor's proposal around the endowment in particular, and the $500 million that would drive $1.5 billion to University Centers, that's really about an investment in research in the state.

You know, we have over a billion dollars in federal dollars that are coming to

us to support research. The Governor's articulated a goal of doubling that. The investment in the University Centers is a way to get there, to get that return on investment.

SENATOR LIU: All right. Since I had seven minutes taken away, Chancellor Matos Rodríguez, I just want to remind you that you had tasked Hector with completing the agreement for the School of Labor and Urban Studies. He's done half of it. Can we get the other half done, the welcome center?

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So we are giving great additional space to the School of Labor, and we'll be happy to continue to support that work.

SENATOR LIU: We want to cut the ribbon on that welcome center.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, John.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Clark.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Thank you so very much.

And adding my voice to many of my colleagues here; as a proud SUNY graduate, I am excited to have you here.

So my first question is the 20 percent withholding on the community colleges. We understand obviously there are some issues with the formula. We know some of the admissions issues that they're having and the stress that this really adds to what is -- you know, I get trying to figure out what we're going to do about enrollment. You know, the funding floor itself is so key right now. As we know, the cyclical nature of community college enrollment -- and we know some of the formula needs to maybe potentially be looked at as well, so why the need to do that right now? Why put that added burden on our community colleges?

We've seen these programs with this withholding over the last few years of COVID dollars, of other things, with this 20 percent. And it's never gone well, it's

never paid well, it's never a process that works for anyone in a timely way. So just wondering what the point is.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Look, let me first say we are very grateful for the community college funding floor, which I think is very important for our campuses.

If the 20 percent hold-back is in the final enacted budget, we would work with our community colleges to efficiently develop plans at each of the community colleges for how they might grow the programs where there's high demand and increase efficiency and regional coordination. That's our understanding of what the Governor intended, and we're prepared to work with our campuses to execute on that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Excellent.

Second question, great to see 53 percent of our students not paying tuition at SUNY. But one of the things on TAP -- and we've closed the TAP gap, and we know that will be meaningful. I'm not a fan of the tuition hike, but given -- whether that

happens or not, the TAP gap will help those 53 percent. But what we haven't seen is a change in family incomes eligible for TAP, nor the increase in the minimum amount awarded, in decades.

And so as much as we've made college and continue to make SUNY affordable for a lot of families, there's still a middle-class and lower-middle-class family that is, as much as their -- all these other costs are going up, are not seeing any more help there.

Is that something that you guys have looked at to understand how TAP could help more families?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We'd love to have a conversation about raising the income threshold for TAP and Excelsior, and also potentially covering fees within TAP and Excelsior as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Excellent. And then my last one, on the distressed campuses. I just think this is really an issue if we're not going to put more operating dollars in it. I mean, this is decades in the making of

sort of funding not being there when needed and this austerity that we saw over the years. It's a cycle, then, because then they cancel classes and then it hurts enrollment. I just think that we're not doing enough to really -- we can't pay for that on the backs of tuition hikes. So I think we need to put more dollars into our distressed campuses.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

To the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Murray.

SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you both for being here. Good to see you again.

On Friday I was with President McInnis of Stony Brook University. We had a little get-together, and I asked about the perception of the brain drain, giving a great quality education to all of these students and then having them leave.

She gave me a number that was good to hear, and impressive. She said about 80 percent of the students from Stony Brook

University that graduate stay.

Do you have similar numbers across the SUNY and CUNY systems?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'm -- I'm -- I can get you the specifics.

I will say we -- our analysis suggests that somewhere between one in four and one in three college graduates in New York State is a SUNY alum.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And we have data, the first five years, about 95, 90 percent of the CUNY students stay in New York. Over 10 years, it's closer to 80.

SENATOR MURRAY: How, in that same vein, is there data available as far as the percentage of -- because it was brought up that perhaps we have a higher percentage of in-state students as opposed to out-of-state students. Do you have numbers or figures that you can provide us in regards to that as well?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, we can provide you the specific campus-by-campus numbers. I think generally we're at about

85 percent in-state.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And we're probably higher. You know, given being in the city.

And I forgot to bring greetings on behalf of the 466 CUNY students in your district.

SENATOR MURRAY: There we go.

Switching gears real quick, because we were talking about community colleges and the struggles we have with them right now.

But I do find it ironic in the budget we're talking about the MTA payroll tax that still hits community colleges at this time. What's your feeling on the impact of -- at a time when they're struggling so much, to now increase the MTA payroll commuting tax on the community colleges?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Well, look, I think from our perspective we're focused on higher education as opposed to transportation policy.

But we do worry about our students' ability to get to campuses, and the larger

issue of having adequate investment in the state in transportation so that students have good, reliable public transportation options to get to campus.

SENATOR MURRAY: But again, the concern being other schools being exempt but community colleges not. I have, again, numbers from Suffolk Community College that say that it's costing -- and again, I know in the overall scheme, 400,000 doesn't seem like a lot. But 400,000 right now they're paying in the payroll tax, and then it's going to go up to 600,000.

But, I mean, again, at a time when they're struggling and looking for every dollar, we're looking at tuition increases, we're looking at enrollment being down -- is this the right time?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Again, I think from our standpoint, the worry that we have around transportation is really our students who aren't able to get to class reliably because as a state and country we haven't invested enough in public transportation.

SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Lupardo.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LUPARDO: Thank you very much.

Hello. It's nice to see you both.

First of all, I wanted to note that I am a SUNY grad myself and proud to represent one of our centers, as well as one of the best nursing schools in the state, at Binghamton University.

I wanted to thank you both for your guest viewpoint that you published recently in the New York News. That was very helpful.

Also I wanted to make sure you're aware that over 50 SUNY and CUNY deans, program directors and department chairs have requested that that nursing simulation training bill go into the State Budget.

The question I have for you both is the issue has come up about the need to define quality-based simulation. Do you think that's going to be something that we

can overcome soon?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'm very hopeful we can overcome that soon.

Look, we have a state and national crisis around the supply of nurses. I think it's incumbent on all of us -- higher education, Governor, Legislature, State Education Department, the healthcare community, to come together around a solution this session that gets us to a clear threshold for the percentage of hours that can be done through simulation.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And I'll just echo that I would hope that in that conversation we go to data-driven answers. I think that in many of these things we have still a misconception about quality in online and quality in simulation. There's quality and lack of quality there; there's quality and lack of quality in in-person education too, right?

So I just hope that as we go deeper here that we use data and not maybe some perceptions that we might have from the past

in terms of what the quality of that education is.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN LUPARDO: Well, hopefully we can expedite that perhaps in the budget, but certainly by the end of session.

I just would like to echo the questions that were asked by Ms. Clark, but to mention on the community college front we're certainly grateful about the floor, but if you talk to most community colleges they're looking for the floor plus four, which many of us are certainly supporting. Community colleges have to be, along with BOCES, the absolute foundation to our workforce development efforts.

I just wanted to also just mention how appreciative we all are for the work that's being done at both of your institutions. It's really significant. We're very proud to have you here and to represent the state.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you.

(Discussion off the record.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Webb.

SENATOR WEBB: Oh, it's on. Good afternoon. It's a pleasure to see both of you. Also a proud SUNY graduate from both Binghamton University and Broome Community College. And in my district, Senate District 52, I proudly represent not only Binghamton University, SUNY Cortland, TC3 and Broome Community College, but also two statutory colleges at Cornell University.

And so one of -- I have two, possibly three questions. I was very concerned to see that while we're asking for tuition increases, that we are decreasing funding to programs like EOP, CSTEP, STEP -- and these are programs that for me as a student were integral in my ability to be successful -- along with the challenges as relates to community colleges.

And so one of my questions is with regards to the requirement, the proposed requirement for community colleges to submit a plan to basically structure it from a standpoint of having a future without the base aid foundation funding, why is the

Department of Budget collecting this, as opposed to CUNY and SUNY? So that's one of my questions.

My second question relates to workforce development, as this is something that's coming up, you know, with both SUNY and CUNY being integral.

My other question is how is workforce development tracked, like specifically. Not just in terms of the number of jobs, but like how is it broken down?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: So first, thank you for all your support for SUNY and for your commitment to our effort to diversify leadership across our campuses through the Black Leadership Institute. Appreciate your support there.

Look, on the community college 20 percent hold-back, our view is that we would work very diligently with campuses to develop a plan that would focus on growing enrollment, leveraging investments like the $60 million from last year to grow programs that we know are going to be high demand:

Nursing, cybersecurity, renewable energy, so forth.

So we're very optimistic that if that is included in the enacted budget, that we could work with our campuses to quickly develop solid plans for their long-term future.

In terms of workforce development, we look at both the placement outcomes for workforce development, aligned degrees and certificates, as well as the earnings impact. And one of the things I think we need to work on is making sure that students know what great opportunities there are for them -- that when students complete a nursing program, there are great jobs on the other side. That when students compete a cybersecurity program, they can get even six-figure jobs afterwards.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Epstein next.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you both.

Do you both support medication abortion available in all campuses across the state, both SUNY and CUNY? The medication abortion that the Governor proposed in the budget, do you support that?

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: It's something that we already have available in many of our campuses, either by the campus itself or --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Chancellor, I only have three minutes, so yes or no would be great. Yes, do you --

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Yes.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you. Thank you.

Do you have enough standalone funding to support students with disabilities currently for those students?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We need more resources.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: We fundraise for that, but additional dollars are always welcome.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great.

So CUNY, we've seen a proposed -- a hiring freeze and potential cuts. What impact would those cuts, $100 million in cuts, have on student services? We've seen on campuses they're not hiring to replace filled spaces. What is that really going to mean for our campuses across the system?

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Well, like I said, we are taking measures to do some cost savings, right? And we have a budget proposal that talked about additional operating dollar support so we can have the services that our students need, and they want, to thrive.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: You know, I know there's a hiring freeze, right, on -- at CUNY? I've heard from presidents that there's a hiring freeze.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: They have to submit a plan, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And so that means they cannot replace any positions, and that will impact class size, I assume, and

class external services --

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Clearly it will have an impact on services. I mean, class size is actually down over the last couple of years, so it will have an impact on services.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And then so we've seen students leaving both systems, CUNY and SUNY, and I know we want to get them all back. But I'm just wondering if we're cutting services and raising tuition, how do you both expect to be able to get those students back if we're making it a really more difficult place for them to thrive?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Look, the key is to provide the services and opportunities that students want and need, both to enroll new students and, as Chancellor Matos Rodríguez raised earlier, to retain the students that we have. Retention is an enrollment strategy.

And so we're working hard to do that. Investments like the 60 million last year and the 53 million for faculty, hugely important.

We're glad those are included in this budget. But there's no question, we need to continue to invest in public higher ed if we're going to attract students and ensure that we have the workforce we need as a state.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: A hundred percent, we need more resources. Basically we're saying if -- and I don't -- I appreciate your concern for more tuition, I just think that tuition increases is going to make it more difficult for students, as I hear all the time.

And unfortunately we don't have students on our panels today to hear their voices, but I would encourage us to be thinking about alternatives. And if that's resources, I think that's our responsibility to us and the students in both systems statewide.

So thank you both for your time.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you. And greetings from the 1,543 students in your district from CUNY.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Chu.

SENIOR CHU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chancellor Matos Rodríguez, I believe I represent the most in the state, I believe, over 10,000.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: 10,483, yes, you're absolutely --

(Laughter.)

SENIOR CHU: There we go. Thank you. I did my homework.

(Laughter.)

SENIOR CHU: So as an international student, where I came from, and also as an immigrant myself, I got my degree in CUNY Brooklyn College. I really appreciate that. That really opened the door for me to be able to be here today.

So I found myself, when I was in the school learning, very fortunate to study in such a diverse and multicultural environment, and that's really important for students with immigrant family backgrounds and beyond.

So CUNY, as policy, follows the

New York City DOE academic holiday calendar. And there have been a number of resolutions passed by the City Council and multiple independent student and faculty university bodies calling for the recognition of Lunar New Year and Eid as a university-wide holiday for CUNY.

So given the number of Asian and Muslim students enrolled with CUNY, and with the highest enrollment coming from my district in particular, so is there any process in place to implement these two holidays and to reflect the recognition of the culture and show how inclusive our public higher education system can be?

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So thank you so much for your question. It allows me to clarify our policy, which is state law and CUNY policy, which is that any student or staff member or faculty member who wants to celebrate a holiday due to religious -- that they are totally allowed to do so, right? And in the case of a student, they just have to sort of notify the faculty

member and let them know that they're going to be able to do that. Right?

So there is a mechanism already by which individuals of any religion can practice their religion. And it's first in state law, and it's also in CUNY, and we let students and faculty know about this practice.

We actually have our university provost looking at whether a different calendar can accommodate different kinds of holidays. It's a complicated thing in terms of the number of days that you have to have instruction, so we're looking at that. But I think the most important thing is to let everybody know that right now that is the law and CUNY policy and nobody should not be celebrating a holiday because they think that they're going to be penalized.

SENIOR CHU: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman Forrest, is she -- oh, there she is.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you so much, Chancellor King and Chancellor Matos, for being here.

My first question is to Chancellor Matos. I saw that you had -- in your testimony you highlighted a new request for STEM programming. How much is it? And can you give me a little -- let us understand a little bit what you're proposing. Thank you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Thank you for your question. And greetings from 1,968 students from CUNY in your district.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Including me (laughing).

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I know, including you as an alum.

We wanted to recognize that the number of students that we're getting in STEM is increasing, and that's something that we're all proud of. And I think we want to be supportive as a state of the opportunities in the workforce in STEM. Those students are more expensive to educate than other

students, that's a reality. Faculty costs more, the facilities cost more to do that. That is not recognized in any of our funding formulas.

So we requested $53 million to sort of make up for the gap of the cost of educating STEM students. We think that that is an investment in the right direction of the kinds of fields that we want our students to go. We want to remain competitive to be able to hire the faculty that is more expensive. A computer scientist, we're competing against other tech industries out there.

So this would be, first, a way to support our operational funding, and then also recognize that those students cost more and we want to continue to encourage them to be part of our student body.

So thank you for your question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you, Chancellor. I really hope that this line, you know, makes it into our house -- because that makes sense, right?

But then I also wanted to follow up

with Chancellor King regarding Senator Stavisky's line of questioning on the Governor's proposed 500,000 enrollment but then the present fact of dropping enrollments, and also the increase is already 25 percent since 2012.

My question, though, is when you look at the website, right, my alma mater, a family making less than 70,000 who chooses to go to SUNY Geneseo, where I graduated, would graduate $30,000 in debt after already paying $50,000 out of pocket.

And so I know that we talk about the investments, right? We expect our students to make investments, of course. But how can we put all the burden on them? Seventy thousand dollars, and they're already paying 50 and owing 30 at the end. How does that make sense?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Look, I very much agree with you about the concern about student debt and the costs of college. That's why we're so committed to affordability. As I mentioned earlier, our

tuition is about $3,000 lower than peer institutions.

At the same time, we've got to make sure that we have the resources to be competitive, to invest in faculty, to provide student services like mental health. And that's what the Governor was aiming for with the very modest tuition increase.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you so much, Chancellors.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: To the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Robert Jackson.

SENATOR JACKSON: So good afternoon and thank you both for coming in. And I'm sorry that I only have three minutes to question you.

But I don't believe that SUNY and CUNY has enough to do everything that they need to do. So I understand that this is the budgetary process, $227 billion. But I'm very concerned about the cuts in the EOP program. I was an EOP student myself. But I'm also concerned about the tuition

increases. I'm opposed to any tuition increase on the people that are attending college, knowing that, for example, many people will not be able to afford the tuition increase because of the pandemic situation that's still negatively impacting all of us.

So I guess my question is that -- I am in part of a coalition which is called Invest in Our New York, to basically increase revenue from the wealthiest New Yorkers and corporate tax -- New Jersey has a higher corporate tax than New York State. We need to raise revenues in order to make sure that SUNY and CUNY are taken care of.

So one of the things I ask you to do is that some college campuses do not have health centers where people cannot go there. I ask you to look into that and to do everything you can to make sure that if someone is ill or they need help as far as from a health point of view, that there is a health facility on the campus.

Understanding that, I ask you: What more can we do in order to bring about the

resources that you need for SUNY and CUNY in order to make sure that the faculty is receiving the increases they rightfully deserve?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Okay, I very much appreciate the question.

You know, the Trustees asked for $120 million operating aid increase this year. We think that's necessary just to maintain steady state, to be able to absorb increases in the costs of staffing and energy and so forth.

Long term, we need a reliable picture of a five-year investment plan, including on the capital side. You know, we've got a $7.7 billion critical maintenance backlog across our institutions. We need a five-year plan on how will we make the progress we need to on capital.

One of the challenges, when students come to a campus and they walk into a building that's in disrepair, it's very hard to convince them to come to a campus.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So,

I mean, equally here -- our budget request will give you a roadmap in terms of some of the things that we need additional operating support.

I mentioned the support to -- for STEM majors as an example of a way to support STEM and also support operating costs.

We also have additional programmatic requests. There are many areas that I know are very dear to you -- students with disabilities, you know, doing more things for our students in the career and workforce and all those areas. So again, thank you for your support.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman Seawright.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you, Chair Weinstein.

Good afternoon. And thank you, Chancellor King, for returning back home to New York. It's great to see you, Chancellor Matos Rodríguez. I'm a CUNY Law alum and a proud mother of two SUNY graduates.

And I want -- as the new chair of the People with Disabilities Committee, I recently attended a CUNY adaptive sports program, the women's wheelchair basketball game, one of only seven that exist in the nation. And I would love to see that program started at SUNY.

But I'd like to direct my question today to Chancellor Matos Rodríguez.

My constituents have raised their voice to me about transferring between the CUNY campuses and how difficult that is. So I would just like to hear what you're doing to address transferring among the colleges within CUNY.

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

We are taking a historic look at transfer and we're giving ourselves sort of a year and a half, two years, to really make all the transfers within the major fully transferable in the system.

Right now, you know the stories of many students losing credits, losing

financial aid because the transfer within the system is not as straightforward and easy as it should be. We have an entire task force, led by University Provost Wendy Hensel, with the support of the Faculty Senate. So we're doing this in collaboration with our faculty colleagues to be able to, once and for all, make that seamless so it will make it easier for the students to transfer, they will waste less time, and less time is less money for many of our students.

And it's part of the strategies that we're pursuing not just for enrollment, but for retention of students who are already within the CUNY system. So we very much look forward to -- and we began that work in this semester head on, and we hope to have it complete in a year and a half.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

And it looks like I have about a minute left.

You talked about career engagement. And can you just elaborate a little bit on why that's so important, with private

corporations, for your CUNY students?

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So when you have half of students being the first in their family to go to college, they don't have the networks that some other students have. Right? And they need opportunities to connect with the world of work, to explore options, to get that social capital. And we want to do more for them in that arena.

We also know, for example -- and you all know that I'm a big fan of paid internships. The students who participate graduate on time, earn more when they graduate, and get a job faster. So we've been investing in a number of programs that are part of our testimony, advancing with support from the state more internships and apprenticeships, with support from the city too.

Career Launch, we had 2,000 internships for community college students; 11,000 students applied. So big demand for those programs. We're working very closely

with industry to be able to place them and to update their curriculum.

Thank you for the question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

I'm going to let Toby Stavisky have her three-minute follow-up as chair.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Chancellor Matos Rodríguez, I've had legislation on campus hate incidents -- which I find very troubling. And there have been accusations of antisemitism at the various CUNY campuses. Would you address what the university is doing to combat this scourge? Because I find that whole issue very troubling.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And I couldn't agree with you more. Thank you for the question.

And one of the first things I did when I became chancellor, based on some of the things that I learned at Queens College, where we had the Center for Ethnic, Racial

and Religious Understanding, CERRU -- which you're familiar with, Senator, because it used to be your district -- was the importance of investing in getting student programming, difficult conversations, getting groups together. And we got money from the City Council to replicate some of that work systemwide.

We did that before some of the more recent surges in cases of antisemitism that have been plaguing our nation, our city and our campuses have emerged.

In the last year we've been vocal when incidents have appeared on our campuses. We have worked with our presidents to improve the way that we investigate when things do come up on the campuses, making it easier for individuals to file complaints and to get information about the status of those complaints.

We began an initiative with seven of our campuses with Hillel International, doing a deep dive into the fear that some of the students might have on the campuses and a way

to make the whole community feel safer. And we hope what we learn from those seven campuses can be applied to the rest of the system.

And with some of the $40 million that we received from you last year, we gave out about a quarter of a million dollars to the campuses to do additional programming on antisemitism, anti-hate and DEI training.

So thank you for those dollars.

SENATOR STAVISKY: I think more has to be done, Chancellor.

I think the time's going to be up. Thank you. I have additional questions, but --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sorry. Can you do something in 42 seconds?

(Laughter.)

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah. Chancellor King, real quick, Stony Brook and Buffalo are receiving special attention. What about the other two University Centers, Albany and Binghamton?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We're glad that

the Governor's endowment proposal would commit 500 million to create 1.5 billion across all four University Centers. The differential tuition investment is for all four University Centers.

There is a $200 million lab allocation to Buffalo and Stony Brook, but it's really driven by those universities' unique positioning in terms of research. They both are the two institutions that have garnered the largest numbers of research dollars over a long period of time.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. I did not have tuition in mind, I had the research grants, et cetera, in mind.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sorry, we have to hold off on that one.

Assembly?

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Eachus.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you, Chancellors, for being here.

Very proud graduate of both master's

and bachelor's degrees in SUNY schools. So I will do everything to meet the obligation that we have of one-third, one-third, and one-third for state, county, and then tuition. I don't think $3,000 less than an equivalent school is where we should be. I think we should be thousands and thousands of dollars less.

I think I have the best community college school in the entire New York State in my county. I'm very proud of it. But one of the interesting things is they have a waitlist. They have a decrease in enrollment, but they have a waitlist for their nursing program. Now, I know that, you know, the animated patients cost a million dollars apiece and so on like that. But we definitely have to put a bigger piece of our budget to be sure, because obviously we need nurses too.

My experience, as you may know or not, 40 years in the classroom teaching both juniors and seniors in high school. Okay? I have taught in private school, I have taught

in several public schools. I taught AP courses. My kids in all of those institutions got college credit, but not from SUNY or CUNY schools. They were all with private schools.

So my question to you is -- you know, and I'm speaking about my personal experience. My question to you is, are you willing to, you know, take on and see if you can't enlarge -- because if kids get credits from your schools, they tend to go to your schools. You know, there's no question about transfer of credits and so on like that. But we can't just say yes, because there's things like -- I'll tell you what held it up in the past. Like public schools can't purchase new textbooks every year. We can't do that, they can't do that.

So we have to overcome a couple of those hurdles that are there. Are you willing to invest some time right now to see if we can't get more credits in high schools for these kids?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: You know, we're

very interested in expanding the ability of students to get credits for things like AP, International Baccalaureate, dual enrollment. The Trustees just adopted a broader prior learning assessment policy so that we can also recognize when folks get training through the military or through a police academy or EMT training, that those kinds of things can also be recognized for credit.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And we have great outcomes from our Early College program. I think that's something that the state needs to look into more deeply. We've already got 19 of those schools throughout the system.

When I was president of our community college at Hostos -- I was, you know, the president of two schools -- I was very proud when I had, at my commencement ceremony, 20 high school kids graduating with an associate's degree before their high school graduation, because it was later in the year.

So fully supportive of all those

programs, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you very much. And as I said, it was just my personal experience; I don't know across the state. But thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

I think I'm up, actually.

So, gentlemen, there's research showing we might actually be producing too many Ph.D.s in the United States. What is your thoughts for your two universities?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I think generally we feel like there's a need for more Ph.D.s, particularly in the sciences. And that to the extent that we can, through investments like the Governor's endowment proposal, grow the number of STEM Ph.D.s at our University Centers, that is going to help us lead the way on things like renewable energy and attract more federal research dollars to the state.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And I will echo what Chancellor King said about the dearth and the need in Ph.D.s in the

sciences. I mean, we need to think about industry, we need to think about research, and we need to think about academia.

I think that maybe some of the studies that you make reference to are thinking just about the lane, about the need in academia, and that might be a very narrow take on what Ph.D.s get to do these days, not just in science but in some of the other fields too.

So I think that you need to prepare those students that are going into any area, and give them a sense of about what the labor market is as part of their decision-making as they go into their education. But we're very proud of the students that we're graduating from our graduate programs at CUNY, and we also think that the diversity of the students that we produce is something that all sectors -- academia, research and industry -- need.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And do you keep data, either of you, on where your Ph.D. graduates end up, say, five years afterwards? Do we know, do they go into academia, do they

go into research, do they use those degrees?

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Yes, and we can --

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We can get you the data that we have, yeah.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That would be very much appreciated, thank you.

And you've both answered questions already about the reductions in student population, and I know that one of the questions that I hear is that we're losing students not to other universities in other states, we're losing students to these online fake schools.

So what can we do better as a state to make sure that we are not losing our students to places that call themselves colleges but in fact are not providing the education they need, but are using up the student's TAP money and other money that they might otherwise have used to get a quality education. What do we need to do to fix that?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'm so glad you

raised this one.

When I was Secretary of Education, one of my major areas of focus was cracking down on predatory for-profit colleges that take advantage of students. We shut many of them down. Unfortunately the Trump administration, Betsy DeVos in particular, put in charge of higher ed policy folks from those predatory for-profit colleges, and they had a free ride over several years.

There's work that needs to happen in terms of regulatory oversight of those predatory for-profit colleges. That's consumer protection, that's the Attorney General's office.

One thing that we could do in the public higher ed sector is move more quickly to respond to student demand. One of the challenges is we have a very cumbersome program approval process in New York State. Assemblywoman Hyndman has a bill on this. Our very cumbersome process means that while we're still getting ready to launch a program, a predatory for-profit college is

already online posting ads, recruiting students.

And so we've got to move more quickly in areas like renewable energy, the semiconductor industry, the cannabis industry. We've got to launch those programs more quickly, and certainly making that program approval process much faster would help us there.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: On our end, that's why -- and you saw in my testimony our big investment in CUNY Online. We believe and we have actually good data that shows that individuals prefer brands that they're familiar with, right? And they want to know -- they want to go to schools, even online, with brands that they're familiar with.

So we want to be able to capitalize on the CUNY brand, on the familiarity that the students have and their families have with our schools. But we have really not invested that much in fully online programs. We have online classes, but we have not done -- we

sort of have not invested heavily in that space.

That's why we're asking for additional dollars for CUNY Online. We began using some stimulus money to do that. But we feel that we were leaving students at the table, and that we know that if we have the programs that the students know are backed up with the quality of our faculty, they're not going to go to any of those ghost universities that were alluded to, they're going to come to the brands that they know.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So just the other day there was an article, "When It Comes to Predatory For-Profit Colleges, No State is More Welcoming than New York." Apparently we hand out more TAP money than any other state, per student than any other state.

Do you think we should change our policies about how we give out TAP grants? Particularly given your experience in Washington, D.C., Chancellor King -- not that I don't want to hear from both of you.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yes. I think

at both the federal and state level we should make sure that there's return on investment for the dollars that are provided to institutions. And when these predatory for-profit colleges steal students' money, whether it's state dollars, federal dollars, GI Bill money, and then deliver no quality education, no degree -- that, to me, is criminal, and we ought to end it.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And I'll add to that that then we both end up taking care of those students after they've been abused by those predatory universities. Right? Because sometimes maybe those students end up coming to SUNY and CUNY because it's really the only affordable option that they have after they had that experience. And then they come to us with their financial aid used, with a lot -- you know, with a bigger burden, maybe having to come part-time, and not being able to complete on time.

So the state loses twice by not being hard on these predatory institutions and the

use of TAP.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And Chancellor Rosa, I know you're there listening; I'm going to ask that question of you as well in a little while.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: But I realized I should ask these chancellors also.

So I'm sorry, Chancellor King, I just got a text from a person concerned that SUNY Upstate Hospital facilities receive DSH funding and yet, according to a recent report, SUNY Upstate Hospital facilities appear to sue an inordinately large number of patients, far more than any other public hospital in the state, and that it appears that SUNY Upstate Hospital is suing lower-income patients, some of whom are incarcerated at the time and are eligible for CHIP, eligible for financial assistance.

You probably don't know the answer to this question right now, but I would really like you to look into it for us --

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I will follow

up on that.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Because it's a large concern on a statewide basis, the amount of medical debt and people getting sued by hospitals and ending up in -- literally losing their homes over these situations.

But since apparently you've been called -- not you, but the hospital has been called out as the worst offender in the state, I would definitely like to understand those policies and what we can do about them.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'll certainly follow up.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And I think I'm giving back my two minutes to the Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Great. We go to -- oh, in the corner -- Assemblywoman Hyndman, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I thought I got five.

Good afternoon. So my line of questioning is kind of similar to

Senator Krueger's line about online programs, because a lot of the students don't want to come back. And we're talking about an adult population who, with scheduling and everything, online courses are very important for them.

So what is the average timeline now of SED approval of courses for CUNY and SUNY? I know you talked about my bill. I just wanted to get the timeline --

(Laughter.)

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I mean, what we would ideally like is to have time limits for both the SUNY process and the SED process so that we can move more quickly.

Part of the challenge is there's tremendous variation. Particularly the programs that require approval through the Office of Professions can go many, many months, even into the period of years. And so it's critical that we have a more expedited process.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And I think also after the pandemic there's been

a whole now couple of years of a lot more experience with all kinds of online courses and services and teaching and pedagogy and investment in training and all that.

So some of the delays are time in converting, for example, degrees that we have fully in-person that should be easy to migrate to online. That should be done very expeditiously. And the demand is there, so any flexibility in that arena would be welcome.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: There are quite a few nursing programs in both SUNY and CUNY systems. But what is the waitlist for those students? Because we keep talking about shortages, but we're not talking about how are you going to retain nurses to teach when they can go somewhere else and make probably three times what you would pay? How do you keep staff and -- or keep faculty? And what are the waitlist times for nursing programs?

Oh, and I need my number, Dr. Matos Rodríguez.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I was going to say, I want you to feel the love from the 4,292 CUNY students in your district.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We'll get you the numbers on the waitlist by campus. But they're significant.

The salary issue for nursing faculty is a significant one. Some of our campuses do have a different salary rate for their nursing faculty. But even then, given the demand in the private sector, it's very hard to attract and retain faculty.

We'd like to see greater investment in high-needs nursing programs so that we can not only pay folks more, but also pay for current nurses to get their degrees so that they can qualify to teach in the nursing programs.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And I have to get you information about any waitlists in the CUNY programs. I'm not

familiar with them.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. And you know -- I know you know this, Chancellor, but the College at New Paltz is now the University at New Paltz, so I'm looking forward to all the endowment dollars that will be coming there. Thank you.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So -- there are no further Senators, so we have a number of Assemblymembers still, so we go to Assemblywoman Wallace, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALLACE: Thank you so much.

First of all, thank you for joining us today, thank you for your comments, thank you for your service to our wonderful institutions. We look forward to working with you this year.

A couple of comments and then a couple of questions.

First, not to belabor the issue, but I just want to state that I share the concerns

raised by my colleagues already about the proposal to increase tuition. I personally believe that it is -- the best way to keep those seats filled and to remain competitive is to keep our tuition as low as possible, and the best and the brightest will just naturally come.

I also can say, as a former faculty member, that what happens is when you wind up kind of digging deeper into the applicant pool, then there's more support needed, so we're going to wind up paying anyway.

So I -- but I do recognize also that it's on us, as the Legislature, to make sure there's enough funding in the budget so that you don't have to raise the tuition.

Second, I also have some concerns -- which I don't want to get into, it's too -- I want to save my time -- but about the endowment proposal. And I can share those with you later.

Third, I know you've expressed support for a couple of the bills -- that's great -- the simulation bill that Donna Lupardo has,

Alicia Hyndman's bill. I'm wondering -- I know there's a proposal out there for a 20-year pension bill for the SUNY police because they maintain that it's been difficult for them to retain and attract officers because they're constantly losing them to other agencies that have 20-year pension plans.

And I'm wondering if you support that bill, that proposal, and whether you think that would make a difference.

And then finally, my last question is about the proposal for a distressed college fund of about -- I believe about $160 million, to go toward some of those universities, the colleges that are really struggling, colleges like Buff State, Fredonia, Brockport, Geneseo -- the ones that are kind of out in more remote parts of our state, but yet serve as cultural and really, you know, economic drivers of those communities and actually give an opportunity for attracting students from other parts of the state to really diversify the area, to --

I can't even -- I can tell you, myself, my husband and any dozen of friends that I have in Buffalo are in Buffalo, even though we're not originally from there, because we went to school there.

So, you know, it also provides the opportunity for people to sort of explore and live in different parts of the state.

So I'm wondering whether you think that 160 million would make a difference and what your position is on that.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: On the first question about the 20-year retirement, we are supportive of that and think we should have parity for SUNY Police and folks in other areas of law enforcement. So very supportive there.

On campuses that are struggling, you know, we are eager to use the $75 million that the Governor allocated to try to ensure that those campuses are offering programs that are in high demand that will attract additional students. We also think our cascading admissions policy will be very

beneficial to those campuses as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALLACE: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblyman Gandolfo for three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN GANDOLFO: Thank you, Chairwoman. And thank you both for being here today.

My first question is going to be related to the building and maintenance of SUNY facilities. I have some concerns about the SUNY procurement process for construction. As it stands, contracts to build and maintain SUNY facilities are often awarded to out-of-state companies, and a lot of times they don't -- they actually lack New York-based workers' comp insurance.

You know, with the public funds that go to these facilities, there is a guarantee of prevailing wage, but there's no guarantee that local labor will be used to complete the projects. For example, one concern that I had was the Javits Lecture Hall at Stony Brook. The contractor was awarded

$37 million despite having a history of OSHA violations, and then they went ahead and brought in out-of-state labor to complete the project.

So how can we address that to make sure that these public funds are supporting a strong middle class in New York and keeping the labor local?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We certainly are committed to following all of the laws and regulations governing the contracting process. I'm happy to follow up with you further on the specific situation at Javits.

ASSEMBLYMAN GANDOLFO: Okay. Would a project labor agreement covering all SUNY campuses be something you would be willing to explore, Chancellor?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Be open to talking with you about ways that we might move forward to ensure that the projects are successfully delivered in a way that treats workers fairly.

ASSEMBLYMAN GANDOLFO: Okay, great. Thank you.

And moving on, there's not too much time left, one thing that still stands out to a lot of New Yorkers is that the SUNY system still has a vaccine mandate, a COVID vaccine mandate for the students but no such mandate applies to the faculty. There are private institutions that have dropped their mandates. Recently I believe it was the Rochester Institute of Technology announced that they were getting rid of their COVID mandate for students.

Is that something that the SUNY system is looking into, getting rid of that -- the COVID-19 vaccine mandate anytime soon?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We've been guided by advice from public health experts and continue to gather that advice to ensure that we're following the best available guidance from public health.

ASSEMBLYMAN GANDOLFO: Okay. So I guess Rochester Institute of Technology, they're not following the best advice --

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I couldn't speak to the decision-making of Rochester

Institute of Technology.

I will say we have tried to be guided by the public health experts and continue to gather input. The situation of students and faculty is different, in that the -- any requirements for faculty have to be negotiated.

ASSEMBLYMAN GANDOLFO: Okay. Just -- especially with struggles with enrollment for both SUNY and CUNY, I hope that's something that you will consider to maybe attract some students back who might have left because of the mandate or are hesitant to attend SUNY schools because of the mandate.

So thank you both for your time and for being here.

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

ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: Thank you, Chairwoman.

Chancellor King, my colleague just asked about the vaccines. So he mainly talked about the staff; where are we with the students? Because I know we're losing

students from New York going out of state, and we're not having students from out of state come into New York to SUNY because of the vaccine mandate.

And I know you kind of gave the answer, but do you ever see that stopping?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Again, we want to make sure we're guided by the best public health expertise on these issues.

ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: So being guided by the best, is that information that's directly given to you, sir?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We -- we gather public health and the Board of Trustees makes the policy decision.

ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: So if I reached out to the Board of Trustees, they might be able to update me on that?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Again, at the moment we are -- we have the mandate in place, there is the ability for exceptions for religious or health reasons.

ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: Okay.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: If there are

particular students who are having trouble navigating that process, we certainly want to make sure that process works smoothly for students.

ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: All right, thank you. I appreciate that.

Next question. I know SUNY has about 40 percent government-owned buildings, maybe a little more. As we move forward with total electrification of New York State, where is SUNY in terms of that? Are any of your buildings fully electrified yet?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, the good news is we are ahead of schedule on a target of a 40 percent reduction by 2030. We're about 30 percent reduction in greenhouse gases now, even though we've had about a 50 percent increase in our square footage over that time period. So we are moving forward on sustainability initiatives.

I will say, to get to the 2050 85 percent reduction target will require capital investment. And as I mentioned earlier, we have a 7.7 billion capital

backlog. Addressing that backlog is critical to meeting our sustainability goals.

ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: Addressing the backlog prior to getting to the electrification?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Right. Well, yes. They're interconnected. As we do building renovations, we try to move quickly towards maximum sustainability and net zero.

ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: So is it safe to say that none of the buildings are fully electrified yet?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Oh, no, we have buildings that are -- that are net-zero buildings now. But our -- and we have many LEED-certified buildings. But our ability to achieve the 85 percent target will take time.

ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: As you look at the long-term goals, have you put a price tag to that?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We haven't. We are about to hire an executive director of climate action for the SUNY system, and one of the functions of that role will be to make

sure that we have a coordinated plan across all of our campuses on hitting that 85 percent reduction target.

ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: With 5 seconds left, when do you think we as legislators would see a report of that?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Let me follow up with you on that.

ASSEMBLYMAN MANKTELOW: Please do. I appreciate your time. Thank you, sir.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman McMahon, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN McMAHON: Thank you, Chair.

And thank you both for being with us today.

Commissioner King -- or Chancellor King, you spoke earlier about the SUNY hospitals and the importance of the SUNY hospitals to the delivery of medical care across the state. And as you know, the SUNY Jacobs School of Medicine is affiliated with a specific hospital. And last year the state covered the debt service for the SUNY

hospitals, and it's my understanding that this year it's a SUNY legislative priority to include the debt service from the Jacobs School of Medicine with that of the SUNY hospitals.

Could you speak to the importance of that, covering the debt service, to the mission of the Jacobs School of Medicine?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, absolutely. Look, the debt service is an important way for the state to invest in our hospitals and our medical centers. And they are driving the production of the healthcare workforce we need.

The UB Medical Center is playing a key role in the Buffalo health ecosystem, providing not only medical staff but also conducting important research that will help drive us towards better health outcomes, not only in Western New York but nationally.

So to our mind, this is an important opportunity for the state to invest in the future of healthcare.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN McMAHON: Thank you so

much. I look forward to working with you this year.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Ra, five minutes, ranker.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

Good afternoon, gentlemen.

I wanted to ask about childcare centers on campuses. And Chancellor King, I know there was money put in last year's budget to expand on the campuses where there weren't previously childcare centers. Do you have any type of list or status of how that has gone and what campuses have added those types of services?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yes, I can get you a specific list. I'll tell you that we have 47 existing centers on 43 campuses. We are in the process of launching seven new centers, at Jamestown, Sullivan, Old Westbury, Canton, ESF, and Alfred State. So those are the next centers that are slated to come online.

I will say a challenge that we have is

we'd like to be able to support as many student parents as possible, so the presence of a center is obviously a good step forward. But then many of the centers are oversubscribed, have a waitlist. It's a real challenge to have flexible hours in the centers for students.

So this is an important opportunity, I think, for the state to invest in student parents.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Yeah, and that was -- go ahead.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And in the case of CUNY, we used the funding to -- we're building a center at Queensborough Community College, which was the only of our colleges that didn't -- that didn't -- I mean, there's another five of them but they're in rental spaces and spaces where you cannot physically -- five schools where you cannot physically put a childcare center. So what we did is we put the money into Queensborough to build that center, and then the rest of the money we

distributed among the campuses that have centers, particularly to expand the number of infants and toddlers, which there's a big, big demand in the system for that. So that's an area -- and I can give you the breakdown by all the other campuses.

And then the five campuses that do not have one -- they're mostly some of the smaller professional schools -- they have arrangements, MOUs with our campuses so they were able to have access to the services too.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. And, you know, as you may be aware, there was money added in last year that's not reflected in this Executive Budget proposal. So you feel that that funding needs to be there to allow these centers to be adequately staffed and have adequate slots for the students that need to take advantage of them.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We would be very grateful for more funding for childcare for student parents.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, thank you.

In terms of -- same issue with regard

to our community colleges. I've had the pleasure on several occasions of visiting the on-campus childcare center on our local community college in Nassau County. It's called the Children's Greenhouse. It's phenomenal, they provide education to the kids. And obviously we all know that's one of those barriers to the parents getting an education.

And one of the things we had talked about -- this is going back a few years ago -- the last time there was an increase in the minimum wage was, you know, there were different sectors which the state provided some support to deal with increased costs that came as a result of that, because, you know, we want to raise people's wages but we want to make sure -- it may be those, you know, those same type of workers that are trying to better their education, and we want to make sure those slots are still there.

So any thoughts in terms of that, if that's something we should be looking at, if this proposal were to go through to raise the

minimum wage and index it, that maybe there would be some kind of support from the state to help these childcare centers both in our community colleges and in our SUNY and CUNY institutions?

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Additional investment for compensating childcare workers is crucial. You know, when you look at the brain science on early childhood development, it's a national embarrassment that we don't pay folks in the childcare industry more.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I know this is obviously a focus in this budget more globally, but I think that needs to be matched with investments in those types of institutions.

So I have less than a minute, but Chancellor Matos Rodríguez, if you could please tell me how many students I have in my Assembly district.

(Laughter.)

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Eight hundred and forty-two. I was going to go there. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you very much, Chancellor.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So I am -- I'm next, and I believe last. And some of my questions are really follow-ups to other members who you didn't have the opportunity to fully answer their question.

Chancellor Rodríguez, I would just agree with Senator Stavisky that I don't think enough is being done to fight antisemitism that we see on some of the campuses. I know that there was an allocation last -- or you announced last year $750,000 to fight antisemitism and other forms of discrimination. I wonder if you could just expand on what that -- what that money means in terms of real -- on the campuses, what that's going to result in.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Yes.

Well, I agree more with your comments and also with Senator Stavisky, and I'm obviously open to additional suggestions from all of you in terms of additional steps that

we can take to fight this cancer, which is extremely troubling to me and to the entire -- you know, to the campus presidents and all of us who are working at CUNY.

We did an RFP for the campuses for programs that were, you know, supporting work on antisemitism, anti-hate, Asian hate, violence, all those things. Campuses submitted proposals and then we approved them. I'd be happy to share with you the criteria that we used for that program.

I can tell you some examples from memory of some of the things that campuses are doing, but I can give you a list of what they're doing. For example, the Queensborough Community College has the Kupferberg Holocaust Center, they're creating an entire educational program that they're going to share with the system around the issue of antisemitism.

I know Brooklyn College is doing additional training, for example, for their faculty and staff on antisemitism. They're also using the dollars to supplement some of

the work they're getting from the Hillel grant that I mentioned that they're doing on the campuses.

So there's many things that the campuses are doing on this area. I'd be happy to share what each one is doing. Some are doing things that they have wanted to do and didn't have the resources to do; others are expanding on things that have worked on the campus and how they have the ability to do some more. So happy to share that with you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Great. That would be helpful. And when you share it with us, we'll make sure to share with the other members here.

So, Chancellor Rodríguez, also you had mentioned -- you talked about CUNY's structural deficit, and I think in response to a question you also expanded a little bit, talking about efficiencies to, say, $40 million, and some others. Are there other plans that you have to help deal with the -- to close that gap?

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So again, we -- we've been doing a number of things. I mentioned some in the testimony, the ERI program, which is generating efficiencies across the system to generate savings to reinvest.

We've also, for example, done things like taking a look at some of our leases. I think we renegotiated about nine of them that are going to bring about $100 million in savings over 10 years because of the nature of the leases. And we've got additional dollars from the landlords in renovations.

So we've been taking a comprehensive look, doing our part in terms of efficiencies and savings, but we also need additional support from the state and the city, right, and we'll be talking with our city partners about the budget -- and mostly these are the community colleges on the city side.

But, you know, we also feel that it's important that we're good stewards of the dollars that you give us. I'm happy to sort of also give you a breakdown of some of those

savings and efficiency programs.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. And just -- I know Senator Liu didn't have time to fully -- no, I'll take care of it. Not to worry.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: You talked about the CUNY Labor School. And, you know, as you know, there were $3 million allocated by the Legislature for the Labor School capital funds. And we have heard -- and I know Senator Liu had started to raise this question of the welcome center on the ground level so that there would be a ground level entrance so that -- as every other CUNY school has. And I just wonder where we are with that situation.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So we're having a conversation with them as to whether that is the best use of some of the money for their leased space.

We expanded their needs for additional classroom space, for the library, for some direct needs. And that's what we've done

then. I'd be happy to provide you with some information about the expansions that we have done for the School of Labor.

And so we're having a conversation about that welcome space, which there's some conversation as to whether it is the best instructional use of the dollars at this particularly tight time that we have for the university. But I'm happy to provide you information on that.

And let me not forget the 3,734 students from CUNY that are in your district.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. It's gone down a little, but ...

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We used to be number one in Brooklyn.

And, Chancellor King, not to be left out, feel left out, I know you talked about the hardships and deficits facing the CUNY -- the SUNY hospitals system. And as a Brooklynite and having a number of constituents who work at Downstate and others who receive care at Downstate, I just wanted

to echo some of the concerns that Senator Gounardes had raised, and the issue of nurses, the need for increased funds for high-need nurses in situations like at Downstate.

And hopefully that garage will get fixed one of these days. It's hard to visit the hospital, both for visitors and for families and others since the garage was shut because it was unsafe. So I'm hoping that that is something that's on the agenda also.

With that, I don't believe there are further questions. I shouldn't look. I don't believe there are further questions for either of you.

There are a few questions that unfortunately there wasn't time to answer. If those answers could be sent to Senator Krueger and myself, we'll make sure that all of our members here will receive them.

So thank you, thank you very much.

SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you.

CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

Thank you for your time.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And we would just urge people who want to speak to the chancellors to take those conversations outside so we can move forward with our hearing.

And next we'll be hearing from the New York State -- from Betty Rosa, commissioner of New York State SED.

Okay, CUNY and SUNY, out the door. Quiet. (Pause.) Excuse me. People who are leaving, please leave quietly.

(Off the record.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, I think we can continue.

So now we go to our third witness, Commissioner Betty Rosa, the New York State Education Department.

Commissioner, good to see you again.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Same here. Thank you.

Okay. Well, good afternoon, Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky, Fahy, and

members of the Senate and Assembly who are here today.

I'm Dr. Betty A. Rosa, commissioner of Education. I'm joined by Executive Deputy Commissioner Sharon Cates-Williams, Senior Deputy Commissioner Dr. Jim Baldwin, and Deputy Commissioner Sarah Benson.

First and foremost, I want to acknowledge and thank Chancellor Lester Young and the Board of Regents members who are watching today. I also would like to recognize our cross-agency partners, our stakeholder groups, and professional associations for their amazing partnership and collaboration.

Now I'd like to highlight a few priority areas.

As part of its commitment to the P-20 continuum, the Regents and the department continue to support programs that successfully prepare students for college and careers and civic life. Part and parcel to this continuum are our Opportunity Programs -- these are key -- which provide

critical pathways and support for students who are at the highest risk of not graduating high school, attending college, or completing a degree and entering the workforce.

As such, the Regents and the department request a 10 percent funding increase for the Liberty Partnership Program, the Higher Education Opportunity Program, Science & Technology Entry Program, and the Collegiate Science & Technology Entry Program. Over 46,000 students have been served by one of these Opportunity Programs, and more students could benefit from them -- and we see these as critical.

Post-secondary support for students with disabilities, another important component of student success. Approximately, believe it or not, 86,000 students with disabilities attend New York State degree-granting colleges and universities, which represents a 15 percent increase in the past five years. We ask for $15 million to further advance support for these students. We received 2 million, which covers about $27

per student.

As you are aware, in addition to this, New Yorkers expect and deserve the department to provide excellent customer service. To do so, we must reverse the decades-long underinvestments that have prevented us from appropriately staffing our information and technology services office. Allow the department to hire technical experts needed to build and maintain a world-class system to support our programs' office modernization, and update our technology-based systems for licensed professionals -- teachers and school personnel certification -- higher education program reviews and approval, and support of program offices and New Yorkers the way they deserve.

And finally, I am vehemently opposed to the Governor's intent to transfer the department's longstanding authority, licensing and oversight of healthcare professionals to the Health Department. The current system works. It works because it aligns the state system's educational

preparation, licensure, professional oversight under a single umbrella, ensuring the public is served by competent, well-trained healthcare professionals.

The proposed transfer is not supported by any feasibility studies -- and in fact, it ignores the licensing delays and other unintended consequences that, should that transfer take place, it would undoubtedly bring about.

The proposal is extreme, treats the department's dedicated employees like replaceable parts, and fails to consider the potential impact to the public health and safety.

In conclusion, the department continuously strives to improve its customer service, streamline and modernize our data system, and supports innovation. We're engaged in every aspect of lifelong learning, from ensuring a quality education and preparing for colleges, career and civic readiness, to overseeing 55 licensed professions. And with said, I want to thank

our staff, who work so hard every day on behalf of students, institutions of higher education, their faculty and staff, and licensed professionals across New York.

Thank you so much for your attention today, and I so look forward to your questions. And if I may use -- I know I promised five minutes, but if I may use one moment to clarify a question that was raised while I was sitting there, which is so critical. And that is the issue of the average -- and I will submit it as a document, I won't go through it. There was a question about the average number of days to register programs. It is 22 days.

And it breaks it down in terms of how many -- in the 10-day span, in the 30-day span, in the 40-day span, in the 60-day span. And so with this, I'd like to submit this as a working document that the greatest number of days that it has taken SUNY to respond to our questions about proposal submission in '22 was about 48 days.

As of 12/31/2022, there were three

pending proposals from SUNY. And I'm proud to respond that currently, there are none pending.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you, Commissioner.

And we go to Assemblywoman Fahy, chair of our Higher Ed Committee.

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

And thank you, Commissioner. Thank you for being here, and it's good to be here. And as the new chair I appreciated your outreach to me as well.

I'm going to follow up on one of the things that you hit in your -- early on in your testimony. And I appreciated that it was early on in your testimony that you're giving such prominence to the Early College High Schools as well as the P-TECH programs as well as career and technical education.

We spoke a few weeks ago when you called -- and again, appreciated -- about this loss of students, this -- and I'm seeing

estimates all over the map in terms of high school students that, you know, we haven't gotten back into our high schools and what that means then for college enrollments, which we've talked about all morning, the struggle with college enrollments.

Are you seeing and has there been an evaluation in terms of students' absenteeism among high school students? Are we seeing less absenteeism among CTE or Early College High School students or P-TECH?

I mean, can you -- what -- I guess I'm looking for things that are going to make a difference because what happens at the middle school/high school is certainly going to set the stage for us turning around a very difficult situation in our colleges as well. And again, I know enrollment is down nationally, and I know we're struggling with reclaiming students at the high school nationally. But the -- needless to say, the early numbers are very alarming.

Are you seeing -- is there a difference? You know, can it help us turn

around this picture?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So -- so let me start -- and you're absolutely correct, the original testimony, and even in this testimony I talked about the reduction of the 10 percent. In some of the programs that we know -- Liberty Programs, some of the programs that we know make an investment when students are in high school. And dual enrollment -- many of the programs that we know are part of these transitional ways of making sure that our students are prepared. Not waiting till -- you know, to your point -- that they're disengaged, but rather making the investment up front.

And so that's why we're invested in the P-20 process. But we can give you not only surveys that we have done in terms of P-TECH, we can give you -- and when I say you, I'm talking about in general -- information that we have been gathering about the dual-enrollment programs and other kinds of support systems for our engagement of our students, particularly many of our -- many of

our children in communities where many times, whether it's in the sciences and other areas, are not represented.

The CTE programs, as you know, we have not only been investing in visiting, data gathering, knowing that the success -- speaking with students on the success of these programs.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Okay, I would be very curious to see if it is making a difference and if you have comparison data, sorry. Go ahead, Doctor.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: We have, in my view, a crisis of student engagement.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Yes.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: And when we look at the data in terms of the number of students that have not returned, that have in some respects vanished from the scene, we need to consider the fact that that crisis is real --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Yes.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: -- and

it has been ongoing for a number of years. Part of what we see with our career/tech ed programs, with our P-TECH programs, with the Early College High School programs, with the IB programs, is that they more effectively engage high school students in learning.

And rather than being the exception, they need to be the rule. The Board of Regents has proposed a package of bills that would allow school districts to come together to create regional technical high schools that would better engage students in hands-on learning.

In addition to that, there is a very significant proposal that would substantially increase aid to school districts, both through BOCES aid and through the Special Services aid, encouraging districts to send more students and to provide greater career/tech ed opportunities for our students.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. I really do look forward to hearing more on the evaluation and the comparison, because again

what happens at the high schools really does affect the -- SUNY, CUNY and more, obviously.

Switching gears, I think Senator Krueger and I both made copies of the same article that ran in Chalkbeat over the weekend, and that is the one regarding proprietary schools, titled -- I'll read it again, it was read earlier -- "For Scandal-Plagued For-Profit Colleges, No State is More Welcoming than New York." And it did have some disturbing charts and data how we are essentially an outlier in terms of the funding as well as the differences between those who have attended -- the percentage that are served versus the percentage who are defaulting on student loans after five years.

Clearly there's work to be done here. I know our colleague Alicia Hyndman as well as Senator Stavisky have a bill to address some of this. Are there other things that you'd like to address and mention? And I think Mr. Epstein also has -- Assemblyman Epstein also has some legislation on this.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So we have

been engaged, as you know, even in terms of the Middle State evaluations, we have had about 26 colleges that have been closed, which we monitor very closely.

We have been very committed to ensuring that these colleges provide, you know, the kinds of programs that they are -- that the students expect. So when -- you know, when we follow up in terms of programmatically -- and by the way, they have to follow the same standards as SUNY and CUNY. I mean, that is the one thing that we are very committed to, and we ensure that it's the same exact standard.

We meet with them when they sometimes identify that they're having some difficulty. We do visits, technical support, everything else. We meet with, you know, obviously sometimes the students. Some of you saw the Chalkbeat, but you also -- there was 200 students signed that they even wanted to keep one particular college open because it was effective. And the truth of the matter is that that college was already on its way

and it will be closed.

So we also want to ensure that we work with the institution that is closing and other possible institutions to make sure that we make a transition that is -- does not impact on the students.

Jim, do you want to --

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Yeah, I think that the issue of proprietary colleges -- I think we need to first of all clarify that some of the proprietary colleges in New York, there are 23 that are chartered here in New York, do quite an effective job working with students.

Certainly there are predatory aspects to some of the proprietary schools. Currently those schools are subject to the same requirements as the commissioner mentioned, as are the not-for-profit schools in New York and the public colleges in New York.

To the extent that the Legislature would like to provide some kind of different treatment for those proprietary schools,

we're certainly willing to work with you and to provide whatever technical assistance we can as you deliberate through that process.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

Just the last couple of minutes I'm going to combine a couple of questions here, switching gears again.

Nursing and our nursing shortages. Can you talk about what percentage -- and then the licensure from the out-of-state nurses, what percent of applications for these licensures for out of state are -- what percent is made up there? Again, of those seeking licenses, what percent are out of state? Sorry to garble that.

And then, separately -- and if you could talk about the average time there as well, as you did on the program approval. And I appreciate you addressing that.

And then separately, but it is related to all these worker shortages, the staffing -- we've seen a number of chain pharmacies closing or reducing hours because of staffing shortages. And wondering if the

board of pharmacy has heard from the field on this.

So if you could address nursing and shortages in the minute we have left here.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay, I'm going to ask Sarah.

But the one thing I will say is keep in mind also that most recently we've had a critical issue with the Florida --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Yes. Yes, thank you for mentioning that.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay. So I don't want to lose sight of that, because that obviously -- we're holding quite -- over 2,000 situations. So holding that, it may make the number look a little bit different because of the fact of the investigations.

So with that --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Very true. Thank you for mentioning that serious issue.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes, not a problem. Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: So in very brief terms, the number of out-of-state

licensed nurses seeking licensure here, we expedite those licenses. We license those individuals typically in about two weeks. Average is about 30 percent of our total licensees who fit into that category.

We are licensing in the neighborhood of 35,000 nurses last year, so there are a lot of nurses that we license.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. And we'll follow up on the pharmacies.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you to the chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Toby Stavisky, ranker on Higher Ed -- chair of Higher Ed.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Commissioner, I know you were working closely -- is that on? All right, there we go. I think we need a STEM allocation for the Senate.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR STAVISKY: Commissioner, I know you worked very closely with the federal government law enforcement officials with the

issue of fraudulent nursing diplomas. What have you done -- based in Florida, no less. What have you done in terms of trying to see if any of the nurses in New York State fraudulently obtained a fake diploma from one of these so-called nursing schools in Florida?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So I'm going to start and then -- because we've been having -- when this was brought to our attention in August, we immediately really started a plan in how to look at the situation, assess the situation in finding out the colleges and the impact.

In addition to that, we followed it up with a memo -- as you know, a confidential memo that we shared both with the Exec and the Department of Health. We continued to work, and Sarah will outline even as close as last week we were still working on issues of making sure that the letter that went out describing the 14 days had on our website questions and answers that individuals could in fact follow up on. And that was also a

way of making sure that we support those individuals that may not be part of this group.

And particularly we are also concerned about prior to August, the number of nurses that were able to get through, because we were notified in August.

Sharon? I mean, I'm sorry, Sarah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: Certainly. I would only elaborate to say that the information provided by the federal authorities -- and we continue to have daily, weekly conversations with them, additional information continues to be forthcoming. We're working closely with them and our Office of Counsel on appropriate next steps.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

I don't know if you were here earlier when Chancellor King referenced a bill that I'm -- that actually came out of committee allowing for simulation instead of face-to-face patient-nurse contact. Has the State Ed -- is the State Ed -- if this bill passes, and obviously there's no guarantee on

anything, would you be able to administer this kind of program to improve the number of nurses who graduate from New York State?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So thank you for that question.

We have had several conversations with SUNY. We've had conversations with Chancellor King around this issue. You know, we've had several conversations around the standardization, because it does say -- I think he mentioned 30 percent or the one-third, and we have asked the question: One-third of what? What does that mean programmatically? How do you standardize that?

The other thing is you know that the programs have different equipment, so that when you look at -- one of the things that we discussed was the whole issue that depending on where the training is taking place, there are different equipments that are used.

So my concern -- and I did share this with the team. When we spoke with SUNY I said, I'm concerned where the ones that are

not going to have the right proper equipment, what communities they're going to go into. And so therefore standardization for us -- in terms of time, equipment and making sure that the proper preparedness in terms of safety and the health of communities -- is of utmost importance.

So those conversations, now further conversations have taken place, and I'd like Sarah -- only because I was not at the table. But I understand that it turned out to be a pretty good meeting in terms of innovating from our perspective.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: Yeah, absolutely. We had a very productive conversation with SUNY, CUNY and CICU all in the same virtual room. And I think everyone agrees that the way to make this bill be something that can be implemented, should it become law, is to have a common understanding of what are the definitions, what are the parameters, how would the State Education Department, as regulators, implement such a bill.

And so we are working very collaboratively with all the sectors to try and reach consensus on that, and I think that we'll be able to move forward once we all have a common understanding.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

I know the chancellor and I have discussed -- the commissioner and I have discussed this issue, and that is the Regents exam in global history and geography and an inappropriate question equating the creation of the State of Israel with the Holocaust.

How have you addressed this issue and the various pushback from the various communities? And I happen to be a former social studies teacher, so I particularly understand the Regents and the preparation in global history.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure. And as you know, we've had some conversations along with other legislators around this question, which obviously the question was -- in form, it was of concern. And I'm the first one to say in looking at it, even

though we have made it pretty transparent, the process that's used -- our social studies teachers develop these questions. And beyond our social studies teachers developing these questions, we have different steps which, again, we will share -- I know we've shared with some of you; I'd like to collectively so that there's an understanding of the process.

But nonetheless, at the end of the day, you know, in terms of our culturally responsive, in terms of the work we're trying to do, we do have to acknowledge that it is not a good question in terms of -- it was not a good question in terms of a short answer, and I'm the first one to acknowledge that, having looked at the question.

Secondly, we've met with our staff and, you know, anytime there's something that is not -- is of concern to any group, any community. We have ultimately the responsibility to take stock and make sure that we put safeguards and other things in place to assure that our essay questions and our short-answer questions are responsive and

culturally responsive as well as sensitive to various communities.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. You've been talking -- we've been talking at many budget hearings about your computer upgrades. Where are you in that process? And when are we going to see the result, particularly in the Office of the Professions, for your computer upgrades?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So I'm going to start because, as you know, in our testimony we talked about -- there's an investment, obviously, in OP and OQ. Right? There's an investment that we're trying to deal with. But the investment in terms of staffing of our IT is not there.

So we are struggling through that process while at the same time we've made some amazing steps with -- even with the individuals we currently have, to ensure -- and you'll see from the timeline, to ensure that our OP as well as OQ are responding in terms of customer service and the modernization.

So I'm going to let Sarah speak to the modernization because despite the IT issues, we're still moving forward. We're hoping that we can get the funding for that. We're moving forward with the modernization. And it's due I think '25 -- '24, '25 is when we're supposed to, you know, have this ready. And we have made tremendous progress with our call centers and with, you know, the kind of work that's being done.

So, Sarah?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: Yeah, absolutely. So the most recent improvement that you can see is our new website, which rolled out in December. Much more user-friendly, much more accessible, easy to access on your phone or mobile device. All of those are great customer improvements as well as having more easy access to information generally.

As the commissioner mentioned, we certainly have made some improvements from a customer-facing standpoint in terms of the ability to ask questions and get answers.

The work around modernization of our mainframe is not the sexy part of this work; it's very tedious. But we are making great strides in that direction.

SENATOR STAVISKY: When do you expect it to be finished?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: In '24-'25.

And we have not -- our timeline has expanded just a bit because, in part, of staffing issues. But our bottom-line expenditure has not changed at all.

EX. DEP. CMMR. CATES-WILLIAMS: And I just want to add something to that. As the commissioner mentioned, the need to make improvements in our infrastructure, the staff that we need, that's why we're asking for that IT staff to support the modernization efforts going forward.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And that's 38 positions.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Next up is Assemblymember Harvey

Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Good afternoon. Thank you for being here and for all the work that you're doing for us.

Commissioner, I just wanted to focus on the increase in funding for students with disabilities. And can you tell us why you want to go from 2 million to 15 million? And what do you think that will help with enrollment and retention for students with disabilities?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Great, great question. Thank you.

And I think you know that my background being someone who has been both in a residential program -- and as we're losing many of our programs, and many of the programs that we know support families and support our students. When we say "all means all," we have to take into account the different ways that both technology can be used to support our students. Twenty-seven dollars -- the $2 million is $27 per student.

Now, what's amazing is when we

testify, we have to give credit. In 2017, '18, '19, there were 66,000 students. Now we're up to 86,000. So there's a growth. And when you have a growth, celebrate that growth and support that growth, and both in SUNY and CUNY and all our -- all of our programs.

And so the 15 million is a way of saying these students need to become part of the economy, need to be contributors, need to be supported as learners, as individuals that need to be part of the fabric of our institutions.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Do you have dropout rates for students with disabilities versus comparison to other students?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: With higher ed?

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: With higher ed.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah, I can get that to you.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: That would be great.

So it feels like when you're talking

about a crisis of student engagement, do you think it's a crisis because students have more needs and we're just not providing those resources to them? Kind of, what is going on and how do we reverse that trend?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I think it's a combination. We have had several conversations, particularly with our students when we're looking to enhance the work. And our students, whether it's through some of the mental health issues, some of the social-emotional, some of the anxieties, and some of the things that they need to really continue to stay focused, to stay part of.

And so when we look at these investments, we have to look at these investments across the board that all children, all students really need these investments to reentry, to re connect, and in some cases to sustain them in their current situation. So personally, for our department, you know, we have taken our special education and our access, looking at transitions --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Commissioner, I'm almost out of time so I just would say maybe offline I'd like to talk to you more about the for-profit issue, something I've been talking about for years. And I'd love to continue that conversation about the students at for-profit colleges.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Joe Griffo, five minutes.

SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you, Commissioner, and the executive team for being here today.

I want to start with the Office of Professions, the second year that the Executive has tried to move that to the Department of Health, to split that. You expressed your opposition and your concern obviously. What do you believe -- can you give some insight into what you haven't been able to accomplish at SED that they can better do at the Department of Health relative to flexibility or addressing the healthcare shortages? Because I can see

redundancy and confusion in this equation.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I'm going to start by saying -- and I think I'm no stranger, saying this for the second year in a row, right? Last year we had the same situation. This is the second year.

We have finally -- I think you know that last year there was finally an investment made, I think there was something like 59 positions made. There was a modernization. The money that was being swept was finally reinvested. So that we have seen not only the commitment that was so much needed being made, in order to do the kind of work we need to do. And we're already seeing, as we had already shared, we're already seeing the -- not only the collaboration and working with DOH, but seeing the kind of work across agencies that really is going to help maintain the professionalism but also the safety that we maintain in our department in terms of what I call the public -- you know, do no harm, and safety.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: So all I would add to that, and really just to echo the commissioner's comment, is that our focus is always on public protection. It's on the preparation of the professionals. That's why we're in the Education Department. We're focused on them being competent professionals.

And so having that housed separately from the agency that's responsible for many of the employers of those professionals makes sense in the way of, you know, a good public benefit, to have those two being under different umbrellas.

SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you.

The labor force and the market are demanding skilled workers. Can you tell me, are our higher educational systems and schools working close enough with the BOCES programs that exist to provide the type of transition that ensures these students have this type of access and opportunity?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, I'm going to have Jim -- but we have been meeting

with -- we have been having -- by the way, let me just go back to we also met with the acting last week to talk about ways of working together. So the cross-agency work for us is very important.

But in terms of the BOCES, even -- we've had meetings with Commissioner Reardon, we've had meetings with, you know, other commissioners to really advance -- Commissioner Ball, others, to advance this issue in terms of BOCES and CTE.

Jim?

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Sure.

I think, you know, there's many -- there's a lot of activity happening at the local/regional level, and the BOCES are at the center of much of that.

When we look at what needs to be done in terms of building stronger connections between the BOCES, the school districts, the business community, we really need to have a focused investment by the State of New York on career/technical education.

The current BOCES formula for

reimbursement of school districts is capped at a $30,000 salary. The current provision of aid to the big city school districts is woefully inadequate to encourage and to support the kind of career/technical education opportunities that need to be made available to students throughout New York State. And that is why we proposed what we did in terms of increasing the aid for career/technical education and also why the board and the department are advancing a package of bills that will enable local school districts to come together and figure out how they can approach these issues on a regional basis.

SENATOR GRIFFO: Okay, thank you.

Just quickly, in the end, teaching profession shortages -- what areas are the most acute and what areas are hardest-hit, do you know statistically?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I'm sorry, could --

SENATOR GRIFFO: In teaching, the teaching profession shortages, what areas of

that profession are probably most acute, the shortage, and then what areas are the hardest-hit?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, special education, right off the bat. English language learners, right off the bat.

And I will also tell you that we have a need in some content areas like the sciences, math and reading, English.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Hi, good afternoon. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I remember when ASA was founded. I know the history, it came out of the proprietary school sector. How much coordination is done between a proprietary college, SED, the accrediting association, and USDOE? Because there's a lot of steps.

So, I mean, for it to get to the point it got to, I just wanted to know that.

And secondly, I just want to thank

your staff for giving me the update on your proprietary school supervision. It's never included in what we receive, and I just want to make sure that -- the numbers of staff needed in that department, are they included in your overall numbers?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

EX. DEP. CMMR. CATES-WILLIAMS: Yes, they are.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: They are? Okay. And almost like OP, they are able to have some of the money -- like they have -- revenue is generated from the tuition refund account. And you all were able to use some of that money for OP last year, right, in 2021-2022?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: No, not the OP, no. Access -- you're talking about --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: No, I'm talking about OP's budget. I'm just saying in --

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: -- the same

way that OP's budget was used to do the same thing with proprietary school supervision.

EX. DEP. CMMR. CATES-WILLIAMS: And for BPSS we've included three positions, yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay, all right. Just wanted to make sure they're not left out.

EX. DEP. CMMR. CATES-WILLIAMS: Right.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So just to answer the first part, there's a lot of work that goes into it. As a matter of fact, I can tell you the number of meetings we met even when we knew that there were issues with ASA.

But it's not just that school. I think there was even a recent visit that our staff made to a meeting with the students. We met with the provost. I mean, a great deal of conversations, because our work is really not only to maintain the standards and the work that is done in terms of the evaluation and -- you know, this one also involved the feds as well --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Right, the

feds were there.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: -- as you know. Exactly.

So our work is always to provide the technical support because at the end of the day there are students that are in this -- you know, in this what I would call process, in this continuum, of trying to get their education and --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: When do you get notification when the USDOE says, okay, this school is under heightened cash monitoring. I mean, that's a red flag something is wrong. Do you get notification immediately? Does OQ? I mean, because --

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: There is a prescribed process, and we can share that process with you, that we go through.

So when we become aware of the fact that there are red flags or yellow flags on a specific institution, we have a process that we follow where we monitor what's happening in the institution. We are in regular contact with whoever the accrediting agency

is, and we are in regular contact with USDOE.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: And we'll get you the --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator John Liu.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Commissioner, once again for joining us. You know, when Commissioner King was -- Chancellor King was answering questions about how nimble or not nimble SUNY is in terms of getting new online courses ready, he talked a lot about the delays, but I don't think he mentioned SED. And then I think you kind of called him out on his nonsense in your testimony.

So does SUNY have to get approval from SED?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So let me -- I -- what I proposed was the fact that this is a complex process. You have the institution itself and --

SENATOR LIU: You mean SUNY.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: No, no. Whatever the institution that is looking in terms of the evaluation -- the school.

SENATOR LIU: Including SUNY, then.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Within SUNY, yes.

SENATOR LIU: Okay.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So what ends up happening a lot of times, it will go to SUNY, you know, it comes to us. We will have sometimes questions. And, right, we send them back, we ask the questions.

And so what I wanted to give you was not calling anybody out but giving you evidence of what the process looks like in terms of our side of it. You know, his comment was that we -- it's complex, we need to address it. Absolutely. When I hear "we," I hear "we" collectively.

SENATOR LIU: Okay. I mean, I heard from him that the delays were unnecessary and there needed to be legislative fixes, including Assemblymember Hyndman's efforts.

And then you seem to come down and say, well, there aren't actually any pending matters right now. So it seems like they don't have any -- SUNY or what you call the institutions don't have any applications currently.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: There is --

SENATOR LIU: And our point was that SUNY needs to do better to compete with the onslaught of online courses.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Right. And SUNY -- SUNY needs to do what SUNY needs to do to get there.

When you look at the program approval process, roughly 40 percent within 10 days are approved.

SENATOR LIU: So SED approves.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: SED -- what happens is this. Each college within the SUNY system does their thing. They then submit to SUNY Central. In my conversations with representatives of SUNY Central, they have admitted that their own system needs

attention. And then SUNY Central submits to us.

So what we are doing --

SENATOR LIU: So what you're saying is that the delay is on their end.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: What they are giving you are the days that it takes for SED to review what is submitted to us.

SENATOR LIU: Which is a short number of days. And therefore the problem is not with SED, it's with SUNY.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, Senator.

You can follow up with the Senator --

SENATOR LIU: Nah, no need. I got it. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We've been joined by Assemblyman Colton, and Assemblywoman Chandler-Waterman has been here since -- for a while.

And we go to Assemblyman Eachus for a question.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you.

Were you here when I introduced myself before?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes, I was. I listened to your testimony.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That will save some time.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay. So 40 years in the classroom, both public school and private school.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes. Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay, thank you.

How long have you been commissioner?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Seven months -- well, actually February was two years of -- when I was appointed, and seven months prior to that. So I'm -- I was the -- pretty much the COVID commissioner.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Yeah. I'm sorry.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: For you, for that.

First of all, a couple of statements.

P-TECH is a huge success, I can tell you that. It is in the last school that I taught in, and I have seen numerous kids get out of high school with college degrees, and it's working wonderfully. And I agree with your recommendation about making it more flexible, no question about that.

Liberty Partnership, CSTEP, STEP, HEOP -- we have to understand, these are lifesaving programs for a lot of these students. And I can't believe that the minimal amount of reduction -- why there would be any reduction in those programs. But that's another discussion, another time, because I will assure you I will try to get those monies put back in the budget.

But the thing I really wanted to talk to you about is what you call teacher/leader prep and development. Okay? I'm sure your department does wonderful things, but you know what, 40 years in the classroom, nobody asked me what will encourage kids to become teachers. And as a matter of fact I can tell you right now that these programs you have --

TOC II, Teacher Diversity, all of those -- they're not going to really work that well. And here's why they're not going to work.

The average teacher in the classroom is not, is not encouraging their students to become teachers right now. You have to understand -- again, pre your time, and I appreciate it. We've lived through periods where you've said to us teachers, we don't trust you, you can't grade your own Regentses. We don't trust you, you can't even see what your Regentses say or what's been done with them or where you maybe were even a little deficient.

And I truly believe that that's where you have to get true teacher development and leadership, is back to those who are in the classroom right now, make them feel appreciated. And so if you have a comment, I'll give you the last --

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: We're going to share the comment. Let me just say this.

As a teacher, both principal, superintendent, senior superintendent and of

course, you know, I was the chancellor even prior to this, so I've spent 14 years, you know, from Regent to this position. What I have learned is first of all, I try not to, as much as possible -- that's why I like data -- to generalize. I do believe that there are many places that I would say are doing a phenomenal job with teachers and people who don't even want to leave the classrooms, they want to continue to be teachers.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Let's continue to talk sometime, please.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So if we can -- yes. More than glad. Why we started this office. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: To the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Murray.

SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you all for being here.

I have limited time, so I'm going to be kind of quick.

First, I applaud you so much for your dedication -- obvious -- to BOCES and career training. Just love it. And I specifically like that in your testimony in this sentence where you said "high school students seeking college credit courses and/or a career pathway." For too long it was being presented as "or," that it was one or the other. It's great that you're pushing that.

My question to that, when we look at the P-TECH and the studies and the six years -- I have multiple questions. First, where did the six-year initiative come from? Why was it six? Why not something -- four or something that made more sense?

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Well, originally when P-TECH was first created there were those of us who were practitioners who really questioned why the six years.

What we have discovered, through a legislatively mandated survey, is that the attrition rate at the end of four years is especially acute. What the Board of Regents has proposed is that P-TECH proposals that

would be up to six years would be entertained, pursuant to the RFP, rather than requiring six years of P-TECH.

There are -- you know, the idea that an eighth-grader going into ninth grade, and their parents, would want to commit to a six-year P-TECH program is just really difficult. And what we found is that as you look at attrition rates, that the worst attrition is in that fourth year, where students are ready to leave high school.

SENATOR MURRAY: That makes sense.

And again, about your proposal for the College Credit and Career Opportunity Program, can you explain a little more of how you foresee that? Because I do -- again, the regional idea makes a lot of sense, having the flexibility. But how do you envision putting that together?

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Well, we have an example of it, actually. The Questar III BOCES, Capital Region BOCES, Hudson Valley Community College have come together to create a STEM school at

Hudson Valley Community College. And on a pilot basis, basically we've taken a P-TECH program, an Early College High School program and the contributions of the community college and brought it all together to create that school.

We had to do some contortions to get there, because, you know, you have all these separate segmented programs. What we want to do, given what's happening out there in terms of sort of the organic development of these ideas, we feel that a program that would basically allow a mixture of different models would make sense. Ultimately this would be the basis for state support of dual enrollment, which is a critical issue facing New York State. And it gets at that issue of student engagement that Assemblywoman Fahy had raised earlier.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you. Let's please talk more about -- I'd like to talk to you more about that.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah.

SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

And thank you for your support for increased funding to serve our students with disabilities. I think that people forget that, A, their numbers are growing, but that the best thing we can do is to support them so they go out and become taxpaying citizens. Because somebody with a degree with a disability is paying taxes just like everybody else, and that's, right, what we want. So I think that's critically important.

And I did want to also speak to you about the proprietary college issue. A number of them are in my district. So I'm certainly getting emails from people who are attending ASA, which is in my district. And I'm getting questions from people who are -- they've just finished like their -- at the

end, this last week, their last -- their semester before their last semester, and they have nowhere to go next.

Who can I send them to to help them find a place they can go for that last semester so they can finish up that degree? Many of these students have been getting As and Bs. I want to help them move on so that they can become the taxpaying citizens and not be another debt crisis. So that's one question.

And then the other question is -- well, answer that question, if you can. Or tell me who to go to offline.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely. We will work with you to make sure. Because we already started that process. And so I know -- I know that our staff did the visit on February 16th. So absolutely we will work with you on that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Great, thank you.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: We've actually created an email where a student can

email to the department, the Office of Higher Education, specifically for ASA students. And I assume that's what you're referring to.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Yes.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: And we can provide that information.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Great. Thank you very much.

And then the other thing is, you know, we've been talking about changing the way we train our teachers to teach reading. I know you and I have been talking about that. I do want you to look at my bill A4689, which is modified from the prior version I had and I think is better. And I would really like to talk to you at greater length about that.

Thank you.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely. Anything with brain research I think, you know, we're interested in.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Webb.

SENATOR WEBB: Good afternoon, everyone. Nice to see you again, Commissioner.

I just have a couple of questions.

One, you know, as I said earlier at the previous panel, EOP, CSTEP, these are programs that I, as a former student, went through and were very integral in my success. And so as I said earlier, I was disheartened to hear about the reduction.

And so my question to you is, what are the potential impacts on -- on those programs as relates to the reduction in funding? That's one question.

And then my second question relates to the transfer of Professions. Specifically, what are the concerns that have caused the push for the transfer of these professions from SED to DOH?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So I'm going to start with the second one and then we'll talk about the investments or the reduction.

I think that that is one key question that we've explored. We've really -- when it

first happened, we were told like I think at a budget meeting, we were told that this was happening. There were no conversations. I think we were totally caught off-guard.

And then I have to tell you, we started to work at the time with Commissioner Bassett, at the time, trying to understand. The only thing we could pinpoint it to was that all of a sudden there was investment, right? There were 59 positions, investment in modernization. So moving it, you know, thinking of it, as you heard me say, as moving it over was a way perhaps of, you know, giving DOH additional staff and whatever.

The problem we saw was that even after last year, there was no feasibility, no impact study. No conversation. So then, you know, here we go again, the second year in a row that -- and I did have some conversations and asked the question why -- you know, why this? And what -- what's -- you know, as a data person, what are you basing it on? What's informing your decision? What are the

thoughts behind it?

So I just want to save a few minutes for Sarah.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER BENSON: I would just add, you know, as you know, we are not an executive agency. We are your agency, for lack of a better word. The Regents are appointed by the Legislature. And so putting things that -- we have a very direct personal relationship with all of you in the Legislature and work very closely to ensure that the laws that you enact can be carried out well, back to Senator Stavisky's question about how would we implement such laws.

I can't speak to the motives of the Executive, but it would certainly change the way that relationship works if the professions were transferred out of the Education Department.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And just to add, even with that, we still continue to know that -- the importance of cross-agency work.

Your second part -- we'll get back --

SENATOR WEBB: We can follow up.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes, thank you.

SENATOR WEBB: I also had other questions about it too. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We do not have other Assemblymembers.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Then we have three minutes for Toby Stavisky, second round.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Real quick, let me follow up on a question that I asked and a question that Senator Liu asked. Real quick, do you have unfilled positions in your department?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes, you do.

Right, now, you -- my memory says it takes 22 days for you to complete an application for program approval. Is that the departmental request for additional approvals? Or is that requests from colleges to become universities? How do you define

program approval?

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Program approval is an institution wants to create a new degree program, they submit the plan, the degree program is reviewed and approved -- either approved outright or roughly 40 percent of them require some follow-up.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Does that refer to the SUNY testimony?

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: It applies across the board. I mean, the position that SUNY has taken for a while now is that -- and in fact a couple of years ago SUNY wanted basically to do its own program approval without SED.

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

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: And, you know, the position SUNY has taken is that there is a backlog at State Ed. That is not the case.

There are times when a degree program

is proposed; when it was reviewed -- when it is reviewed, there are questions about the degree program. And those questions are sent to SUNY or sent to the institution that is proposing those programs, and we basically wait for an answer to get back. Sometimes there is an extended period of time. But that is by far the exception.

SENATOR STAVISKY: If my memory is correct, several years ago they submitted a request for them to approve a certain number of programs. Could that be behind the testimony?

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Possibly.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, we do have another Assemblymember.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Monique Chandler-Waterman, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: Hello. Thank you so much. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am a former high school teacher as well as a professor. And I came across a good concept in one of the schools in my district that did expeditionary learning, Outward Bound, for certain schools. And I know that that was a great way to piggyback project-based assessment on tasks for students like conferences to roundtables and passages. Which we know that it helps them with problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and really helped them beyond just taking a Regents exam. So this school did not have Regents exams -- maybe one. Right? They focused mainly on those kind of criteria.

In the budget or in any of your thought process did you consider schools like that to support so they'd definitely be able to have longevity in a college program?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, first of all, anything that -- any program that takes the standards work and applies it, applied learning, so that the students take the concept that's being taught and apply --

I did this in my own district as a superintendent, where the kids would go to Maritime for a week. They used simulators, they were studying weather, they were absolutely working with engineers and others. And I know that we were supported by the Legislature in terms of funding for that program.

We truly believe that any type of -- you know, that kind of a program allows the students to really conceptualize it, but experience it. Experiential learning is about really not just reading about the museum, but going to the museum. So for them, it's truly an adventure that really many times engages them, many times gives them a network of support.

So these are fabulous programs that we want to make sure we invest in that it goes beyond what I call the walls of the classroom, so that students really, truly -- who learn differently can have the opportunities to take in the learning in the way that their learning style allows them to

focus on. So thank you for the question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Now to the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

I think I'm the last Senator. Hi.

So Pat Fahy followed up with you on a question I told you I was going to follow up with. I just want a clarification for me to understand. So you said, I think, you were 38 or 39 schools that you took off the list of being eligible for TAP. Did I understand that correctly? Twenty-six. Sorry, 26 is what Pat Fahy heard. What's the right answer?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: No, we're talking about proprietary? That were closed.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Were closed. So you actually have the authority to close the schools, not just take away their right to get TAP funds.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: These were -- okay. So the 26 schools that were

closed were closed through a process that's used, whether it's, you know, that they don't meet certain specific standards. So we can share with you the 26 that were -- that were closed and some of the, you know, thinking of who -- you know, who was involved in the closure, if you will. Because we do have the information. More than glad to do that.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I think we would definitely like the list. And I think it would also be helpful to see what the standards are that are used.

But part of that process for closing also says they can no longer receive TAP funds from the state, is that correct?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: If they're closed? They're closed, yes. Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, you were saying --

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: No, no, if they're closed, they wouldn't.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: They wouldn't, okay. But it's not that they -- so they can continue with TAP while your investigation is

going on, and then you're going to hit a moment where you close them and then they can't get anymore TAP for those students.

And when you close them for failure to meet our standards, are the students eligible for reimbursement of the TAP money somehow to their accounts? Or they've just blown it, they've just lost their TAP money?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: You're talking about if -- if we've closed them -- if we've closed them, usually we go through a process so that students know that -- it's not -- the closure happens with -- you know, sometimes it could be six months, it could be even longer, depending. So that the students really -- we work with the institutions, they start to know that we're closing those schools and they can move -- you know, they can move into other. And we do work with them to facilitate the movement in terms of credits, you know, for some students, whatever the degree is. I mean, we've done that even in Long Island. I was still signing diplomas, believe it or not, of

students that were in -- you know, were moved to other institutions.

So we really work very hard to ensure that the students are not hurt in this process.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: But if I'm a school that's about -- and I know I'm going to be closed by the state, don't I have a motivation to try to speed up as fast as possible the amount of TAP money I draw down into my accounts?

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: It all depends. Some of them even -- I mean, I know that ASA was still even trying to get USDOE to keep them open. I mean, some of them want to continue to exist. And some of them obviously through this process, you know, do -- I mean, I think with ASA we were even in conversation last year with them, right?

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Yeah. What happens is that we work with the institution to identify -- and many of the institutions themselves will identify colleges where the student can complete the

degree requirements.

And depending upon the institution, you know, they could end up with five or six different institutions where they will agree to accept the credits and enable the student to complete the degree requirements.

Now, the question -- as far as TAP, I'm not an expert in TAP, but, you know, when a student is aware of the fact that there is an issue with their college, I mean, they typically will be cautious about, you know, what their next steps are.

I do not know when TAP is paid, so I think you'd have to -- we'd have to find that out from Higher Ed Services to get you an answer to the question about -- about TAP.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Do you use the same standards for evaluating the 52 yeshivas that receive TAP money in New York State for post-K-12 education?

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: The yeshivas, those that are providing, you know, what we would call P-12 education --

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Different

concept. Those are the yeshivas that --

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: They're subject to the substantial equivalency requirements.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, we've had that discussion at the recent K-12 hearing. These are 52 yeshivas who receive TAP funds for students post-grade 12. So do you use the same standards for evaluating them?

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: I would imagine we do. I can't imagine that we don't.

I mean, as far as the higher ed institutions go, all higher ed institutions are subject to the same standards. Only when the Legislature has or would enact an exception would there be an exception.

But we will inquire specifically of the Office of Higher Ed in terms of the way the yeshivas are addressed.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: But you're not aware that you've been doing any investigations or questions about these schools.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: About the yeshivas?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: About the --

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: The higher ed. She's talking about the higher ed --

(Overtalk.)

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: I am not aware of anything specific.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: No. No.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay.

So HESC knows I'm going to ask them that question next. So then they can give you the list of these schools that are receiving these -- I believe over $32 million in TAP funds a year, and then you would think that it is your obligation to look into these schools as well?

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: We would -- our obligation would be to hold the yeshivas to the same standard we hold every other institution of higher education.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. And you're going to send us all the standards you use.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes.

SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER BALDWIN: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. That's it for me. Thank you. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: I believe that's it from any of the -- all of the legislators. So thank you for being here.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Again, we'll just ask people to quietly make their way out and to not -- and for Assemblymembers to go outside if they want to speak to the commissioner and/or the staff.

Thank you.

So next we will have the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, our former colleague, Dr. Guillermo Linares, president.

So again, as State Ed is leaving, people who are remaining can take their seats.

Guillermo, Mr. President, if you would like to proceed.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Ready?

Good afternoon, Chairs Krueger,

Weinstein, Stavisky and Fahy, and all my former colleagues in the Senate and Assembly. I'm Dr. Guillermo Linares, president of HESC, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the 2023-'24 Executive Budget recommendations for HESC.

New York State has a history of generously supporting students seeking post-secondary educational opportunities. In 2021-'22, which represents the last completed academic year, more than $900 million in HESC-administered financial aid was awarded to support the postsecondary educational goals of roughly 300,000 college-going students. This represents one-quarter of the 1.1 million students who attended a New York State higher education institution.

Governor Hochul's 2023-'24 Executive Budget continues the state's commitment to putting postsecondary education within reach of every student seeking to obtain a college credential by maintaining critical investments in higher education programs that expand access to a high-quality, affordable

higher education here in New York State. With the $836 million -- or 12.6 percent -- annual increase in support for higher education advanced in her fiscal year 2024 Executive Budget, we can secure and strengthen access to a quality, affordable college education in New York.

In 2023-'24, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of our state's flagship program, TAP. Over the course of the past 50 years, TAP has provided nearly $30 billion to help more than 6 million New Yorkers who pursued a college education in our great state.

Last year, Governor Hochul advanced changes to TAP in recognition of the fact that for many students, full-time higher education is not viable with other challenges like work or families. With support from the Legislature, New York also implemented significant programmatic changes recognizing that many students need affordable access to effective training courses to build or improve their work skills.

The 2023-'24 Executive Budget continues full support of the historic expansion of TAP that was implemented last year to support part-time students in both degree-seeking programs and non-degree training programs at our community colleges. These changes have already resulted in the awarding of financial aid support to thousands of part-time students enrolled for the fall 2022 academic term alone.

The Governor's 2023-'24 budget recommendations also propose continued TAP support to incarcerated New Yorkers who are pursuing postsecondary degrees or credentials, continuing the state's restoration of a benefit that has been withheld to this community of students since 1995. Continued support in the reversal of this ban expands educational opportunities to those seeking to learn while in the state's correctional facilities and helps incarcerated individuals obtain critical job skills that will be an immediate benefit upon their release.

In closing, this year's Executive Budget continues to implement the Governor's vision to transform the state's public higher education system to become the best and most equitable statewide system of higher education in the country. It advances actions to expand enrollment and access to colleges across the state and build the strength of our world-class public university systems.

A higher education remains the engine for social and economic mobility. The more than two dozen HESC-administered grant, scholarship and loan forgiveness programs enable students to reach their higher education goals and attain the economic and social benefits that accompany a college degree or postsecondary credential.

The Governor has outlined her higher education goals related to increasing enrollment and completion rates, preparing students for in-demand jobs, and ensuring a world-class student experience at our public universities. She is committed to

reimagining higher education to provide students every possible opportunity to put them at the greatest competitive advantage.

Under her leadership, New York continues to lead the nation in expanding access to a quality and affordable college education, and HESC is privileged to help carry out her vision for all New Yorkers and to work toward our shared goal to help New York's students realize their dream of a higher education.

Thank you, and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to the chair of Higher Education, Pat Fahy.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

And thank you, our former Assemblymember Linares, as well as -- for your work while here in the Assembly as well as with HESC.

A few questions this morning. Some of it is a bit of a follow-up to the previous

testimony and previous conversations. But can we start with talking about what are some of the top challenges that New Yorkers face, our students face when repaying federal student loans? And we've talked a bit this morning as well about a recent article regarding some of the proprietary schools, but I think it's a challenge right across the board, we know, with loan payment. But some recent stats are showing that while our proprietary or for-profit colleges may make up 6 percent of our state's undergraduates, they're -- one study, the Center for Urban Future, is saying they make up 41 percent of those who are defaulting, student loan defaulters, after five years.

So in general, in addition to those students, can you talk about what the biggest challenges are and what we collectively should be doing to change that.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, first of all, congratulations on your leadership role.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I will begin by indicating that when it comes to loan forgiveness, we do have a myriad of programs, starting with Get On Your Feet, which was an initiative of the Legislature.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Can you pull the mic closer a little bit? Thank you. Sorry.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: So one of the programs that we have is the Get On Your Feet loan forgiveness program for students graduating from college and giving them two years to, you know, be able to pay.

But we also have a loan forgiveness program in a series of key areas of demand within the workforce, going from DAs to indigent -- attorneys for those services, social service child -- child -- child welfare workers get that as well. And so it's a myriad of scholarship -- of loan forgiveness programs that we have.

The other side that I would mention, as a guarantee agency we are now shifting as a guarantee agency and have been working very closely with the federal and state

departments of education that have designated a successor for the portfolio of students that have student debt. That successor is the Trellis Company. We've been working with them and by the 30th of March -- 30th of April I believe we will be completely transferring that. And the news with that is that all the benefits that all the student borrowers have will continue to be there for them moving forward. So I want to give you that response, combining the two.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Okay. Anything in particular on this concern, however, that's coming out again recently -- I feel like we talked about this 30 years ago, but long before I was here -- but the proprietary school, the loan defaulting. Is there anything particular that HESC is doing with regard to that?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, I would say -- and just following up what the commissioner was mentioning before with the schools that have been closed, in order for any school to receive TAP, they first need to

be accredited by the federal Department of Education, they need to meet the criterias that all schools that receive TAP in New York State, they must meet those criterias. They have to be eligible to receive aid on the federal level, Title IV. And they also must qualify to receive Pell. Or those need to be in place before a school receives TAP.

And so in addition to that I say that there are set requirements that we have also for students who attend those schools, so that there is a guarantee that they -- whatever courses they take, those credits can be transferred to other schools.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

Switching gears, part-time TAP, that is relatively new and I'm pleased to see you mentioned it as well in your testimony. Do we have any sense of how many students are taking that up or the comparison between those who are still full-time versus part-time? Is it still new, and is there something we need to be doing to expand that?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We're excited

about part-time TAP. And we are already beginning to see, from last term, that there's certification of students but there's not enough for us to give you numbers, only to say to you that thousands have already been certified. I would say over 7,000 already. But this is very early. We're still in the middle of the process, which will extend to June 30th. But the good news is that we will have, you know, as we move through the academic year, we will have more numbers, better numbers to give you a sense of how far we're going.

But comparing what we receive, over 7,000, to the 2,000 that were enrolled and certified the year before, we already see 300 percent over what was the previous year.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Terrific, thank you. Very encouraging.

The DREAM Act, something long talked-about. I think you were one of the very original sponsors when you were here in the Assembly --

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: -- and thank you for your work.

That passed in 2019. Any updated numbers on how many students are accessing it, or how many Dreamers are accessing it, and if there's barriers that we should be looking at.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you for asking about the DREAM Act. It's been a long road.

I am happy to share that thousands of students have enrolled and are benefiting from the DREAM Act. I think when we look at the last academic year we see -- I mentioned the 300,000. Within those 300,000, roughly, students that I referenced, there are Dreamers that are benefiting from the myriad of programs and benefits that we provide.

And I am happy to say that the original 5,000 target students that we anticipated, we're on target to really reach that number of Dreamers. So good news.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. That's very encouraging.

The last question is regarding the FAFSA, the financial aid -- the federal financial aid form. And I understand there's major changes underway at the federal level now. Do we see that as -- we talked a lot this morning about -- or this afternoon about enrollments and declining enrollments and what it's going to take, especially post-COVID, to reengage students and up those enrollments.

Will the changes help? Is there anything that HESC is doing? And is there anything we need to be looking at with those changes? Or do you see that as a positive change on that financial aid form?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Absolutely. We work year-round with -- not just with colleges, but we also work with Community Schools and school districts and superintendents to really get to the students and make sure that they apply. Because that's the first important step in them being able to get the max in terms of financial aid, including TAP and the other programs

that we have.

But I see nothing but good with the changes that are coming on simplifying the application. And this will -- this is like music to our ears when we see that we want to make it simpler and easier, the process of getting that application across the finish line.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Thank you again for your testimony.

Madam Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

The chair of Higher Ed, Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you, Senator Krueger.

And thank you for coming, Dr. Linares. Good to see you again.

A number of really quick questions. In the past, the ETA, the Enhanced Tuition Award, has been somewhat overlooked. At one point you testified that there were fewer than -- or somebody testified there were

fewer than 25 colleges involved. How is the ETA proceeding now, and is it being utilized properly?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I'm going back to 2021-'22, which is the last academic year that we looked into. There were close to about 2,000 students participating in the college, generating about 2.7 million, which was complemented with 2.7 million from the participating colleges.

When we started in the 2017-'18 academic year, we had about 4,600 students enrolled. And that number has gone down. And so has the 38 participating colleges that we had in 2019-2020, which at that time was about 38 colleges. That number has gone down to, this year, being 27, while the previous year was 32, and prior to that was 35. So there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of participating colleges, and that has resulted in a smaller number of students benefiting from the program.

SENATOR STAVISKY: That's what I suspected.

I want to have enough time to ask you this question. Last Wednesday the Queens Senate delegation held a public forum for people to come and testify about the budget on any subject they wished. It was held at Borough Hall. And somebody whom I've known for many years from Queens College came and testified about the Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary program, known as CTP. And it's a certificate for students with intellectual disabilities. And apparently last February they had a Zoom with somebody named Dr. Mock, Chris Rosa from -- who was then at CUNY, and Steve Kleinberg, who's the one who asked at our little budget forum about that program.

There are quite a few who are eligible for Pell, approximately 50 or so people. But not everybody is eligible for TAP. And the cost would -- to include these CTP program people would be approximately 250,000 to $300,000, and that's a rough estimate. Would HESC be able -- since we are concerned about students with disabilities, and Steve

Kleinberg represents the students with disabilities at CUNY and at Queens College, would it be possible for HESC to absorb that cost in its budget?

If you'd like to get back to me, that's fine. I just wanted to raise that issue.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: First of all, thank you for bringing that to our attention.

A preamble to receiving TAP is receiving Pell. So, you know, one of the things that we have to look at is at what -- specifically whether those students meet the criteria, and especially when we're talking about students with needs.

So we'd be glad to follow up with you and also to take a closer look into it.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Apparently there are nine federally approved programs in the state. And the cost truly would be minimal, and it would be very beneficial to students with disabilities.

One last question. The DREAM Act was one of the first bills that we reported out

of Higher Education when we took the Majority. How is that going? Are students utilizing it? What are the -- you know, how do you see it progressing?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, thank you again for asking. As I had indicated with chairwoman Fahy, the program is going very, very well. We have maintained close relationships with the colleges where those students are participating. The network of nonprofit institutions that have always engaged, going back to the time when I was the original sponsor as an Assemblyman in 2011, they all are engaged in looking to bring support to the students beyond what they are doing now, that they receive some financial aid in college.

So this is a resounding success, I would say, given where we started, and I think the beneficiaries are all New Yorkers.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

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

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Thank you, Chairwoman. And thank you.

A couple of questions. I wanted to dig into part-time TAP a little bit. I know we're waiting for more numbers; it sounded like it was around 7,000 right now.

Also would love to get a sense -- and maybe you don't have it quite yet. I mean, are these people that are getting full -- like has there been a formula that's been figured out that matches the part-time -- or that matches the full-time TAP so that people get a scale depending on what they qualify for?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: The part-time students are attending as low as six credits and up to 11.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: And the formula would be based on that and their income?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes. The income is based on the top figures that we have.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Right, percentages.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: So we fully expect that number to multiply. Right now we're just waiting for the colleges to certify and send them our way. And once we have those numbers, that data, we'll be happy to provide it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: But there would be some of them that would be getting their full part-time tuition paid, and some who are only getting partial tuition paid.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: All part-time students will be attending part-time.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Right. I'm just saying what percentage of their tuition they are paying would vary as well. Some are getting that full -- the full amount for part-time --

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Okay. Thank you. I'd love to see those numbers when they come out.

One of the questions I have, and it

came up when we were talking with SUNY, is about TAP compared to Excelsior. Is it hurting that TAP's income threshold for eligibility hasn't been raised to at least Excelsior? I mean, it hasn't been raised in a couple of decades, and we know it is probably one of our most successful programs, as you've heard.

I mean, does it seem that it would make sense to have those programs be a little more in line with each other?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, I'm glad you mentioned Excelsior because, you know, when we look at the universe of students that we are able to cover, especially those with low income -- but there are, because of the threshold of income, there are -- Excelsior comes into really fill the gap between those who don't get any financial aid because they are over the TAP limit, but it goes up to 125,000 now.

So right now we know that at the federal level it's at 50 -- has 50,000. We are at 100,000. So we are much better off

with the students -- we're much more generous.

But I think the Legislature will have to address that along with the Governor.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

To the Senate.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Joe Griffo, five minutes.

SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you, Chairwoman.

Thank you, Dr. Linares, for being here today.

To follow up on that, there are many people talking about increasing the TAP award because it hasn't been done in 23 years, and making potentially an additional 24,000 families eligible. So do you support this eligibility increase? Can the system sustain the increase? And should the minimum award be increased?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, I basically implement all of the programs that are approved and passed by the Legislature,

along with the Governor.

Obviously the reason why we have an Excelsior is because, you know, many families are not able to get that support from TAP because, obviously, of the limit there is. And so more students benefit from that, and families.

But it's really up to the Legislature along with the Governor to address that. And obviously the more the merrier when it comes to providing students financial aid. I think, given the challenges that we have of the day when we look at SUNY, CUNY, and private colleges and universities, and also what we need to do at K-12 -- which excites me now that I see emphasizing, on the part of the Governor, investing in early college and also in early childhood education and kindergarten -- all of those are able to increase the pipeline to college and give us greater benefits, in addition to the non-credential degrees that we're pursuing.

SENATOR GRIFFO: So with expanded TAP and support for part-time students at both

the degree-seeking programs and non-degree training programs at the community colleges, have you seen that have a noticeable impact on TAP utilization?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: There would definitely be in the decline that we have in college, especially two-year colleges. The expansion of TAP, but also focusing a lot, like the Governor has decided to invest $20 million in Early College and P-TECH programs, in expanding that, I think that that would go a long way in helping prepare and align students to enter college, whether they're going for a degree or nondegree -- and that's where part-time comes into play now in a big way.

I think all of those efforts are extremely beneficial, and I think we also need -- and if I take a moment to just say, what I heard earlier today from the two chancellors and I heard from the commissioner of Education -- I know the three of them. In fact I went to -- I did my master's with the commissioner at City College. I know them

well. But we need to do a different type of realignment with the challenges of the day, which I'm excited about, knowing both chancellors and the private schools and everybody else, but especially the two large systems that we have, with K-12, so that we can really have efforts to a pipeline that will get students to get to college, whether for degree or nondegree. And at the end of the day they will learn a job, whether they have a degree or they have a credential for it.

That's what we need to really get across, and clear the air to do that. I'm prepared to work closely with that, pushing forward the Governor's initiative within this budget.

SENATOR GRIFFO: In 2010 the Graduate TAP was eliminated for New York students, so many think that if we reestablished a program like that and focus it on some of the high-needs fields right now -- nursing, education, STEM -- that could address some of the workforce shortage issues and helping

students in need of that type of assistance.

Would you agree that something like that should be reintroduced and supported?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I think the key is going to be in those critical areas of needs, whether you talk about teaching or the health field, and we need to be laser-focused on those.

But we also need to make sure that in the private sector there is alignment there for -- so that students know that when they are finishing with their degree or credential, there is something waiting for them there, and that's the motivation. And that's what I think we need to continue to focus on. And I'm excited about the way that the Governor is really approaching it.

SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Ra, five minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Good afternoon, Dr. Linares.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: So I'm going to ask you about a program that I believe I've asked you about a number of times in the past, and, you know, you've been kind enough to provide information to our office if you didn't have it with you. It's two programs that are designed to help with I think a sector that we need people going into, and that's the Child Welfare Work Incentive Scholarship and the Child Welfare Worker Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program.

So after the hearing last year you had provided some numbers to our office in terms of how many people have been applying to these programs. So I'm just wondering if you have them or if you could provide for us updated numbers for 2021 of these number of students who applied for either of those -- each of those programs.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We have it to provide you with those numbers.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. Do you know --

I know from 2020, from the information you provided last year, there was -- on the loan forgiveness program there wasn't currently funding to open it to any new applicants. Do you know if the program was able to take on new applicants in 2021?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I missed your beginning of the question.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: You had indicated that in 2020 there wasn't funding available to -- for any new applicants to come into the loan forgiveness program. Do you know if there was money available for any new applicants in 2021?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: You're not referring to the STEM program --

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: No, the -- this same -- the Child Welfare Worker Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: No, I would have to look into that specifically and then get back to you.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. And then the last thing, just regarding that topic, you

know, as I said earlier, I think this is a sector that needs people wanting to go into it. We've talked a lot about finding ways to retain people, finding ways to have incentives, so I think these are good programs. And they've been kept at a $50,000 each level for a number of years.

And I think -- you know, I look forward to getting updated data from you, but I think the data shows that maybe if we put a little bit more into them we might have more of an opportunity to recruit workers into these fields. So I look forward to working with you on that and trying to recruit people into a sector that needs people willing to do that work. It's difficult work, but it's rewarding work.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah. We're limited by how much allocation is there to -- in those particular areas. But we're happy to work with you, and hopefully we can expand.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

I think it's just me. How are you, Dr. Linares? So people are calling you Assemblymember Linares, but some of them know you from when you were a councilmember before either of us hit Albany.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So we're going back a long time.

So I know you know that I was going to ask you this question, and I think you were here when I was asking the commissioner of Education.

So there are apparently 52 -- or at least in 2020 there were 52 yeshivas getting TAP funds for -- I'm sorry, for approximately 5,000 students -- excuse me, 7388 students.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Seven thousand two hundred.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So tell me, because the Department of Education wasn't really clear, how does it work? Does TAP supposedly work exactly the same way with

these schools as it does for other schools?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes. As I explained before to the chairwoman, the way TAP is made available to any school is based on a number of criterias. And those criteria include you having the ability to receive aid at a federal level, based on Chapter IV. You also have to be accredited by an accrediting institution recognized by the Department of -- the State Education Department. You have to be able to receive Pell.

And only after all of those fall into place, then the school -- you know, the students attending that school will receive TAP.

The 52 schools that you're mentioning are -- receive about 7,200, roughly aid -- TAP assistance. And for the students -- for those schools that there is also -- when we talk about the schools that you're referring to, the 52, there are also requirements that they must meet in order for them as accredited schools, in order for whatever credits are earned by those students, that

those credits are transferable to other schools that the students go.

So that -- those are the criterias that lead for schools to receive, but that's across the board that we follow with any school that receives TAP.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So does HESC do the review of these schools' credentials and qualifications to be eligible to receive TAP? Or does SED?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: No, I believe in earlier testimony by the commissioner she referred to the process where there is -- if there are questions about where any school may be in terms of those qualifications that are mandated, they come into question, then there's a process that the state has, that the commissioner of Education has, to look into and hold accountable, so -- to see that they are met.

And if they are not, then they're closed, as she indicated for 26 schools.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So first the school asks you and then you pass them along

to SED? Or the school knows they must first get through the SED process before the evidence can be submitted to HESC to approve TAP? What's the order?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, we -- we work with all of the schools that certify the students, and we look to make sure that all of the requirements that we must observe, along with other partners -- and then should there be questions about the process, I think that what kicks in the department -- the State Education Department that looks into anything that may be missing in the process.

So the question, I would say, is that for students who may have been in a school that may have closed, obviously the student, when the student moves to another school, then obviously we will look, you know, to make sure that if that student is entitled to financial aid, that the financial aid goes with the student.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And the school has to be degree-granting?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I'm sorry?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: The institution has to be an institution that provides a degree?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: It needs to be an institution that is accredited, and it needs to be an institution that provides an accredited program for no less than three years. So that is another -- that is another area or another specific thing that the school must provide.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And are you going to be able to provide me a list of the names and addresses of those 52 institutions?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Happy to share it with you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. Thank you.

I don't think I have any other questions.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we go to Assemblyman Eachus.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just to work off what Senator Krueger was asking you, I'm going to make a statement

and you can tell me whether it's correct or not: Students that receive TAP must go to accredited schools and those schools must have credits that can transfer to other institutions.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: (Inaudible.)

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Is that a correct statement? Again, I'll repeat it so that I stay within my time.

That students who receive TAP must go to accredited schools and those schools must have credits that can transfer to other institutions.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: When I referred to that specific statement, it was in relationship to a set of schools that the Senator, the chair was asking.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, but --

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: But -- yeah, when you are attending an accredited school in the State of New York, it means that those credits are transferable.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay. That's --

I just wanted to make sure I heard it. It was quite lengthy. And I'm sure Senator Krueger thanks you for your answers; so do I.

I really have one question. You talked about the HESC money going to, you know, county or state correctional facilities, incarcerated folks. Does the corporation have any responsibility for encouraging colleges or other institutions to participate at the correctional institutions?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, let me just share with you the registration process began last fall. And I'm happy to share that within this week, within days, we will have an online process available that would allow students to be registered.

The reason is simple -- that, you know, if we go back to the Dreamers, incarcerated individuals have no access to the internet, they have no phone, they have no way of communicating. So registering is not an easy thing. We have to address that.

So we have been working very hard with the New York Consortium for Higher Education,

who have been working with us to help delineate an easier way to register those students.

So we are -- we think it's a great benefit for students to be able to have an opportunity to get an education --

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: I do too. And I'll just stay within my time. What I was looking more for is encouraging colleges or institutions to participate in these programs.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I believe that the greatest encouragement is that finally we are providing financial aid for those students and that over 30 programs that we have with about 60 different colleges that have this type of program offering to about 40 correctional facilities. Now that they have this incentive, more colleges, I believe, will step up to really be part of this initiative.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate, any?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: The Senate is

complete.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We have three additional Assemblymembers. So we go first to Assemblywoman Seawright.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you, Chair Weinstein.

And it's good to see you. Good afternoon.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: I commend the Governor's proposal to increase TAP funding for part-time students. However, students with disabilities have yet again been left out.

So would you support TAP for students with disabilities?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I believe that when we talk about TAP, TAP is for all students, including students with disabilities. And if there are any impediments for those opportunities for students, then they need to be addressed.

So, you know, when we think about this

expansion of TAP, it needs to include all students that could benefit from this.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Including part-time students with disabilities.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Next we go to Assemblywoman Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you, Dr. Linares. Always good to see you.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Same here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Doubling down on Chair Fahy's question about the recoupment of TAP funds. When a school closes, like in the case of the proprietary college that's going through trouble now, and the steps that you delineated that a school has to be recognized by the USDOE, has to be accredited, has to have Pell and then receive TAP -- at what point when the USDOE puts a school on for like heightened cash monitoring, which means something is wrong, they're slowing down the disbursements, at what point does HESC get involved with

auditing the school to stop the TAP money that is usually given in the financial aid package to a student? Number one.

And as far as TAP audits, like how many TAP audits of higher education institutions has TAP done in the last year or so? I ask because I knew when schools got a TAP audit it was like almost closure, because having to find that money instantly to pay back the state was a lot.

So where does -- at what point does HESC say a school's been put on heightened cash monitoring, we have to now intercede? When does that happen? And how does the state get its money back?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, there is a mechanism that the state has in place whenever there are issues or questions about a given school, which was described by the commissioner earlier today when she referred to the 26 schools that have been closed.

So our job is to really make sure that the students that are entitled to receive the financial aid do get it. When the process

that unfolds with questions about any particular school comes into play, that's when we then can take note to address that. But we do that in concert with the process that unfolds, which is under the purview of the State Education Department.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: So a school has lost their accreditation, the USDOE says, Okay, we're going to slow down your process. That's when HESC would jump in and say, We're going to get involved in the process too?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, the process basically dictates what position we take. And obviously when we have students that were attending that particular school, then we will have to look -- in the same way that the State Education Department does, and with any institution that comes into question. Because we have to look and safeguard, you know, the well-being of the student; in this case, the financial aid that they're entitled to.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay, thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

And our final questioner is Assemblyman Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: First of all, I want to thank you for all you've done for New York. And I really appreciate your leadership here on HESC.

How many people have applied for Excelsior this year?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: The last recording year, '21-'22, we had close to 30,000 students applying.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And how many were eligible?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Actually, 30,000 were receiving the scholarship.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So how many people applied?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: And in the previous year --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Yeah.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: In the previous three years, roughly about 36,000 students applied, and about half of

them received the scholarship. Which is consistent with TAP.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So about 36,000 applied, about half received it?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Half of them -- half of the 36,000 received Excelsior.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And of the ones who didn't receive the Excelsior, did those students attend New York schools?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: All of them. I mean --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: But they didn't get Excelsior. Did those students continue to attend New York schools, the ones that didn't get Excelsior?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: The students that did not receive --

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Yeah.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: That's a question that I will have to look into that and get back to you.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So could you get that information? I'd like to know, if we're

turning people down, what happens to them.

The same thing with the DREAM Act. How many people applied for the DREAM Act last year, do you know?

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We're -- you know, we can -- we're still sorting those -- remember, the DREAM started and then we had the pandemic and so forth.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Understandable.

It would be great to know how many people applied and then how many people actually got it, and then what happened to the people who didn't get it.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah. The same question could be asked for the TAP recipients who applied. Fifty percent get it, so 50 percent don't get it.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And what happens to those people? Because we're seeing a crisis in our higher ed because we're seeing less people now attending our schools. But if we're turning people down for TAP or Excelsior and they don't go to our schools, we need to know why we turned them down and

what barriers we put in front of them to prevent them from getting TAP and Excelsior.

It would be great to also know the number of students who have applied for extended TAP because they've run out. Not everyone gets to be finished in college in four years. And I know I've heard from students who have said they needed additional TAP and requested additional TAP but were denied additional TAP. Great to know that data as well.

Because I think we're hearing from our institutions that we're running out of students, but then we're also turning down students who could attend our schools.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I think you asked the million-dollar question, which needs answers in multiple places. And that's why I say the answer has to be looking especially at our two large systems that we have, SUNY and CUNY, and we have to look at the Department of Education, but we also need to look at the Legislature along with the Governor.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I look forward to seeing those in writing, those answers. Thank you.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

President Linares, there are no further questions for you. Thank you for being with us today.

HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you very much for the opportunity.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Look forward to continued conversations.

So now we start the portion of the hearing that is the nongovernmental portion. And all of the witnesses from now on are in panels, so our first panel which is listed on the witness list is Panel B: Professional Staff Congress - CUNY, James Davis, president; Faculty Federation of Erie Community College, Andrew Sako, president; United University Professions, Frederick Kowal, president; New York State University Police Lieutenants Benevolent Association, James McCartney, director; and GSEU-SWA 1104,

Andrew Dobbyn, state president.

So just as a reminder, you each have three minutes to make your presentation. After the time -- after all of you have presented, then there will be opportunity for individual members to ask questions.

And again, members, it's three minutes to both ask the question and to have the answer. So please leave time for the panel members to answer.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Hi, there. I'm going to start with my left, your right, and just run down. And if you'd introduce yourself first.

MR. McCARTNEY: I'm James McCartney.

MR. DOBBYN: Andrew Dobbyn.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay.

MR. SAKO: Andrew Sako.

DR. DAVIS: James Davis.

DR. KOWAL: Fred Kowal.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you so much.

Starting from my left.

MR. McCARTNEY: Good evening. Let

me --

DR. KOWAL: It's still afternoon.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You thought it was going to be evening.

(Laughter.)

MR. McCARTNEY: Good. It's pretty close.

Good afternoon. My name's James McCartney, and I'm director of the New York State University Police Lieutenants and president of the PBA of New York State. I've had the honor of serving as a New York State University police officer for 23 years.

In this session, pension parity is our number-one priority. Our members work under an outdated and uncompetitive 25-year retirement, while 96 percent of police and firefighters receive a 20-year pension. Governor Hochul has twice vetoed your pension parity bills, and we are asking you to include the 20-year in your one-house bills to force the issue during budget negotiations.

As police officers, we are acutely aware of the dangers in modern society, including on our campuses. Just last week a Temple University police officer was murdered while serving the community he loved, and there was also a mass shooting at Michigan State University where three students lost their lives and many more were wounded.

In the past two years, officers were fired upon at a university hospital, a student was taken hostage at gunpoint at SUNY Brockport, and a number of illegal handguns were seized on campuses across the state. In 2021 our officers saved the lives of 587 individuals through mental health custodial arrests and performed an additional 1400 welfare checks.

A major component of our community-centric policing is ensuring that we have diversity to reflect our campus communities. Approximately 20 percent of State University police officers are female, but we have a long way to go to achieve Governor Hochul's challenge of 30 percent

females by 2030.

In April we lost a highly qualified female officer to the Troopers, where she will receive higher pay and a 20-year pension. With the four upcoming Trooper academies it will be even more difficult to recruit female and diverse officers.

Competing police agencies constantly advertise they accept lateral transfers from New York State University police officers, largely because of our expertise in community policing and deescalation. Downstate we lost a black male lieutenant who accepted a demotion to go as a police officer to a neighboring agency that came with an instant $20,000 pay raise and a 20-year retirement and credit for prior service.

Over the past two years, we have lost 114 State University police officers, only 19 of which were due to retirements. Our former colleagues tell us the 25-year retirement is the leading reason for their departure.

Just last week, north of here, Saratoga County approved a 20-year retirement

for their sheriff deputies, realizing it was critical to retaining experienced officers.

While the projected cost of the 20-year retirement is $67 million, every officer that walks out the door represents approximately $120,000 lost in training and equipment costs for their first year of service, not to mention invaluable on-the-job experience.

For these reasons, we are respectfully requesting that the Legislature include our 20-year retirement in your one-house budgets for it to be included in the final state budget.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony, and I welcome any questions you may have.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

MR. DOBBYN: Hello, everyone. It's Groundhog Day at the Higher Ed Committee, because I'm here to testify about a thing I've testified about three or four times now, and probably at least 50 percent of you have either talked to me or someone else about

this issue.

And that issue, of course, is the insane prospect of having to pay between 8 to 20 percent of your income upfront to your employer in order to work. And that is the pay-to-work fee system, which myself and my members deal with as graduate assistants and graduate research assistants and graduate grading assistants within the SUNY system.

I'm the state president of the Graduate Student Employees Union. I represent approximately 5000 GAs, TAs, and RAs across the state, principally at the SUNY university centers, and we have a hand in a majority of the teaching or research that happens in the SUNY university center system.

Yet we make very little money. We are paid a small stipend in order to support ourselves, and that stipend is the only form of monetary income we are allowed to earn by contract because our employment forbids us from seeking outside employment. And on top of that, we have to pay back large percentages of our income in order to be

eligible as students. And this is because while tuition remission is part of our pay package, fee remission is not.

Now, we have fought through grassroots organizing because the state has in the past refused to bargain with us over this issue, claiming it's a student issue and not an employment issue. And as a result we have won fee remission in various ways across the state, but we don't yet have a total package of fee elimination, fee abolition for our members.

And that's key. Because members at UAlbany are still paying fees, they are still paying a large percentage of their income in fees every year, and that is pushing them from on the brink of poverty to poverty. They are selling blood plasma, they are getting food out of dumpsters -- it is very, very bad.

And we are asking for a very small amount of money in the broad scheme of the SUNY budget, really -- $10 million to effectively get people out of poverty, allow

the people who do the backbone of teaching and research in this system to actually not have to worry about where their next meal is going to come from so that they can teach and do the research that's necessary to drive New York's economy and to educate the next generation.

So I urge you all to vote for Senator Stavisky's bill that eliminates fees, make sure it gets into the one-house budget on both the Senate and the Assembly sides. And, yeah, it's passed through the one-house several times. We have faith that this time that the Governor's side will support it. So please get it in the one-house. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

MR. SAKO: Hi. Chairman Krueger and honorable members of the Legislature, I am Andrew Sako. I'm president of the Faculty Federation of Erie Community College, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I would like to thank you for your continued advocacy on behalf of higher

education. I truly believe that your work saved community colleges by establishing a floor and hold-harmless language to support a myriad of programs at every community college. And in particular, my home campus of ECC has benefited by your actions, so thank you.

The 2022-2023 enacted budget was a welcome change from the austerity budgets of the past. Unfortunately, one good year simply cannot erase the years of damage of cuts and flat budgets. We must reaffirm the role public higher education plays in society and stand up for a just, well-funded and inclusive system.

NYSUT is calling for significant state investment in New York's community colleges. Without proper state investment, community colleges are left with no good situations and are either forced to raise tuition or eliminate programs and student services, neither of which are good for enrollment.

Access to quality higher education is a critical component in the state's effort to

recruit and retain businesses and industries. Our community colleges help fulfill that need and provide affordable, high-quality education.

Notwithstanding the Legislature's commitment to the community colleges, the state funding is not commensurate with the State Education Law, which requires 40 percent operating costs be paid to these campuses.

To make matters worse, declining enrollments -- our funding continues to be based on a totally inadequate FTE reimbursement funding model. Also, there's a a troubling fact: Seeing preemptive fiscal belt-tightening by community college administrators has impacted potential enrollment at places like SUNY Erie.

Accordingly, we are asking the Legislature to continue to hold harmless base aid of 100 percent allocated -- allocated from the 2019-'20 year, or a 3250-per-FTE. This would give community colleges an additional 23 million over the

proposed Executive Budget.

This is an investment. This investment would guarantee that the organizations are still recognizable and will still help us attract students.

We also want to make sure students are successful, and we want to bring programs like the ASAP program that CUNY has. Every tax dollar invested at SUNY and CUNY yields even greater returns to the tax base.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Mr. Davis?

DR. DAVIS: Good afternoon, Senate Chairpersons Krueger and Stavisky. Thank you to all of the members of the Senate and Assembly who have convened this meeting.

I am James Davis. I'm president of the Professional Staff Congress. That's the union that represents 30,000 faculty and staff at the City University of New York.

I want to say that, first of all, the PSC is very grateful for the support for CUNY in last year's budget -- holding community

colleges harmless, funding the hiring of full-time faculty, expanding mental health services, supporting childcare centers, expanding TAP to part-time and incarcerated individuals. These all helped a university that was reeling from a terrible pandemic, and your determination to invest more in CUNY is critical to reviving a budget that saw public funding decline long before the pandemic.

You have my written testimony, so I just want to focus on three areas in the time that I have today. One, how wise an investment CUNY is. You probably know this already, but I am going to say it anyway.

The second thing is what the PSC's funding priorities are for this cycle.

And then last, if time permits, I want to talk about the really acute issue in this moment of the budget gaps that currently exist and the university's response to those budget gaps.

So first, on the point of being a wise investment, CUNY is an economic engine for

New York State throughout good times and bad. We know CUNY is a catalyst for the state economy, and it should be understood as a sound investment. In 2019 alone, CUNY graduates earned $57 billion in total and paid 4.2 billion in state taxes, according to the New York City Comptroller's Office report.

And support for CUNY isn't just fiscally responsible, it's widely embraced across the political spectrum -- 95 percent of Democratic and 79 percent of Republican voters in New York State favor increasing public higher education funding, according to a recent Hart Research survey.

In terms of the PSC'S funding priorities for this year, you have them in my written testimony. We're really seeking additional funding for full-time faculty hires; $82 million to cover mandatory cost increases -- these aren't discretionary points of spending, they're commitments that the university has already made -- enhanced academic advisement and mental health

counseling services; a community college funding floor, as my colleague Andy just mentioned; and also, we are seeking additional support for graduate education.

I wanted to mention something about the budget gaps that persist today. You know, last year the Legislature and the Governor came together to do an amazing thing, which was to close the TAP gap, but our systems are still reeling from a decade in which the TAP gap increased tenfold.

And I'll wind up just by saying as a result, right now our university administration has demanded severe austerity cuts from each of our colleges in order to save an additional $100 million over the 75 million from fiscal '23.

I'll be glad to follow up with any questions that you may have, and thank you again for the opportunity to present.

DR. KOWAL: Chairperson Krueger, Chairperson Stavisky, thank you on behalf of the 37,000 members of United University Professions. I am honored to present to you

the testimony that I believe gets to the points that are really urgent this year more than ever.

My name's Dr. Fred Kowal, and as president of UUP this is now my tenth year testifying on the budget facing SUNY. And really, I can't put into words the level of appreciation my members have for each and every one of you in the Higher Ed committees and in the Ways and Means and Finance committees because of your staunch support for the work that my members do -- my colleagues do.

This time around, I believe that given the fact that our state has an $8.6 billion surplus, the resources are there to address longstanding issues.

You have my written testimony. I want to draw your attention to a couple of important areas, and I'll reference that testimony a couple of times.

First, as you know, over last year's budget and this year's proposed budget we did see the Governor propose some increases, and

they are necessary and they will bear fruit, undoubtedly. However, if you look at Figure 1 on page 3 of my testimony, you will see that from state fiscal year 2008-2009 to the current state fiscal year, when adjusted for inflation, there has been a decline in direct state support of over $7.8 billion to the state operation of campuses.

Moreover, if you just focus on 19 campuses in the SUNY system, 19 campuses, they face a cumulative structural deficit of $160 million. This is what happens when you have, as we had under the previous gubernatorial administration, an aggressive program to cut and strangle the institutions of both SUNY and CUNY.

The steps that you took last year in conjunction with the Executive were helpful, but it is imperative this year that a concerted effort be made to eliminate this $160 million budget gap that exists at 19 of the campuses. In fact, if you look at those campuses that -- where our members work, in fact there's only six that are not facing a

deficit. So this is crucial.

Second, on the SUNY hospitals, once again we need a commitment to take care of long-term issues of underfunding. These are hospitals that are the hospitals of first and last resort in communities of color, where they can get healthcare nowhere else, while also these are teaching hospitals where the next generation of a diverse set of professionals are trained to fill the ranks that we desperately need.

I thank you for the time I've been allotted. I look forward to answering questions on my testimony.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

Our first questioner will be Chair Toby Stavisky, three minutes.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Real quick. I hope you heard the testimony of the two chancellors from SUNY and CUNY. Does anybody have any reaction to what they testified to?

DR. KOWAL: My first reaction is I welcome the fact that at various stages in

his testimony Chancellor King referenced the need for resources that are absolutely necessary.

Where I would disagree is his endorsement of increased tuition. Not only is it an issue of tuition, it is also an issue of fees, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels. And the reality is that when you look at issues like enrollment, tuition does dissuade students from attending, but even more so, research shows that a lack of public investment in public universities curtails enrollment.

We've got the studies, I cited them in my testimony. That needs to be addressed.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Anybody else?

DR. DAVIS: Senator, if I could add to that. Thank you for the question.

Actually, I missed most of the chancellor's testimony because we were holding a contract rally right outside of his office this morning.

(Laughter.)

DR. DAVIS: That also explains why my

voice is really hoarse. We went to CUNY Central at 7:30 because our contract expires tomorrow, and I know our colleagues are negotiating their contract too.

So -- but I want to echo what Fred said, which is, you know, at the PSC we support additional public revenue for the university, which for us means not additional student tuition.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

MR. SAKO: If I might just say something on behalf of the community colleges, the FTE funding that he mentioned, they mentioned that they don't have a crystal ball, and they don't want to really look at it. And we need stable funding. And it should not be based on enrollment. And I think that's really killing us, and we are dying on the vine.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

MR. DOBBYN: And just to jump in, there is a definite need for investment in CUNY and SUNY.

I think there's also a need for some

oversight as to where that money is going and how is it being spent. Because in many instances you have situations where the wage bill of the high-level administrators on various campuses is larger than my membership. And my membership do a lot of the teaching and the research.

And to be perfectly honest, if a number of associate deans disappeared tomorrow, I don't think anybody would notice except the people who work in their offices. And that's an issue.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

MR. McCARTNEY: I have one thing, in how the chancellor addressed our 20-year retirement. He fully supports it, and I just want to thank you all for fully supporting it also.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

Assemblymember Clark.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: A quick question.

So I want to go to the community college a little bit. We've all had the same

conversation earlier with the chancellor about the formula, needing stable funding. The floor, maybe plus four, would be great.

What would the 20 percent holdback do, and why is it not something that really would work in this situation and --

MR. SAKO: Well, holding anything back would really hurt our community colleges, in my opinion. And I really believe that we need the money, and we need to be able to provide the services.

And the most important thing about the services are the wraparound services for advisement for our financial aid, and all of those types of services that are being cut. And those are the areas that we really need to help them, so --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Yes, I would agree. It doesn't make sense.

A question -- and a couple of you may be able to answer it. But particularly in our financially distressed campuses, the fact that operating has really not been invested in for decades. There's been a lot of

austerity around funding for SUNY and all of our public colleges, CUNY.

If we don't fix that piece of it, if we don't really put the dollars in it -- which we all, I think, agree that it can't be done on the backs of our students and tuition hikes on their families. If we don't do it, though, what will continue to happen?

I mean, we are all fighting this enrollment battle. Isn't it going to have the exact opposite effect of what we're trying to do? Because there won't be the professors, there won't be the faculty, there won't be the classrooms. You know, there won't be the operating dollars to do the things to provide the classes and the services that the students need.

DR. KOWAL: Well, I would begin by asserting, and I think it is more than an assertion, and that is that funding a public university system on the private money of students is totally unsustainable. This is a public university system, and by its nature you need to have public investment.

What we see also is that where investment doesn't occur, what we don't do as institutions is reach large sections of students that would address the enrollment crisis. Fully 60 percent of African-American students who graduate from high school in this state do not attend institutions of higher education. Among Hispanics, it's 35 percent.

So you're talking about huge swaths of our population that don't even consider higher education. And it is clear it's because of the overall costs. And so there is a large percentage of the population that can get tapped into.

The only other point I would make -- when we talk about the distressed campuses, I want to focus on Buffalo State. At Buffalo State the enrollment of African-American students is at 30 percent. That's well above the statewide average for the enrollment at institutions. We need to address the funding there. It's one of the worst campuses in terms of its financial situation because of

the austerity you talked about.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Thank you.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you very much.

I'll take my three minutes right now, if you don't mind.

You know, I think we spoke a lot with the chancellors earlier and they were very positive, but they didn't really answer the whole 60/40 traditional balance between SUNY and CUNY.

Last year CUNY put forth a very good proposal, the New Deal for CUNY. This year both of you got together, and we're now calling it the New Deal for Public Higher Education; is that correct? So both UUP and PSC are on board with maintaining a 60/40 balance? Parity, shall we call it?

DR. DAVIS: I understand that that's been the historic practice. I happen to note that in the Governor's Executive Budget that even that historic practice has not been observed, and so I would just urge the committees to restore it.

To restore it, and also I think SUNY

deserves every bit and so -- not to cut the SUNY budget in the process as well.

Thank you.

DR. KOWAL: Senator, I think that both systems are so vitally important. And as you know, they've been harmed terribly, I hope not irreparably, by the austerity budgeting. I think that where SUNY's costs skew the overall ratio are in the teaching hospitals, because we have to remember too that not only are the hospitals treating patients and, in the case of Downstate, overwhelmingly Medicaid patients --

SENATOR LIU: Yeah, I mean, you know, SUNY has some parts that CUNY doesn't have commensurate responsibilities, and CUNY has other needs that SUNY doesn't necessarily have. So we're trying to maintain that 60/40.

And I guess, James, what you're saying is that if SUNY's getting an additional $1 billion, you shouldn't take anything away from SUNY; the state budget should just add another, what, $667 million for CUNY so that

it can maintain the 60/40 parity.

DR. DAVIS: Yes, for a start.

SENATOR LIU: That's all. Okay.

My last question, just for the two of you, is that last year we put in a substantial amount of additional money for the purposes of both CUNY and SUNY hiring additional full-time faculty, with a preference towards adjuncts filling those positions.

The chancellors seemed to have indicated that they have done so and made a lot of progress. Would you concur?

DR. DAVIS: I'll start on that one. Thank you for the question.

I think that the attention to hire current adjunct faculty was partially successful, and I'm very proud of the work that the union did to make sure that that happened as well.

Part of the issue, though, is that we lost so many full-time faculty over such a stretch of time that there's a way in which even that 53 million for each system, at

least as far as CUNY goes, is backfilling. We lost almost 800 faculty, as I indicated in my testimony, through attrition and retirement over the span of approximately four years through the pandemic.

So there's still a lot of work to be done on that front.

SENATOR LIU: All right. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Assemblywoman Seawright.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

I would like to address my questions to State President Dobbyn of the CWA. Can you elaborate on the pay-to-work system? What are the average stipends? What kind of work are union members doing? What's it like across the different campuses? How many people does it impact?

MR. DOBBYN: Yes. So the way the system came about was that fees were an insignificant part of your kind of semi-tuition bill pretty much everywhere, and then with the creation of the SUNY 2020 kind of plan, you know, way back in the long, long

ago, you had no differential tuition but you had fees that the university centers could charge.

And initially this wasn't addressed in the contract because it was a small amount of money, we had like a little fee mitigation fund, and that was fine.

The issue was that fees then began to grow at a level that sometimes doubled or even trebled inflation, and they began to then be based on increases on a base rate that was already very high. And so up until about two years ago, before we won some of our most recent victories, we had people across the state, all 5,000 of our members, paying something like $2,000 a year.

Now we've won significant relief on various campuses, but we now have a system where basically on campuses like Albany, everyone is paying. On campuses -- at Binghamton, if you're a Ph.D. supported by your program but not by a different office, you are not paying. But if you're a Ph.D. of pharmacology, you are paying, because

somebody in President Stenger's office decided that pharmacology Ph.D.s weren't real Ph.D.s.

Again, it's the issue of that -- because these are piecemeal solutions, they've gotten very strange, and there's no uniformity or equity to them.

In terms of our base stipends, it ranges. But I would say generally $20,000 is a good sense of what we would get. Some places it's much lower, some places it's a bit higher, but that's a good sense.

So, yeah, on a base rate you're paying about 10 percent. Sometimes you're paying more than that because your stipend's less, you're paying 15, sometimes even 20 percent. And again, we are the -- sort of the instructional and research backbone of the SUNY system.

And again, these fees are really just table stakes for making the SUNY system more competitive at attracting graduate student employees, which is key because the entire bottom part of the academic labor pool from

post-docs to adjuncts to non-tenured lecturers to graduate students, they've all left. Because we all got the message. We were all told something, which was get out, we're not going to pay you anything. So everybody got out after the pandemic.

And so now there's a shortage of basically every kind of lower-level academic worker around.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

Senator Webb.

SENATOR WEBB: I couldn't tell if it was on.

Good afternoon, thank you all for being here. So, you know, we have heard throughout the hearing today there's a lot of issues around pay disparity. So I wanted to open this question to Fred -- which, you know, a long time UUP member -- but also to other panelists. What else could we be doing to provide more financial resources for staff, also for graduate students? That's my first question.

And then my second question is for Mr. McCartney. With regards to -- I know at Binghamton University they have a Campus Citizen Review Board, and so one of my questions is, what is university police doing to foster better relations on college campuses, especially with underrepresented students and staff?

So those are my two questions.

DR. KOWAL: You should go first.

MR. McCARTNEY: I can't answer for Binghamton University specifically on that, but I can get back to you.

But for what we're doing as a whole -- community policing -- we're getting involved with all of the different clubs on campuses, we're engaging with them. I can tell you, where I work we do it all the time. And that gives us a better understanding what the students -- so they can come speak to us.

I mean, that's one main thing that we do, community policing, and it's just a major -- it's a major thing that the students look forward to, because they have somebody

they can talk to. A lot of times when students are in distress, they're looking for somebody to speak with, and we are the first people they see.

And when you open up a rapport with them, when you're doing little Ice Cream with a Cop, Coffee with a Cop, Donut with a Cop -- we do Gamings with Cops -- we schedule these at all the SUNY campuses just so we have a better rapport with all the students on campus.

SENATOR WEBB: Does that also entail that all of the campuses do have a campus citizen review board, or is it just at certain institutions?

MR. McCARTNEY: Binghamton is the first one that I've heard of. Just last year, I believe, they put that in place.

SENATOR WEBB: Okay. Thank you.

DR. KOWAL: Senator, in terms of pay disparity and so forth, I think that where it surfaces most is in the -- literally the shortage of professional staff. We're seeing it in IT across the state.

We are also obviously -- as the Governor herself said in her State of the State last year, that SUNY does not pay the salaries to attract and retain especially faculty and staff from underrepresented communities of color.

Third, I would again pivot back to the hospitals, where at Upstate they are spending $14 million a month to attract traveling nurses. And the reality is if salaries were offered to our members, we could grow the personnel numbers there and then there wouldn't be a shortage, while also training the next generation. So it's all-encompassing.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

Assemblymember Wallace.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALLACE: (Inaudible; mic off.) Oh, much better. Okay.

So first of all, I just said thank you for coming today, for your comments, and for all you do to really raise the bar in terms of making our higher education institutions the envy of the nation. And, you know, our

job is to try to help you do that.

I want to focus on a comment that Dr. Kowal made about the distressed campus funds. You mentioned that there's a critical need of 160 million for about 19 campuses. And most of those campuses are in communities that really rely upon those institutions -- I'm thinking places like Brockport, Fredonia, Geneseo, you mentioned Buff State. And, you know, they are really economic drivers as well as really cultural institutions in those communities. So that if they were to close, it would really devastate some of those communities, I believe.

And there's -- I mentioned earlier in the hearing when the chancellor was speaking that it really provides an opportunity to bring cultural and economic diversity to those communities that might not otherwise see it. You said, you know, 30 percent of individuals of color at Buff State and -- you know, I know there is a lot more diversity in the other campuses as well -- and it also provides an opportunity to showcase those

communities to people from other parts of the state who might never wind up going to -- being at Fredonia or Brockport or Geneseo.

I was wondering if you have ever seen or are aware of any report or studies showing what the economic impact of that 160 million would be, hypothetically, if we were to allocate that money.

DR. KOWAL: Thanks very much.

And I think the formula that is -- or the multiplier effect that we're aware of is that it's $8 of economic activity generated for every $1 of public funding that goes into SUNY institutions.

And imagine in a community, as you said, like Brockport or Geneseo or Delhi or my hometown of Cobleskill, where this is the mill -- as it was said in the old days, we're a mill town. Well, it's the SUNY campus, that's what generates economic activity. It builds a middle class of faculty and professional staff who raise their families there, pay taxes.

When we talk about economic

development, if you want very rapid economic development and recovery from the past economic declines and to cushion a potential future one, invest in SUNY campuses. That's how you create stronger economies upstate literally instantly.

And so that's why it's worth it. Really, there's the urgency that I feel about this need.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALLACE: Thank you. I share your comments.

And in the last 15 seconds I also want to say, you know, I also share your concerns about raising tuition, because we really should be investing in public education, and I think we really are shooting ourselves in the foot when we do that because what we're doing is we're losing students that we otherwise would get and are really becoming less and less competitive.

So thank you.

SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

Assemblymember Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

I just want to second what Monica just said about tuition increases and losing students.

Do any of you have data about the students who are losing -- the students who had started but then dropped out? Do we have good data about why they left and -- because they're trying to -- obviously we're seeing a shrinking pool of students, and we want to stop that. But no one's telling us why they're leaving. Is it because they ran out of TAP? Is it because they needed more support and couldn't get it?

Like, what are you hearing from your members about why we are losing?

DR. DAVIS: Assemblymember, let me start. Thanks for the question.

What I have is mostly anecdotal, but I just want to point to one interesting data point, I think, which is, you know, the CUNY enrollment has been in sharp decline during the pandemic and was already in decline at the community colleges prior to the pandemic. But CUNY just published some data on the

Spring 2023 enrollment. And first of all, the overall story is interesting, because enrollment decline has slowed. It hasn't begun to bounce back yet in positive terms, except at the community colleges, where the year-over-year head count from Spring 2022 to Spring 2023 is actually up 1 percent.

So I think there is -- there may be something there in terms of your question about the demographics of the students who are returning. I think senior colleges at the CUNY system will follow, but that's only a small piece, I think, of what you're after.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I think we're trying to get to a nugget here. Like, we're losing people. We heard the CUNY chancellor say, Have we reached out to them? We picked up 16,000 students who dropped out, and now they're back in the system, but how do we keep them in the system?

And the one effort that we dropped, they picked up 16,000 students. If we did larger efforts, I assume there are more students, you know. And, I mean, I'm sure

our grad students are hearing why students are leaving. And again, I'll just -- we need to stop the fees, totally there. But I think we're looking for this data so we can actually do something. And I don't think anyone's sharing that data to help us figure out what to do.

MR. SAKO: If I might just jump in. At the community colleges, I think it's the wraparound services, it's the fact that the financial aid and the other offices are understaffed. And in many cases it may even be not so much the marketing, but -- the new students, they work, they have elder care, they have children, they have jobs and in some cases multiple jobs. They have transportation issues. They have food insecurity issues. These are all issues that are not being addressed.

And we as faculty try to address those with food banks and things of that nature at our institution, but again, those are some of the reasons why people are leaving. And also the tuition goes up a little bit, it drives

some students away. And I just think, you know, we're not doing them any service by raising tuition.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Any data you all have, I would love to see.

MR. SAKO: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Sorry, I have to cut you off.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assemblymember Eachus.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you, Chairwoman.

I don't know, you mentioned at least one of you, if not a couple of you, were not here earlier. I am a SUNY graduate, both in a bachelor and master's degree, very proud of that. I am also 40 years a high school teacher. So education needs all the funding it can get, without question.

I also want to thank all five of you for being able to survive COVID. That was my

one shot at teaching in a college, and I lasted one semester and I couldn't handle it anymore, so --

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: But I also was for 12 years an Orange County legislator, so just think county legislator. And we were always told that there should be a one-third, one-third, and one-third cut between the state, the county, and the tuition. And I'm certainly for that completely, but I question about we need a set budget every year, because I'm going to watch these SUNY and CUNY schools just absolutely explode with students. It's coming. Just hold your breath, it's coming.

And once -- if that happens in a particular year, aren't you going to be short-circuited if you have a set budget instead of basing it on the number of students?

MR. SAKO: Well, if you look at the -- first of all, thank you for the question.

If you look at community colleges, we

have -- in the years that we had the highest enrollment, the governor at the time cut us twice. And that's what started a lot of this stuff. So to say --

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Those times are over.

MR. SAKO: I'm just saying, and I always go back to that, that we got cut twice, and that's what started a lot of this dying on the vine.

You know, I think there has to be a discussion of the FTE reimbursement and how that affects colleges and community colleges, and if they go above a certain level there should be an accelerator. Obviously, we need more sections, that type of thing, that needs to occur.

But when you're talking about a flat number of faculty, all the costs that go along with that, I think you need to have a certain amount of money like we would in our own homes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: I understand that. And we just want to always be careful

about what we ask for, and make sure it's going to work not just short-term but long-term.

MR. SAKO: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: And also I'm very conscientious about the whole business of the loss of faculty and all that you had mentioned. I'm one of those, I got out. I retired, so I understand that.

But thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Pat Fahy.

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: How about "Assemblymember."

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: It has a nice ring to it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you, thank you, Senator.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: And I apologize, I had a call, a prearranged event, and had to miss some of the testimony here.

But -- and I -- it looks like a number of my questions were already answered. But I do just want to pick up on -- and maybe on the community college issue and the FTE, the way it is based.

But if you could just elaborate a little bit more on it, if you think we need to look at formula changes there, or what else we need to do to increase enrollment. And I am glad to see that generally there's small uptick, but we have a lot of work to do. And as you know, we spoke a lot this afternoon about what it's going to take at the secondary level as well to make sure that we turn this around.

But if you -- is the formula the correct formula as well. Either of you is fine, please.

MR. SAKO: The formula, I believe, is antiquated, and I do believe that there needs to be a funding level where we can continue to grow. There also needs to be an accelerator as the growth of enrollment needs to occur.

I don't have a particular one in mind, but what I'm saying is I do believe we need to come up with stable funding for community colleges and, had we been doing it at the 40 percent that open-enrollment campuses require over the last 50 years, we might not be in this situation.

And I'm not trying to throw anything at all of you. I really respect everything you've done for us in many, many years. But the funding has not been there, and that's really I think part of what has happened here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Okay. I think I got reduced on the minutes, so I'm going to be very brief there.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Everybody is three minutes when you get past the government --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Got it. Thank you.

Okay. I'll -- I talk fast, so that's fine.

Anything else that we should be doing

with regard -- across the board with regard to some of the distressed campuses and turning around this enrollment issue? And what else it might take in addition to the funding to stabilize the distressed campuses.

And again, this enrollment issue that I think is -- you know, the horizon doesn't look good with losing so many secondary students.

DR. KOWAL: Well, I think, you know, research has shown that when funding increases, enrollment increases. Not only that, retention improves. You need those wraparound services that Andy was speaking of a little while ago. We see the same thing in SUNY.

I saw it in my 25-plus years of teaching, students who, you know, had real capability of success and they do succeed in the EOP program. Which unfortunately the Governor once again has cut that budget, which makes no sense. But where we see those services in play, students succeed. And what we are desperately in need of is to reach

those students in the communities of color who have simply given up the entire concept of going to college.

We can reach them, we need to get them into school and to make them successful. And I think until we do that, we are going to get wrapped up in the idea that, well, it's demographic and there's nothing we can do about it. We need to get to those students and bring them --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You're welcome.

Thank you. All right, I believe the Senate and the Assembly are closed for this panel. I want to thank all of you gentlemen for coming and testifying.

I'm going to call up the next panel.

DR. KOWAL: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you to them, and I'm asking them to move out. And I'm inviting the next panel up, which includes the Association for Program Administrators of CSTEP and STEP; the

organization On Point for College; Fostering Youth Success Alliance; the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities; and the Liberty Partnership Program.

Is everybody in their seats? And everybody take your conversations outside so that we can politely listen to the next panel.

And why don't we start from my left, your right, and introduce yourself and then speak for three minutes. And we will just go down that way. Okay? Thank you.

DR. ALBA: Okay. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Dr. Renaldo Alba, representing the Association for Program Administrators of CSTEP and STEP. Thank you for having us, having me today, and for reading my testimony in advance.

I would like to say hello on behalf of the 121 CSTEP and STEP projects throughout New York State, representing 20,000 students. We have served for 37 years close to half a million students in STEP and CSTEP.

And where are we? Fifty percent of

our programs are in public institutions, 43 percent of our programs are in independent institutions, 17 percent of our STEP programs are in community colleges, 23 percent of our CSTEP projects are in community colleges.

Our programs are highly effective and efficient, and the Legislature has recognized this by investing in the growth of our network, for which we are grateful.

While increased allocations have allowed the network to expand by 21 new projects -- 2,000 CSTEP students, 860 STEP students -- over the two last years all projects, all projects, remain hobbled by an outdated and obsolete funding formula.

The current funding formula, devised in 2014, has failed to keep up with the costs to administer our programs in 2024. For context, in 2014 -- in 2015 hourly wages in New York State were $8.75. Today it is $14.20 statewide; in New York City it's $15, for context.

There's simply less money to cover programmatic expenses -- for example,

academic enrichment, instructional supplies. With both chancellors speaking about STEP -- STEM professions, that's exactly what we target. Technology supplies. Of course both chancellors spoke about internships and research and personnel expenses. The pandemic has created an extra layer of need for our middle school, secondary school students and undergraduates, CSTEP and STEP directors and staff, and their institutions.

These need to include food and housing insecurity, a reliance on students to work to offset expenses at home due to unemployment in families, increased requests for instructional and lab supplies, and increased requests of technology supports to meet the everyday demands of coursework.

Very simply, we need additional funding. We're requesting, respectfully, an increase of 20 percent. We understand that inflation rates -- things have changed. There are projections that you have in front of you that were submitted to you late in the fall.

We are the folks in the field. We are the firefighters. We are the wraparound services. I'm speaking from the trenches here to tell you that those projections have not taken a full accounting of how our students are in crisis. This is not a crisis of engagement, it's a student crisis that we strive to meet.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

And before you start, just a reminder for everyone, on the nongovernmental panels, which is where we are, everybody gets three minutes maximum to ask questions and let the panel answer. So it's a very almost lightning-round model.

All of your full testimony is up online for all of the members of the committees to see and read and all of the public to see and read. But whether you're a chair or this is your very first budget hearing, you all get three minutes.

Okay. And now I'll take it to the next panelist.

(Inaudible.)

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, what happened?

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: I think we're having some trouble with the timer.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh. Is the timer not working? Only the one up there's working? They can see it, we can't.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay. As long as they can see it, we're going to believe them. What I can see -- because I have a little one up here too.

All right, sorry to interrupt the flow.

MR. ROWSER: So I can talk as much as I want for three minutes?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Please.

(Laughter.)

MR. ROWSER: My name is Samuel Rowser. I'm executive director of On Point for College.

Thank you for this opportunity to talk with you about transforming lives and

communities by investing $500,000 in New York's future workforce.

Education is an effective pathway out of poverty, and 90 percent of the students who earn a bachelor's degree are lifted out of poverty, according to a Pew Charitable Trust study. Since On Point was founded in 1999, it's helped more than 3,000 students graduate from college. These graduates now earn more than they would had they only had a high school diploma, and over the course of their lifetime would earn over $3 billion which will be spent primarily in their communities.

And we're working now in Onondaga, Madison, Cayuga, Oswego, and Herkimer counties, and also a partnership in Manhattan and the Bronx.

On Point provides college access, college success, and career services to help adults 17 and up apply to and enroll in and persist at college through graduation while building skills in preprofessional experiences to help launch their careers.

We help to level the playing field for our students, low-income, first-generation students who face many challenges on their higher education journey. Without assistance, these challenges will be turned into barriers that leads them to stopping out and never attending college.

On Point takes hundreds of students each year to visit colleges throughout the State of New York. On Point helps with the financial aid process, provides some college supplies to students who complete our college orientation session, and provides transportation to any college in New York State using the corps of dedicated volunteers or bus tickets.

On Point partners with local dentists in our areas who do pro bono dental work. We provide winter coats, eyeglasses. On Point even partners with a local college and a housing agency so that our students that are at risk of being homeless or did have to face homelessness have a safe place to stay during the summer and winter breaks when the dorms

close.

We help students pay for textbooks, summer courses, outstanding bills that prevent them from reenrolling, housing deposits and fees when financial aid is unavailable or has run out.

An investment in On Point is also an investment in New York's higher education institutions. Seventy percent of our students, more than 2,400 enrolled students, are serving this semester attending public colleges across New York State. These students contribute over 23 million in tuition fees, room and board at community colleges.

Our On Point students persist at a rate of 74.3 percent -- that's 25 percent more than the first generation students persist at most of the community colleges our students attend. So in addition to students who have never been able to access college without On Point, 600 more students would have stopped out and had college debt and not be contributing over $5 million in tuition

fees and room and board to the community colleges that they attend.

Our students bring their TAP, their Pell awards, and their last-dollar grants to these colleges and to these campuses. If these students had not had On Point support, they would not have attempted to go to college at all.

These funds flow to campuses across New York State because of On Point's help. These students go and remain in college. Keep it On Point.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Next?

MS. BRABHAM: Good afternoon. My name is Lola Brabham, and I serve as the president of the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities.

CICU represents more than 100 private nonprofit colleges and universities across New York, and nearly 500,000 students -- more than half of which are New Yorkers. Our members award 58 percent of education

degrees, 61 percent of STEM degrees, and two-thirds of nursing degrees. These graduates are needed by New York's businesses and other entities to remain competitive.

Recently, the New York State Office of Strategic Workforce Development awarded more than $6 million in grants to eight projects across the state to support employer-driven high-skilled workforce training programs. Two of our schools, Cornell and RIT, were recipients of that grant.

The future of New York is in the hands of today's college students, whether they attend a public or a private college. They are the next generation of entrepreneurs, healthcare workers, and educators. But they need your help to realize their full potential.

The most effective way to help students is to invest in student aid. Two-thirds of students at CICU member colleges are from families that earn less than $125,000 annually. Of the nearly 50,000 independent sector students receiving awards

through the Tuition Assistance Program, half have annual family incomes of under $20,000.

While I represent the independent sector, I want to emphasize that the public and private higher education sectors form an ecosystem that together and only together will be able to educate and develop the skilled workforce that New York State needs. For that reason, CICU members, SUNY and CUNY recently united to support legislation which we hope will be enacted to address the urgent nursing shortage. As you know, New York has a serious healthcare workforce crisis. Colleges and universities both public and private must play a significant role in addressing this challenge.

We're working closely with the State Education Department to develop a pathway to utilize simulation education to alleviate the bottleneck created by a lack of clinical placements. It's imperative that the state bolster student aid and increase support for proven education programs that benefit New York's college students.

So we're asking the Legislature to provide that support by expanding the Tuition Assistance Program, investing in Bundy Aid, supporting Opportunity Programs and student well-being, and investing in funding for HECAP and research and development -- the details all of which are in my written testimony.

New York State should continue to partner with colleges to support the local economies that rely on them. This includes support for higher education capital which spurs investments and creates jobs in communities across the state. So we're asking you to restore the $30 million that was left out of the state budget for higher education capital.

Lastly, New York can solidify its position as a national leader in higher education and R&D by expanding partnerships with the world-class universities. And again, there are details about how we can best do that in my written testimony.

Colleges and universities need the

state's support to prepare the next generation of leaders, and we look forward to working with you in partnership on behalf of New York's college students.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Next?

MS. ALTMAN: Good afternoon. My name is Liz Altman, and I'm honored to be here today in my position as the president of the Friends of the New York State Liberty Partnership Programs, Inc.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Bring the mic closer.

MS. ALTMAN: Okay.

Liberty is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year as New York State's only state-funded dropout prevention program.

We provide high-quality, academic-based comprehensive programming, services such as social/emotional learning, experiential learning, academic remediation, college prep, career and workforce readiness and mental health services to over

15,000 marginalized and at-risk youth across the state. Last year LPP helped to graduate 91 percent of our senior cohort with a less than 1 percent dropout rate.

The first ask is that you consider moving the per-pupil cap proposed by the Board of Regents and supported by the Governor. With the removal of this fixed cap, it would enable us to provide services that are weighted and more equitable to the diverse populations that we serve.

The second ask, respectfully, if you will consider a 20 percent increase in funding. And we'd like to thank you for the previous increase in funding. This year it enabled us to grow from 46 to 51 programs and therefore essentially serving more students across the state.

Liberty has been administering social/emotional assessments for over seven years to each and every single one of our students. History and more recently the pandemic have reminded us that we need to refine programming and curriculum to meet our

students' needs.

We use the ASCA results to identify the needs of our students to develop and implement responsive and effective programming. With the additional monies we can continue to ensure that Liberty is hiring, training, and retaining qualified individuals to provide these mental health services.

I feel that Liberty is in a unique position to support the Governor's mental health initiatives, specifically as it relates to providing mental health services to the K-12 level. As I understand it, there currently is no state license that permits clinicians like myself to push into the K-12 setting to provide services. So Liberty provides a really unique position for us to partner with LEAs and through the addition of MLAs to provide these services.

And lastly, I just want to bring awareness to the fact that we're chronically experiencing late access to our funding, often in the second fiscal year. And this

year it looks like it's going to be no earlier than our third fiscal quarter. This jeopardizes the continuity of necessary and effective services to our at-risk youth. And I'm hopeful that by expressing this concern, it will provide an opportunity for further inquiry, perhaps by way of a task force or something similar, with the goal of addressing this concern.

And I thank you for your time today.

MS. NESBETH: Hi.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So --

MS. NESBETH: Is this on?

Okay. My name is Deidra Nesbeth, and I'm here today on behalf of the Fostering Youth Success Alliance. We'd like to thank the chairs as well as the rest of the members of the committees for the opportunity to testify here today.

This testimony seeks to address funding for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative, or FYCSI. FYCSI was first established in the 2015-2016 budget and aims to bridge the gap from foster care to college

success.

So far the initiative has been able to serve over 2,000 students, and currently there are close to a thousand students who are on the path to college success, participating in FYCSI across more than 100 public and private colleges and universities throughout New York State.

While we appreciate that Governor Hochul's Executive Budget proposal included $7.92 million in funding for FYCSI, there's still more to be done. We ask that the Legislature support an additional $2.08 million in funding, for a total of $10 million in funding for the Foster Youth College Success Initiative.

As more students with a foster-care background become aware of and utilize FYCSI, it's essential we ensure the support they need to make it both to and through college is available to them. FYCSI resources allow young people to cover expenses and access support such as tuition, housing and transportation, books, medical and personal

expenses.

Knowing that the support is available allows young people with a foster-care background to view higher education as an accessible pathway. One youth advocate, currently a senior at SUNY Purchase, stated that "When I learned that I could get funding to pay for college, it gave me the motivation to expand my horizons. I pursued a degree in psychology. With resources such as FYCSI, I can now be one of the people to diversify the field of psychology."

These resources make the difference between young people having to consistently think about survival versus thinking about thriving. As many as 25 percent of youth with a foster-care background are thinking about the need of where they will live, making it very difficult to consider things such as where will I go to school.

In addition to making sure there's an investment of funds, it's also important that FYCSI funds be easily accessible for youth to access. Through the Making College Success

working group that FYCSI convenes every month with partners from HESC, SED, OCFS, ACS, SUNY and CUNY, the TAP application now allows for young people to more readily acknowledge that they are young people with foster-care backgrounds.

In this first year of the full implementation, 26 percent of students found eligible for FYCSI support were new students. FYSA anticipates that this will expand further as we work alongside both our state partners and youth advocates to raise awareness of the initiative.

Again, to accommodate this increase, we ask that the Legislature support an additional $2.08 million, for a total of $10 million in the FYCSI initiative.

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 and, further, are able to further their education and become independent and make their unique impact on society.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So the -- at least we have one clock, members, that's working. So just keep an eye on it.

We go to Assemblywoman Fahy, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Thanks to each of you for your testimony.

And I know the clock is against us here, so I'm just going to try to get in a couple of questions. And I want to start with our Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, to President Brabham.

If enrollment -- we heard a lot today, we talked a lot today with SUNY and CUNY and others about enrollment, including the outyears, with the numbers down across the board, including in secondary schools. Can you give us a sense what you're seeing at the independent colleges and universities? And are there promising practices that we all need to be aware of?

And then in addition to enrollment,

you mentioned well-being, well-being programs, and I wanted to hear more if there's -- given some of the mental health concerns that we're seeing among our students and among so many post-COVID.

So enrollment and well-being, or mental health programs that are promising practices.

MS. BRABHAM: Sure. Thank you for that question.

I think we know and we've heard a lot today about how enrollment and reductions in enrollment has been a problem across the higher education system. And, you know, quite frankly, in our sector we first started to see that problem -- that it kind of coincided with the introduction of the Excelsior Scholarship, where we immediately saw specifically in our schools that serve primarily New York students a 5 percent reduction.

Going forward, you know, with the pandemic, we saw yet more problems with enrollment. Now that, starting as a sector,

we're starting to bounce back. It's coming back slowly. I think we're down in enrollment maybe a net 3 percent decline in enrollment. But we're seeing that enrollment start to tick up again, primarily in our larger schools with international reputations where it's a little bit easier for them.

Our regional schools that serve primarily New York students are still struggling with that and looking for ways to recruit students onto campus and to retain the students that are there. And the best way to do that, you know -- what I -- every year when I come here I say the best way to do that is by providing adequate student aid.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

With our few seconds left here, just a very quick question with the Liberty Partnership Program as well as our Fostering Youth Success Alliance. Any comparison data, especially with the foster care program, which as you mentioned is quite new, in the last eight years or so -- any comparison data to show if it's truly working and has made a

difference? It's great that we're serving 1,000 students currently.

MS. BRABHAM: We don't yet have comparison data, but we are working with SUNY, CUNY and SED, speaking with them about how we can access information so we can make those available.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Dr. Brabham, let me ask you a quick question. First of all, thank you for your help with the simulation bill for the nurses, to improve the number of nurses.

MS. BRABHAM: You're very welcome, Senator.

SENATOR STAVISKY: The issue that was just brought up of declining enrollment, I know that you've had some closures of some of the independent colleges. How is that

progressing? Or let's hope it's not.

MS. BRABHAM: Let's hope it's not progressing.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Let's hope it's not. But how are you meeting the challenge?

MS. BRABHAM: Yeah, it's a challenge. And, you know, most recently we heard the announcement about Cazenovia, you know, that is scheduled to close.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah.

MS. BRABHAM: You know, when we have that situation, the college will put a teach-out agreement in place to help students identify either other schools that they may want to transfer or how they might want to handle those transfer arrangements.

It's -- to my knowledge, Cazenovia has I think 19 agreements in place right now where they're working with their students to enable those -- to facilitate those transfers.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, they had a long history, and it was really unfortunate to see any college go --

MS. BRABHAM: Absolutely.

SENATOR STAVISKY: -- to close.

One last question. Student debt. Do you find that students are graduating with increasing debt? Or are you finding ways to reduce the debt of students?

MS. BRABHAM: So I will speak for our sector and say that we're doing everything we can do to hold down student debt. In fact, we provide -- our schools provide 89 percent of all of the financial assistance, student aid that our students get. Another 7 percent is provided by the federal government, and 4 percent comes from state aid. So we're doing everything that we can. Again, it comes down to student aid and making sure we have enough of it.

I would say to your point specifically, though, about student debt -- the students that are most at risk for not being able to pay their student loans are students who do not graduate and can't find jobs and don't have the money to pay back their debt.

The other part of it are students that are seeking to pursue graduate study where there's not enough student aid available for them to do that, so they're borrowing more.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

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

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Hello. Thank you all for testifying here today and bringing your expertise.

We've had a long day talking a lot about college affordability, doing things that we can do increase enrollment, but also why we're losing students, why we're losing those who have enrolled and leave or apply and never make it to our campuses for a variety of reasons.

And so through all the services that you guys provide, I feel like we should be doubling down on what you do. You are critical at a moment when we know we're losing students in college. You offer all the services we know our students need and at

the same time we know our workforce needs them to graduate.

So I first just want to say thank you. And you do have a lot of support in our Legislature to really, I think at this critical moment, be doubling down on what you do.

I also really am thankful for the support of increasing TAP eligibility -- we did hear about that today -- and understanding that we haven't really raised income threshold or minimum on it in decades, and that really hurts definitely our lower-middle-class, middle-class families who have not had access to that as tuition relief.

The one thing I want to touch on -- and there may not be answers today, maybe these are conversations we have to have -- you know, over the last couple of years we've been hearing a lot more about food insecurity on campuses. And we think that's sort of reaching a level where many of our college campuses are partnering with food cupboards

and various organizations to help them. But what we're now hearing more than ever is the housing crisis.

And I'm wondering if there are given -- working with the foster population -- you know, the youth coming out of foster care, housing is a big issue -- but I'm guessing you're all seeing it now. It's not just about staying in dorms, because so many people can't afford to do that. And if they do stay in dorms, it's then that issue of breaks and what are we doing -- and really looking for some unique ways that we can support, as a state legislature, different kinds of ideas to support those kinds of students.

We have kids -- we have more students at our community college that are living in shelters now than we've ever had before. So maybe there are unique ways that we can start looking at housing to address this, and I just wanted to know if any of you have thoughts to start that conversation, but also willing to follow up with all of you.

DR. ALBA: Some thoughts that what we've seen across our network are what would be helpful at our institutions, just resource centers.

So there are food pantries, but resource centers as well, connecting students that are in need of public assistance -- SNAP benefits, Section 8 housing. Those are benefits that are available widely. And making response teams, mobile teams available, or a call center that can help resolve a lot of that, alleviate a lot of the issues.

What we're seeing with the pandemic, people are now moving back home and are taking on additional boarders in their home, and that creates a stress that's fairly unique, and we're seeing it in our counseling sessions at school.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Gounardes.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: There we go.

Thank you, Senator Krueger. Good afternoon, everyone.

I have questions for CICU. As we know, the Supreme Court has heard arguments on two of the affirmative action cases, Students for Fair Admissions. I think many people expect that the Supreme Court will eliminate the ability to consider race as a diverse factor in college admissions.

So I'm curious, what are your member institutions doing to plan for creating a diverse student body without the ability to consider race in their admissions practices?

MS. BRABHAM: I would answer that by saying that our schools, even before this issue came up, before the Supreme Court, are always working to create a diverse and inclusive atmosphere.

But to the second point of your question, you know, race is never used as a primary factor for recruitment or for admission to any of our schools. So I don't know that they would be doing anything differently in light of whatever the decision

is that the Supreme Court makes.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Sure.

My concern is that we have some of the most exclusive institutions of higher education here in the state, private institutions of higher education, many of which get state dollars to support research grants and tuition assistance and a whole bunch of other things. They employ really exclusionary admission practices like legacy admissions, which is basically affirmative action for privileged students. They use a scary level of early decision admissions which favors students who are -- come from wealthier backgrounds, who can afford to make commitments to schools without knowing their financial aid package, and that serves to self-select those who might consider a college degree or certain institutions to pursue a college degree.

And so in losing the ability to consider race as any factor through affirmative action, I'm very concerned that we're going to lose diversity in our private

institution campuses here in New York State while they continue to use legacy admissions and early decision practices which, by their very definition, are exclusionary to the most privileged and wealthy students in our state.

So I would love to follow up on that conversation. If your schools are not thinking about that, I think they should be starting to think about it, because this is a national conversation that we need to start having at this point.

MS. BRABHAM: Really quickly, I just want to respond and say that our schools do not use -- again, legacy admission would never be a primary factor for college entrance.

And also I'd say that it's not used to keep people out, it's used to bring people in. Because primarily, you know, our regional schools use that to say, hey, if you make the grades and you meet the criteria for entrance to the school and you had a parent or relative who has attended here, you know, we welcome you. So I don't believe that it's

used as a tool to keep people out.

But I understand the spirit of your comments. And I understand, you know, this complex issue has so many different layers that I would like to circle back and talk to you about this. I've spoken with Assemblyman Epstein about this, and I would love to continue the conversation.

SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And now we go to Assemblyman Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Andrew, thank you so much.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So I would love to keep talking about legacy admission. You know, I think it's got historical discrimination or racism packed right in there, so I think we should end it, to be honest. And I hope we can get on the same page around ending it, because I don't think it serves the students of New York well.

MS. BRABHAM: Yeah, so one comment that I will make about that -- and, again,

part of what makes this so complex is that, you know, obviously our schools will comply with what the Legislature decides, right? Gladly.

But I do want to say that taking away early decision, for example, from New York, but the surrounding states still have early decision, you're putting New York State and its colleges at a disadvantage because there are students that seek early decision that will be looking outside of New York.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So Andrew's bill has legacy and early, mine just has legacy. So let me distinguish --

MS. BRABHAM: Well, I'm speaking on the whole thing.

(Laughter.)

MS. BRABHAM: I'm capturing it all.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Okay.

But I want to talk about how we're losing people. Because we keep talking about the enrollment numbers going down, and I think we're not really having good data. I would love to get good data from everyone

here to figure out why we're losing students who -- are we losing students because they run out of TAP?

Are they -- are we losing -- at what percentage are we losing because they run out of TAP? What are we losing because they need more support that they're not getting? Who are we losing for what reason, and how do we recapture those students?

Because I think that's part of what -- I think that's -- we're missing part of the conversation. And I'd love to hear from folks -- and I know we only have a minute and a half, but I would love to hear from folks now and love to hear from folks later about what we can do to figure out who we're losing, why we're losing them, and how we get them back into finishing college.

MR. ROWSER: I will say really quickly, you know, with On Point it's providing those wraparound services, providing the services the students need that we aren't generally looking at.

When you're talking about

housing-challenged students -- you know, I come home over the winter break and I really don't have any place to stay, and I'm staying someplace and I don't have transportation to get back to school -- I mean, some of those things are part of the problems students have. On campus, I can't buy all my books, I have no one to go to to help me get those books.

So those wraparound support services, if you have them there, keep them there. And that's part of what we try to do is make sure more students can stay on campus that are there.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I would love to get that data about, like, who are we -- like what -- who we're getting that, and if we got more of these wraparound services, who could we keep on all our campuses.

DR. ALBA: I've been hearing your questions throughout the day, and I really appreciate them.

You know, I have a simple answer: Invest in the precollege programs that you

have in New York State.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Right.

DR. ALBA: LPP, the STEP programs. Those are programs where those students are nurtured. And we talked about a lack of student engagement. We provide communities for our students at our institutions. STEP programs have arrangements, for the most part, where their CSTEP counterparts are preparing to receive those students. It's a pipeline of 7 through 16.

Invest in the precollege student programs that are working. LPP has a tremendous track record. STEP has a tremendous track record. STEP graduates, 80 percent of them pursue professional degree programs of study in college in STEM and health-licensed fields.

They get handed over -- an On Point student gets handed over to a CSTEP program, into an HEOP or a EOP program, or there's a Fostering Youth program that's able to come on campus and support it. We retain our students. We recruit our students.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

MR. ROWSER: The quick answer to your question, invest in STEP and CSTEP, and invest in LPP and your Fostering Youth programs.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

To the Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Murray.

SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you, Chairwoman.

So the TAP issue is one of the issues I was going to bring up, so I'll just bounce this idea off you. I'm from Long Island, where the cost of living is a bit higher. What would you think of -- we haven't changed the TAP threshold in forever. And 80,000 per household is ridiculous; on Long Island it's really ridiculous.

What would you think of tying it to either the federal poverty level -- similar to what we're talking about with childcare -- or tying it to the regional median income or something like this, to raise the threshold

up? What -- I mean, is there a better way to do this? Anyone.

MS. BRABHAM: Yes. The better way is to adopt our proposal that we put on the table, which is to raise the income limit to $110,000. And we know that right off the top we will capture another 24,000 New York students that would be eligible for the program.

SENATOR MURRAY: Right. I'm wondering why we don't just take it to 125 and match Excelsior. But -- that would make a little more sense, I think.

But moving on to -- you mentioned things like pre-college programs. BOCES -- we've been talking about that a lot, and I've been preaching about the fallacy that it's an either-or situation regarding go to BOCES or go to college.

Are you seeing any kind of an increase now since we're putting a little more attention to BOCES and CTE? Are you seeing more of an increase of BOCES or CTE students enrolling in college or going on to college?

DR. ALBA: We've observed --

No, you first.

MR. ROWSER: We work in a lot of the upstate -- in a lot of the rural -- we're in Oswego County, Cayuga County, and many of those students are in the BOCES program. And they're getting those college credits now while they're in the BOCES program, and they're completing that program and going on to college.

So it is a combination of -- that's happening now.

DR. ALBA: To your question, should it be mutually exclusive, it's not an either/or. Clearly students that are inspired in BOCES go to college and continue their programs of study.

I had a student that was a BOCES student, came from Yorktown, and he graduated from Columbia Medical School.

SENATOR MURRAY: Wow.

DR. ALBA: So, you know, it's not an either/or. So the narrative on that I think needs to be examined a bit more. Those

students go to college and they're supported at college by programs like ours.

SENATOR MURRAY: With one minute left, any suggestions on how we can get rid of that fallacy?

I know we're making steps and we're making progress, but anything we can do better to remove that -- again, that fallacy that it has to be an either/or?

DR. ALBA: I think that just comes out into a local issue, right? I know superintendents supervise BOCES, and that's the message that's created in those home communities. I think that's exactly -- a lot of it is local. Along with politics, right?

SENATOR MURRAY: And success stories like you just said, those are great.

DR. ALBA: Absolutely.

SENATOR MURRAY: So thank you very much. Keep up the great work.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you, Chair Weinstein.

So having run a CSTEP and STEP program, it's really good to see the students that are now doctors around this country. So I understand the value and hope the Assembly can advocate to get that money back.

And, Mr. Rowser, I hope you get that $500,000, because as long as I've been on Higher Ed, you're one of the few groups that show up to ask for your money every year. So thank you for doing that.

MR. ROWSER: Just trying to keep it On Point.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: On Point. Right.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Ms. Brabham, so this conversation has come up quite a bit today about the turnaround time for program approvals. Does your sector of higher ed -- what has your experience been with the turnaround time of SED approvals for programs?

MS. BRABHAM: I heard that testimony earlier today, and I think SED said that it takes an average of 22 days. That's not been our experience.

You know, we have many schools who come to us and ask for our assistance and ask for us to intervene on their behalf in talking to SED and trying to figure out where some of the issues are. So I will just say that that has not been our experience. We've had campuses that wait anywhere from several months to several years for approvals.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. And when we had the president of HESC, he talked about the Enhanced Tuition Assistance Program and that the numbers were going down. But for the private colleges and universities, are they still trying to get Bundy Aid? Is it a problem? Because I know sometimes they get discouraged and they don't even get the aid.

I hope we can change the name this year from Bundy Aid, Chair.

(Laughter.)

MS. BRABHAM: Yes, we are most certainly still in need of Bundy Aid. We think it's one of the best investments that the state can make right now. The program is funded at $35 million, which is only about 18 percent of the statutory level of the funding that we could be receiving.

But it's a great investment because, you know, schools don't get the money unless they submit a report to SED. The amount that they get is based on the number of students that they graduate. And so it's performance-based, and that's why I say it's a great return on investment for the State of New York.

But yes, we are indeed seeking an increase in Bundy Aid.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Webb.

SENATOR WEBB: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you all so much for the great programs that you provide.

As I shared earlier, I, you know, was a CSTEP student and most certainly understand also Liberty Partnership. And so my questions -- I know we're pressed for time -- is I know we've been talking a lot about enrollment.

My question for you all is, what can we be doing to lift up the stories of retention in the roles that your respective programs play in that narrative with regards to both SUNY and CUNY?

And I would add on the success rate as it relates to connections to careers. I don't know if you have that information based off of, you know, number of underrepresented students, but I was curious if you could lift up a little bit more about the impact that your programs have on retention in our SUNY and CUNY schools.

MS. ALTMAN: If I can speak to your question as it relates to maybe some possible considerations for retention efforts. Although Liberty Partnership Program serves primarily 5th through 12th grade students, we

do have -- and we are performance-based. But part of that program is, you know, post-secondary.

We try to follow up with our students for at least two years after they've graduated. And from, you know, the data that we collect based on that, we're seeing that our students, although we've gotten them, you know, promoted and graduated and thinking about their future and, in some instances -- in a lot of instances, actually -- pursuing post-secondary education, that they didn't just become un-at-risk all of a sudden. You know, they still need services.

And we often find ourselves providing those services. Case management -- so we continue to provide wraparound services, but in a very un-prescribed way where it's -- you know, we find students will be assigned a counselor if they're lucky to, at an institute of higher education and during that very prescribed setting it's a certain amount of minutes, right, an increment of an hour that they're seen with that counselor once a

semester.

Whereas when they're following up with Liberty, it's in a very un-prescribed manner. And I think that's -- I think that's really helpful to them.

DR. ALBA: Senator Webb, I know --- thank you for your question. And I appreciate you being a sister of mine, being Opportunity Program alums ourselves.

Some statistics. CSTEP students -- over 75 percent of CSTEP students graduate. Graduates pursue professional degrees of study in STEM and CSTEP targeted fields. At the STEP level, the precollege level, over 80 percent of our STEP graduates pursue professional degree programs of study in college.

So those are some clear data points there. What can we do to support and lift up the stories of retention? We need to increase the funding 20 percent of all Opportunity Programs.

You have a 5 through 12 program in LPP, 7 through 16 program in STEP and CSTEP,

and of course we have our brothers and sisters at HEOP, EOP, and of course SEEK. That's how we uplift the narratives of retention.

We have the academic model at institutions that come with ready-made professionals with professional services and funding that address the specific issues that appear on our campuses. We provide the community, we provide the direct support, and we have the outcomes to prove that.

I hope I answered your question.

SENATOR WEBB: (Inaudible; mic off.)

-- about ways to bolster the marketing of people understanding how impactful these programs are with relation to retention.

Thank you.

DR. ALBA: Absolutely. I think the way to market that, increase the funding and the RFPs will come.

(Laughter.)

DR. ALBA: Yes.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Alicia, did -- you went already,

right? So we have Assemblyman Eachus next.

ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you.

Assemblyman Chris Eachus.

I'd just like to -- you actually covered some of the stuff that I was going to go through, but the first thing I would like to say, as I mentioned, that I grew up with 13 foster brothers and sisters, so I'm very proud of that.

These services that we're talking about here that all five of you represent -- and I will reiterate what I said earlier in this hearing -- these are lifesaving programs. They are.

In the high school I taught -- Liberty Partnership Program, I'm glad you mentioned it. We're not just talking about -- we are in higher education, but we're not just talking about higher education. We're talking about getting kids -- you know, actual individuals -- into higher education with these programs.

And they do work, and I will vouch for that. CSTEP, STEP program, keeping them in

the programs. You know, retention. And we have made reference to that, you know, quite a bit all along.

I would like to -- I know you were asked about BOCES and, you know, how can BOCES -- you're either in BOCES or you're not. One of the best ways that we can get rid of that stigma, shall we call it, almost, is like a high school that I taught in, in a very urban environment, we are a cooperative high school. We have our BOCES programs in the school.

And of course not every school can support a full BOCES program. But they can support some of the programs. And, you know, we have magnet school systems and so on like that that go on, so parents, children can select from that and, you know, decide what -- maybe what type of program they might be interested in and so on like that.

So I think creating more cooperative high schools is one of the ways to actually alleviate that problem.

I just wanted to, you know, ask you,

maybe beg you -- the best salespeople that you folks have are the kids in the programs. Get them to us. Get those success stories to us, please, whatever it takes. I know it's problematic with transportation, permission sometimes, time and all. But I think that everybody is 100 percent sold when we see the sux -- successes, excuse me, I have an Altoid in my mouth -- the successes in your program and all.

So please do whatever you can. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We have -- there are no further Senators.

But Assemblymember Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you. It was good to see so many of you a couple of weeks ago when we were talking with you and some of your students. You should have been there, Chris.

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: So I have just a follow-up question, because for some of your programs I know that you are also working

with students with disabilities. And, of course, some students with disabilities can -- you know, they don't have to age out till 21. They might get their high school diploma later, depending on that program.

I'm curious if you're keeping that data. Because I think one of the big challenges for students with disabilities is what are those programs that can support them. Disability services, generally not that model. Some of the TRIO programs can work with that as well. So if you could tell me a little bit more about that and also -- so any of you.

DR. ALBA: I can speak to the work that we do at the college level.

CSTEP programs serve as sort of advocates of a unique nature where we bridge all offices of the university or college that we are housed in, to ensure students receive the support.

So a lot of the work that we do is making sure, one, that students are aware of the services that are needed -- and of course

the paperwork that's required. If they in fact enter college -- because a lot of these students sort of overcompensate by the pure talent that they have -- and they need to receive evaluative services, we try to help them and assist them with pointing them -- with consultation with people on our campuses to get them evaluated at the college level.

Some of the disadvantages are if you don't come in with paperwork into a college, you then have to get evaluated, and that's a very expensive proposition.

And so a lot of the CSTEP programs on college campuses -- as I'm sure it is not unfamiliar to our HEOP brothers and sisters as well -- we really try to coordinate with our disability office. And then of course based on the student, the situation, we provide services, either through bridging them with campus offices or helping offset some of the costs there at the college.

I don't want to take time away from LPP.

MS. ALTMAN: In regards to helping

address students with special needs and concerns -- well, we worked in the past, you know, prior to COVID, and things have changed, but one part of our program was a service that we provided at the pre-collegiate level where we would take, let's say, like the ACCUPLACER -- you know, the college placement test -- and we would prep our students for that test as early as their junior year. So this way at least they're familiar with the test, because we want to try to at least help them overcome some of the barriers that are, you know, preventing them from getting to higher education.

So enabling them to take these tests earlier, just to be exposed to them, provides the necessary remediation to get them to where they need to be so that they can place at college level.

And then, you know, getting -- you know, we foster interrelationships between the IHEs and the LEAs where we're, you know, introducing them to the various services that

are available to them at the collegiate level early on.

DR. ALBA: We're promoting services, of course, in a way.

MS. ALTMAN: Yeah.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Anybody else, if you want to tell me what you're doing, let me know later.

MS. ALTMAN: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We have one Assemblymember, Assemblymember Chandler-Waterman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: Hello, thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to everyone here.

I just had a question as a former educator both in high school and a professor as well, and having four children -- one in CUNY, one in SUNY, and one about to go to CUNY or SUNY, right?

(Laughter.)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: So a lot of college tuition, right?

So I see here where you talk about CSTEP and STEP need an additional 20 percent in funding in order for the programs to exactly, you know, respond to the needs that may cause barriers, right, for people to get into STEM, health.

And I don't know if you know with behavioral health and mental health, we have a lack of staffing there. Right? So then that's something I don't know if y'all was thinking of kind of really highlighting that, you know, because we need incentives to people -- we have beds but no staffing for that, and the correlation. I don't know if that was a thought-out process you had when you put this together.

DR. ALBA: So the social work, licensed mental health counselors, psychologists -- those are CSTEP-targeted professions. This young lady at the end of the table, she would be a CSTEP-eligible student interested in psychology. And how CSTEP would respond to that, they'd try to connect a student to professions and labs to

get them research experience. We know that that's important.

And of course they have to volunteer. We have budgets that are set up to provide a living stipend to make sure they're not taking off and having to work at a retail store to pay bills.

So this is -- this is the -- we're a Legislature program. That's why I say we're sons and daughters of the Legislature, because you all have created us and now you continue to fund us and provide a gold standard throughout the country of how intervention models like this work for STEP and CSTEP.

Nationwide, no one does what STEP and CSTEP does. Nationwide, no one -- no one really does what New York State does in terms of opportunity programs. This is a highly developed model of working with students from historically underrepresented groups to move them along, provide social upward mobility and of course create future taxpayers. Because that's part of what it's about.

But having actualized young people thinking about the world around them, that's exactly what we are -- and lend their talents and services. So that's exactly how we respond.

With the health professions --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: I would love to see more of that when you're --

DR. ALBA: Oh, absolutely.

I'm a trained mental health professional. That's a trained mental health professional there --

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: Especially culturally responsive.

DR. ALBA: No question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: Especially in the Black and brown community.

DR. ALBA: That's the only way to do it nowadays.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: Right.

DR. ALBA: Because we know the harm that has caused not being responsive to cultural nuances. That's an oppressive kind

of format, and moving forward -- so I appreciate your comments. And we're on the ground doing that great work.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: All right. Thank you.

DR. ALBA: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

I don't believe that we have any more questions for this panel. Thank you for being here and spending time with us.

DR. ALBA: Thank you. No problem.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: If you're keeping score, we're up to Panel D: New York City Alliance against Sexual Assault, Reproductive Justice Collective and Advocates, and Swipe Out Hunger.

And I would just advise the speakers for Panel E -- NYPIRG, Association of Private Colleges, National Council of State Boards of Nursing, and Columbia Health to make your way down to us -- lower chair -- so that you'll be ready for the final panel.

Can we have quiet in the hearing room, please, so we can continue.

Thank you. Can we start with the New York City Alliance against Sexual Assault.

MS. MILES: Good evening. My name is Emily Miles, and I'm the executive director of the New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault. And I'm here representing the Enough Is Not Enough Campaign asking for increased funding for the Enough Is Enough programming from $4.5 to $9.6 million.

In July 2015, Enough is Enough, or EIE, was established to address sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking on college campuses. An addition to much-needed advancements in New York State law, the legislation created an EIE funding initiative for rape crisis programs which now supports 53 organizations across the state to work collaboratively with college campuses to prevent sexual violence and provide intervention when sexual violence does occur.

Let me start by saying that the Enough Is Enough program is truly incredible. Every day, EIE coordinators are on campuses across

the state training thousands of students, faculty, and administrators, providing technical assistance to ensure campuses are abiding by federal and state regulations, and connecting survivors to trauma-informed services to begin the path of healing.

But despite the strength of this program, there remains a number of gaps in program delivery and access to students across the state. EIE has been flat-funded at $4.5 million since its inception, and each year the purchasing power diminishes. Over 60 colleges across the state are not affiliated with an official EIE program, accounting for 92,000 students not connected to these critical services.

At campuses being served, current programs report a lack of adequate staffing and program resources and an inability to reach the depth necessary to truly make a difference on campuses. At the Alliance we partner with 14 campuses across New York City and have one full-time coordinator. That's over 102,000 students for one person.

I have to say that my coordinator is amazing. She's a fantastic individual, and her dedication and skill is beyond anything I can imagine. But there are only 24 hours in a day, and there's no real way for her to conduct the level of trainings and outreach necessary to meet the needs of those 102,000 students.

And unfortunately our story is not an outlier. In each of your districts there is an EIE program that is not receiving the services that it needs. In each of your districts there are students that are not being connected to these critical resources because the EIE programs do not have critical funding.

To fill these gaps, we are asking that the state increase its annual investment to $9.6 million to expand the reach of EIE programs to invest in culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate prevention materials and to enhance training and technical assistance to EIE programs.

Many of you heard the statistic that

one in four women report a completed or attempted sexual assault in their lifetime. But what you might not know is over 80 percent of those assaults occur before the age of 25.

We have the tools to stop this level of violence, and I ask for your investment in order to do so. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Next, Reproductive Justice Collective.

MS. RAO: Good afternoon. My name is Niharika Rao, and I'm a student, abortion doula, and the lead organizer of the Reproductive Justice Collective, a coalition of New York's student and youth organizers from Columbia, CUNY, NYU, and SUNY schools.

I also work at Advocates for Youth, a national nonprofit that works with young people to champion youth rights to bodily autonomy and health equity.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the need to invest state resources for abortion care in our higher education institutions.

Under the Executive Budget, SUNY and CUNY campuses would be required to provide access to medication abortion at student health centers. Our original legislation also established a fund jointly overseen by the State Comptroller, Health Commissioner, and chancellors from SUNY and CUNY to cover student out of pocket and campus implementation costs.

This fund does not exist in the current bill's version and in the proposed Executive Budget, but we urge you to allocate the needed state resources through the fund described at a sum of $10 million.

Medication abortion is an extremely safe method to end a pregnancy up to 10 weeks. Only 0.4 percent of patients require hospitalization with serious complications. As New York becomes a destination state for abortion access post-Roe, our clinics and abortion funds are experiencing immense demand from patients out of state and increased protest and harassment from anti-abortion groups.

As an abortion doula who has supported multiple college students through their abortions, I've seen firsthand the impact it has had on young people. For many this is the first time they are navigating a deeply complicated medical system on their own. Young people in their 20s account for more than half of all abortions in the United States, but also face unique barriers, including limited financial resources and increased stigmatization.

SUNY students face an average trip of over 10 miles to the closest abortion clinic. We can reduce wait times and funding pressures for clinics and abortion funds by making on-campus abortion pills available to students. On-campus provision reduces out of pocket costs, decreases travel time, and lessens information barriers to vital healthcare.

Seeing this policy enacted in both California and Massachusetts, we anticipate the main associated cost to be training for clinicians and possible site upgrades. Both

the American Medical Association and public health experts have recommended that medication abortion does not require an ultrasound or a physical examination.

This policy directly addresses barriers and bridges the reality between New York being a state where abortion is legal to one where abortion is truly accessible. Over 1800 New Yorkers have signed a petition supporting abortion pills on campus and demanding the end of the continual exceptionalization and politicization of abortion care. This investment would help ensure all students have access to the healthcare they need, regardless of their income, location, or personal circumstances.

Thank you for your time, and I'm really looking forward to your questions.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Swipe Out Hunger.

MR. FRIEDLANDER: Thank you.

My name is Robb Friedlander, advocacy director of Swipe Out Hunger, a national

organization committed to ending college student hunger.

We are joined today by a number of stakeholders from across the state who are ready to raise the level of student services on college campuses to those states who have passed Hunger Free Campus, such as New Jersey, Pennsylvania, California, Massachusetts, and more.

Since the pandemic and the end of recent federal government COVID relief programs, the crisis of college student hunger has risen to levels never seen before. Just 20 minutes up the road from here, at SUNY Schenectady Community College, Robyn King, the director of wellness and support services, notes that they are serving three times the number of students as they were this time last year.

And while in 2019 former governor Cuomo mandated that all public institutions of higher education have a food pantry on their campus, that mandate did not and has not to this day produced the resources for

those campuses to start, grow, and sustain those food pantries.

And while public institutions have received increased funding in recent years, that funding has only filled the gaps left behind by COVID. And it's also specified detailed allocations that have prevented institutions from investing in their basic need centers and campus food pantries.

According to a 2020 study by Healthy CUNY out of the CUNY School of Public Health, out of nine CUNY pantries, only one had a budget of over $20,000. What we have been left with, with rare exceptions, is a patchwork of deteriorating or missing services across the state, wholly funded by students themselves or small one-time foundation grants.

Examples include SUNY Oneonta, who, due to a lack of funding, their pantry consists of two shelves on a bookshelf with a few noodles and granola bars. SUNY Buffalo, the largest public institution in the state, funds their on-campus pantry solely through

the student activity fee, forcing economically challenged students to fund their own food pantry.

CUNY City Tech. Until this semester, CUNY City Tech had a mobile pantry that changed location each time, was only open for two or three days a month, by appointment only through an online forum which was broken online for most of the year.

Hostos Community College had gone over a year without a functioning cafeteria. To fill the gap of the increasing need, the staff member filled out application after application, finally securing a one-time $10,000 grant to open the pantry.

Back at SUNY Schenectady Community College, since they compete for the same grant funding as everyone else, they go through their trash cans and recycling bins to collect bottles and cans in order to afford items for their students.

Through the Hunger Free Campus funding, higher education institutions would receive $10 million to strengthen their

existing basic needs and anti-hunger efforts, leverage these grants and staff basic needs positions, train student advocates, expand university SNAP outreach, upgrade existing basic needs resources like food pantries, meal donation programs, and housing insecurity programs.

Swipe Out Hunger urges your support of Hunger Free Campus grant funding in this fiscal year and an appropriation of $10 million in the one-house budgets.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblywoman Fahy, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Thank you each for your passion and concern; it comes right across from each of you. So thank you for being here, thank you for waiting this out as well.

I'm just going to start briefly with the hunger, since it's fresh on my mind. What do you think is fueling the rise on the

campuses? We know COVID, we've talked a lot today about the impacts of COVID and just how many changes we're seeing, how much more anxiety we're seeing. But in addition to that, what do you think we're seeing -- in addition to the funding, can you remind me what your funding is at right now?

And also talk about what -- are we doing enough to make sure students are qualifying or signing up for SNAP or food benefits?

MR. FRIEDLANDER: Absolutely. So I'll kind of tackle first what's causing the increase.

You know, in addition to the economy still recovering -- of course, we have skyrocketing rents across the city and across the state, and a plethora of other economic issues that are impacting students. But one of the things is that we know that from inflation, groceries are the number-one item of any category of item that has increased in the past year. This month it was 11.9 percent, last month it was 13 percent.

So what that means is that our food banks -- like Food Bank in New York City or City Harvest, Island Harvest across the entire state, and Feeding New York State, who supports this bill -- are having to send smaller shipments to their community pantries or, if college pantries are buying food at retail cost, that cost obviously -- those dollars go shorter due to the increased costs of food.

I'm sorry -- you had one more question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: SNAP. Is SNAP -- what is your current funding? You said you want 10 million. Remind me what your current funding is. And then the SNAP, the SNAP benefits -- are we doing enough to enroll students in SNAP?

MR. FRIEDLANDER: Yeah, absolutely not.

And so one of the things that we see across the entire state is almost every instance -- almost every on-campus food pantry receives zero dollars in funding from

their institution or from the system. They are fully funded either, again, by students themselves or by small foundation grants, often one-time, of about $5,000 to $15,000.

The issue with SNAP in particular is that it's such a complicated, long, and hard process. And so what we need are more resources to have students trained in enrolling other students in SNAP, the application process. We need staff there to be able to help students through that process. We need more resources on campus to be able to get students into that pipeline.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: While we have a few more seconds, I just want to switch.

And Emily, with the Alliance Against Sexual Assault, it's great to hear that you feel Enough is Enough is having an impact. That's very encouraging. We have been talking about that recently.

How is funding distributed? You mentioned that there's still many needs. Can you talk about how the money goes out at this point?

MS. MILES: Absolutely. The funding is currently based on a formula that includes the geographic region that the EIE provider covers. So at the Alliance we cover all five boroughs, and so we receive a bit of a larger portion of the funding than someone only serving one county, for example.

That said, we receive the maximum amount of funding and that is barely enough for one full-time coordinator.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Hi.

Senator Webb.

SENATOR WEBB: Yes. Thank you all for your testimony and for the work that you do.

I'm going to start with Swipe Out Hunger. I've actually done a lot of work on food insecurity, and one of the things I was always fascinated by is that we have a significant number of students who rely on food pantries in order to actually have food to eat, and yet we're talking about raising

tuition.

So one of my questions is, do you have a breakdown on the number of students that are food-insecure across our campuses? And who are dependent upon food pantries?

MR. FRIEDLANDER: Yeah, in 2020, the School of Public Health -- the CUNY School of Public Health engaged in a report called the Real College Report. In that report they found out that 48 percent of all CUNY students were food-insecure. That goes up to 51 percent at the community college level.

According to the 2019 SUNY Food Insecurity Task Force report, on average 40 percent of SUNY students were food-insecure, and that goes up to 54 percent on the community college level, with even higher numbers at the EOCs on SUNY campuses.

SENATOR WEBB: And then I know I have limited time left just to go to both Reproductive Justice and New York City Alliance Against Sexual Assault.

What are some additional supports that we could be offering with regards to

expanding access to your programs? I know you're asking for additional funding, but I was just curious -- what are other ways that we can either promote awareness about the resources that your programs actually offer with regards to our campus communities?

MS. RAO: I will say that as a student, actual community education is a really big part of both sexual violence prevention and reproductive justice work.

It's really great to have all of these policies and fundings in place, but it's really hard when students don't know they exist to actually access them. So really having a streamlined form and access point, ways and centralized systems that students know that they can go to these resources. Helplines are really, really helpful for all of the above.

But, yeah, that tends to be the barrier.

MS. MILES: Absolutely. And as I said, when you have limited staffing so EIE coordinators are really only focused on the

training on campus, so they're not able to do the outreach that's really necessary to bring people into the program.

This additional funding would allow that to happen and allow it to happen to communities that have historically been difficult to reach, and bring an expertise from those communities to actually do that outreach, which I think is critically important.

The one other piece that I would throw in there -- and this was in my written testimony -- is that a majority of the programs don't have access to materials that are linguistically appropriate, and that translation piece is really -- makes it difficult to actually reach those communities.

Additionally, the New York City Alliance has a resource guide of all the rape crisis programs and all services available to survivors in New York City. I would be happy to follow up with any of your offices to provide that to you. And the state coalition

has done something similar. I'd be happy to connect anyone to their local EIE program.

SENATOR WEBB: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblyman Epstein, three minutes.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I also want to thank you for all you're doing for New York and for our college students.

And Niharika, thank you for your advocacy on this work. I know it has been great to collaborate with you.

So $10 million -- is that for the campuses, do you think? Is that for the students? Is there a mix? And how do you break that down?

MS. RAO: Yeah. For the funding model, it's based on what passed in California and Massachusetts, which really functioned off of a grant-based program. So the state allocated the funds, and then individual campuses applied for a certain amount of money.

We anticipate the money going both for

site upgrades -- so this despite an ultrasound machine not being needed -- there could be like, you know, a speculum or an exam table in case a physical exam is needed in the exceptional cases. And also training.

But really importantly, which is something California didn't do but we're trying to be pioneers at because we're New York, is trying to allocate funds for out-of-pocket costs as well.

A really big barrier is that a lot of states are now preventing the coverage of abortion, and we have a lot of students who come from these states that are paying $600 out of pocket for a medication abortion. So we're actually really wanting to provide part of these funds to cover those unexpected costs as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

And just for all of you, I know we only have a little time left, but we've been talking a lot about losing college students. They're like -- they're dropping out, we're not getting them back into the system.

You know, are these part of the reasons why we're losing people, is food insecurity? We're losing people from sexual assaults on campus and not having enough training, people not having access to abortion earlier? Are these some of the reasons we have? And free resources here, could that help us retain college students longer so that they can graduate?

MS. RAO: Yes.

(Laughter.)

MR. FRIEDLANDER: And also in the 2019 report that Healthy CUNY and the School of Public Health did as well, they found that food-insecure students were two-and-a-half times more likely within the CUNY system to either fail or drop out of the school as well.

So when we talk retention, we are really talking about all of the basic needs, from health to housing to food security.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And so in the past we have kind of given CUNY and SUNY lump-sum amounts of money and said, Hey,

here's a lump sum, do what you want. If we were able to do that this year, would that help your issues? Or do you feel like we really need to be more tailored in our approach to funding?

MS. MILES: I think for us, you know, the rape crisis programs are the ones that have the expertise to go on campus and do this work. That expertise largely doesn't exist on campuses.

So you can give them funding and, you know, we support a strong and robust higher education system, but if you don't have the right crisis programs on campus providing those services, you are not going to be reaching survivors in a trauma-informed way.

MS. RAO: Yeah. Same here. I think like we're really working with a lot of advocates and students around implementation of this policy itself, and I think it really helps to let the people who know best do the work they know how to do.

MR. FRIEDLANDER: I will just quickly add, those lump sums are not getting to basic

need centers. So that's something that we need, to directly allocate resources to these services. Because those lump sums for a multitude of reasons are not actually going down into the actual programs on the ground.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

We go to Assemblywoman Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

Thank you very much for your testimony and the incredibly important work that you're doing.

I have a couple of questions. One is with regard to the availability of medication abortions or other abortion care on our campuses, for example.

Are you -- I'm concerned about the states where this private insurance, private insurer may not cover it because of the state requirements, and whether there is an issue on campuses with regard to fear of liability if they provide that care for somebody whose state they come from does not provide that care.

MS. RAO: Yeah. So currently the

funding -- the funding mechanism that we proposed and have talked more about in my written testimony -- actually creates part of this funding available for these out-of-pocket states.

An alternative we're also really encouraging CUNY and SUNY campuses to implement is a really codified referral process to abortion access funds and practical support organizations that can help with these type of concerns and help provide coverage for out-of-state folks. These abortion funds are primarily working with out-of-state folks who are coming to New York for abortion care.

Regarding the liability concerns, our experience is that because abortion care is actually a lot less risky than most of the procedures provided at these campus health centers, they're usually covered by standard malpractice medical insurance.

But there's actually a really great list of resources available from the Reproductive Health Access Project that talks

about primary care implementation and goes through like all the billing procedures, insurance concerns, legal like loopholes that you may need to jump through when it comes to this type of coverage.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And are you finding with regard to sexual assault, for example, resistance on the part of any of the campuses in New York to students getting those kind of services?

Because obviously a lot of times these things happen on campus and sometimes we know who the perpetrators are.

MS. MILES: Yeah.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: I mean, often we know who the perpetrators are.

MS. MILES: Absolutely. You know, the Enough is Enough legislation closed a lot of legislative issues in the state, but it didn't mandate campuses work with rape crisis programs.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Right.

MS. MILES: In fact, we have to go out and we have to actively engage campuses.

Those 60 campuses that have no connection to EIE programs, many of them it's because they don't want them. And so it's the -- on the burden of the EIE programs to go out and have to recruit those institutions. That takes an incredible amount of time. And when you are working with 102,000 students on your campuses that you already have, you have limited availability to do that.

We are actually drafting now some edits to the EIE legislation that we plan to introduce next session, so we look forward to talking with all of you about those then.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you. I look forward to it. Thank you very much.

And food insecurity -- I'm sure -- I'm happy to talk to you further, but I'm running out of time here, so -- but thank you for your testimony.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman Hyndman, you have a -- oh, okay.

So we have no further questions for this panel.

MS. MILES: Thank you very much.

MS. RAO: Thank you very much.

MR. FRIEDLANDER: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you for being here and the work you folks all do for the students of New York State.

Next we call our final panel, Panel E: NYPIRG, Association of Private Colleges, National Council of State Boards of Nursing, and Columbia Health.

And I think we'll go out of order with this group and start with Columbia Health. Columbia -- I know -- if you can go first, please.

MS. BERNITZ: Thank you.

Madam Chairs, ranking members and members of the Assembly and Senate, my name is Dr. Melanie Bernitz, M.D., and I serve as the senior vice president of Columbia Health, which is a student health service for the 32,000 students at Columbia University.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Pull the mic closer.

MS. BERNITZ: As a family physician,

college administrator and college health provider with over 20 years of experience, I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and to share the reasons why I support allowing New York to join the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact and the Nurse Licensure Compact, which will truly be transformative to the care of almost 1 million students enrolled in higher education in New York State.

On college campuses throughout our state, healthcare teams provide high-quality medical and mental healthcare to emerging adults tailored to their needs and really allowing them to become -- to be well, take care of their health, and really succeed academically.

Our students are more and more mobile. They travel to their home states for breaks in the summer, they get jobs and internships in different states, and this causes lapses in their healthcare. And as you are aware, without continuity of care we can see adverse outcomes which brings greater cost to our

healthcare system.

And these very same issues with breaks in continuity of care negatively impact the children of New York State constituents, your very constituents, whether they are in college out of state in Michigan, California, or even Massachusetts, and they face the same concerns when they return home to New York and cannot see their on-campus providers.

These issues were amplified during the pandemic when we sent our students all home in March 2020. And it is important to understand that when it comes to telehealth, which has really become a part of our healthcare system, licensing jurisdiction lies not with where the provider is located and licensed, but where the patient happens to be physically located at the time the care is provided, regardless of where they normally reside.

So while we could support New York-based students throughout their time studying remotely, as other students returned to their home states we were not able to

provide them the same care, due to these state-based licensing restrictions.

As the pandemic recedes, we realize the value of telehealth. It's not going away. Many visits can be provided by video visits without making someone come in for an appointment, which is great for our students who are busy studying, trying to fit their appointments in between their classes and their exams. But this is why this issue has become so pressing.

We're also seeing a lot of oppressive legislation across the U.S. around reproductive rights and gender-affirming care, and we want to be able to make sure our students can get the care they need when they need it.

So we really need to leverage the lessons we learned through the past few years and allow New York to join the interstate compact so that our college students can get timely care and not rely on pandemic support -- that support.

Healthcare doesn't take breaks for

vacations, prescription needs are year-round, and healthcare needs for our students are often unpredictable. So we hope you will support this compact to allow simplification, streamlining, and expediting of the processes for our physicians and nurses to become licensed in multiple states.

This reduces risks to our patients, reduces risk to the healthcare system as a whole, and allows continuity of care for our students, expanding quality cost-effective healthcare.

So I really appreciate your support and look forward to answering questions.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

So why don't we go to Blair Horner, NYPIRG.

MR. HORNER: Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

NYPIRG's board of directors are all college and university students elected from SUNY, CUNY and independent colleges in New York State.

As you've already heard, the state's

system of higher education is in deep financial trouble. Far too many community colleges and four-year public colleges as well as independent ones are facing declining enrollments -- some significantly -- yet are now facing, at best, stagnant state financial help.

The Governor's budget plan unfortunately not only does too little to reverse the trajectory of New York's system of higher education -- she's adopted policies that contributed mightily to the problem.

Investments in higher education not only help produce more highly skilled workers and more knowledgeable citizens, it also provides a solid economic foundation for the communities in which the institutions are located. The economic rate of return is solid and positive, often a far less risky investment than some highly touted but poorly performing other economic development programs.

NYPIRG urges you to reject the Governor's tuition proposal to raise tuition.

You've heard today that it's a predictable way to raise revenue. Another predictable way would be for you to increase state support every year instead of asking the students to have to pay more.

We also think you should restore the cuts to the Opportunity Programs and the -- you've already heard that the Tuition Assistance Program's anniversary, its 50th anniversary is next year. That provides a platform to modernizing financial aid, because one of the key ways that you help keep students in college is to provide financial assistance if they need it.

In terms of some of the enrollment questions that have come up, there are differences when we've looked at the enrollment data. There's differences between SUNY and CUNY, particularly pre-pandemic. There's differences between the four-years and the two-years. There's differences even with independent colleges. And so lessons to be learned can help from a deeper dive into that.

I'm getting down to my last minute.

So the TAP gap contributed to those problems. We think it's critically important that you financially support higher education.

NYPIRG, as you know, has submitted -- will have submitted five testimonies during the budget hearings. I'm going to mention just two things that are not related to higher education. My apologies in advance.

One is today the Governor announced $3 million for the Town of Fair Haven to deal with its resiliency issues, $3 million of tax dollars to do that. It's going to be billions of dollars for the state to deal with resiliency issues. Why should the taxpayers foot the entire tab?

There's a bill, Climate Change Superfund Act, where the oil companies will pick up the tab. They have the money, and it's their fault.

Lastly, with regards to tobacco control, the Governor's proposed a dollar increase on tobacco in the cigarette tax. We

think you should be spending more money on tobacco control programs to help smokers to quit so they don't have to pay the tax. The state under Governor Cuomo slashed funding for the program. It needs to be restored.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Association of Private Colleges.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Good evening.

Members of the Legislature, thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony on behalf of the Association of Private Colleges. My name is Donna Stelling-Gurnett, and I am the president of APC.

I'd like to start my testimony by announcing that APC has changed its name from the Association of Proprietary Colleges to the Association of Private Colleges. Our new name reflects the changing nature of higher ed and the proprietary sector and better reflects the 11 degree-granting family-founded institutions that are members of APC. We may have a new name, but we remain committed to educational excellence,

access, and affordability.

I have submitted APC's written testimony in advance, so in the interests of time I will focus my remarks today on just two of our priorities.

The first priority would be to expand the part-time TAP program to include students attending proprietary colleges. Since 2006, students attending SUNY, CUNY and independent nonprofit colleges have had access to part-time TAP, but students attending proprietary colleges have not.

Traditionally APC members encourage full-time attendance with flexible schedules and learning modalities, as well as offering three full semesters per year that enable students to graduate on time. However, as we recover from the pandemic, our students may need to attend part-time due to family or job responsibilities. So we're requesting that the part-time TAP program be expanded to include students attending proprietary colleges.

I'd also like to take this opportunity

to thank Senator Fernandez and Assemblywoman Hyndman for sponsoring the sign-on letter that garners support for this request.

The second priority would be to address the disparity between the dependent and independent TAP schedules. You may have heard us talk about increasing the maximum income threshold from 80,000 to 110,000 and the maximum TAP award from 5,600 to 6,000. However, if these changes were made, they would only impact the dependent tax schedule.

If you're an independent student -- a student that's not claimed on someone else's taxes -- or you do not not have dependents yourself, you're at a great disadvantage.

If you're married, the maximum income threshold for your family is just $40,000 per year, and your maximum TAP award is significantly lower at just $3,525.

If you're single, your maximum income threshold is only $10,000 per year. These are likely nontraditional students who are returning to college to finish their degree or reskill themselves for a different job.

So we would ask that the same TAP award schedule be used regardless of dependency status, that mirrors the higher income threshold and the maximum TAP award.

Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that the APC students are here in Albany today and tomorrow to meet with their legislators and share their stories, so tomorrow take a look around for the blue-and-white scarves and be sure to say hello.

So thank you. With that, I'll end my testimony and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

National Council of State Boards of Nursing.

MS. LIVANOS: Good evening, chairs and members of the joint committee. Thank you for the opportunity.

My name is Nicole Livanos, and I'm with the National Council of State Boards of Nursing. I'm here on behalf of the nurse licensure compact that, if New York enacted

it this year, we would become the 40th member state to join the NLC.

I'll focus on three main points today. The first is that, if enacted, New York would be joining a safe and tested compact. The NLC has been operational for over 20 years, facilitating licensure mobility for RNs and LPNs. The NLC requires applicants to meet their home state licensure requirements in addition to 11 uniform licensure requirements that are outlined right in the compact.

For member states, the compact mandates communication between states to ensure that significant investigatory information is shared among party states. And the compact requires all of this while still maintaining licensure and enforcement of state practice laws at the state level.

Second, the NLC is an important tool in the toolbox for addressing the nursing workforce shortage in New York. NLC allows for flexibility in hiring nurses to fill acute shortages, allows patients to have access to more providers when needing care or

continuing care for students, and offers a benefit to nursing students to remain in New York for the benefit of flexible licensure.

According to the New York State Department of Health, it's predicted that New York will face a shortage of 39,000 registered nurses by 2030. Short- and long-term solutions are needed here.

Since COVID-19, legislative and executive leaders took swift emergency action to recruit providers across the country to aid in New York's response. While facilitating licensure mobility for these nurses to New York, the emergency actions lacked the protections and strict standards that the NLC has.

Importantly also, this facilitates mobility for both New York nurses to be more mobile as well as nurses to come into New York.

Third, the nurse licensure compact will enable more patients to access expert care from New York providers. Like the

flexibilities provided for the nursing workforce, the compact enables patients to choose to receive critical healthcare in the state. Whether it's due to restrictive laws or provider shortages across the country, patients can seek primary reproductive or mental healthcare care services in New York under the compact.

For the above reasons, the compact has strong and diverse support, and in nearly all of the 39 jurisdictions that have enacted the compact, that's been led by the support of state nursing associations. The diverse coalitions include telehealth organizations, patient groups such as AARP, those groups representing military families, and others.

The diversity of the coalition demonstrates the impact that NLC has across all of these groups. So we urge support for the NLC in the budget and sponsorship of the bill.

Thank you so much for your time.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Pat Fahy.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. I appreciate all of the testimony. I appreciate you staying with us this evening as well.

I guess I'll just pick up on the nursing, since you were the last one to speak. A number of concerns on the compact. There's just many tradeoffs that we've been seeing from both sides on the issue. And if you could help us with addressing some of those, I would appreciate that.

For instance, while I'm a new chair, I've been on the Higher Ed Committee for many years and I can very much remember when we passed the B.S. in 10, so New York has been quite proud of the very high standards they have for nurses, that they have 10 years to get a B.S. degree.

Can you address how that would be addressed with the compact, as well as -- my understanding is there would be some differences on the reproductive health -- the training that might be required in New York, versus what is not -- may or may not be

required in other states.

MS. LIVANOS: Thank you for that question.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Sure. Thank you.

MS. LIVANOS: So I'll address the first part.

So nurses that have a primary state of residence in New York will need to continue to meet New York's licensure requirements. So the compact is based on your primary state of residence. So, so long as you are a New York resident, you still need to meet those requirements that New York has set into law -- in addition to the 11 uniform licensure requirements that ensures all compact nurses have met at least those baseline 11 requirements.

And so for nurses that are practicing from other states coming to New York, as soon as those individuals would move to New York and change their residency, they would be subject to meeting the requirements such as the B.S.N. in 10 or any of the other requirements that nurses must meet to

maintain and obtain a license here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Okay, thank you. I look forward to more conversations on that as we grapple with this issue.

I'm going to switch gears to the Association of Private Colleges. Thank you as well for your testimony. You mentioned you represent 11 degree-granting programs, and we spoke a little bit this morning or this afternoon about a recent article that addressed some concerns on loans.

Can you talk about if that's your 11, or -- I actually don't know how many other colleges there are, proprietary colleges, that are not a part of your association. If you could maybe give us a little data on that.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Sure. Sure. So APC represents 11 degree-granting, primarily family-founded institutions. So yes, they are proprietary.

And I believe there's about 20 overall, so we do have a majority of them. Of the institutions, they represent about

25,000 students, of which about 20,000 attend APC member colleges. So we do have the majority of the students attending our institution.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: And do you want to address the issue of the student loan debt or default that again was raised in --

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Yeah, absolutely.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY. This article, the most recent one, was the Chalkbeat.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Right, right. Thank you very much. I appreciate you bringing that up.

You know, it's interesting, because we did work with the reporter before this story came out. And one of things that we had cautioned her on is conflating the outcomes of the non-degree proprietary schools versus the degree-granting colleges. And that default rate at five years does have both mixed together.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

MS STELLING-GURNETT: So it's not just

the degree-granting colleges.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Very helpful.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Senator Murray.

SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you, Chairwoman.

And thank you for being here.

I'm going to ask you a question that I started the day with with the two chancellors, when I asked them if they knew the percentages of students, of graduates, that remained here in New York. Do you have similar --

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I do. I do, actually. Over 90 percent of our students that are currently enrolled in APC member colleges are from New York, and over 80 percent of those that graduate stay here in New York to live and work afterwards.

SENATOR MURRAY: Okay. That's great to hear. And the reason I bring this up is now we'll go on to the TAP issue. And in

discussions we've said it's expensive to raise the threshold. But I'm a small business owner; I differentiate between spending and investing. I think this would be an investment.

I brought up in the last panel, again, the 80,000 threshold for families. The statewide thresholds -- we're a very diverse state with different economies in different areas. The income and the median income down on Long Island is, you know, quite higher, so an 80,000 threshold is really --

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Correct.

SENATOR MURRAY: What would you think -- and I'd ask anyone -- what would you think of tying it maybe to the regional median income and doing a percentage to that? Maybe 200 percent of the median regional income.

Would that be a fairer thing? Would that get more students in? What would you think of that, first?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Well, I mean, we are recommending that you raise it from 80

to 110,000. Or maybe even 125, as I think I heard you mention earlier, so it's more in line with the enhanced tuition awards program.

I mean, I'd have to look at it. I'm not sure what the data would show. If it would get more or not, it's hard to tell.

SENATOR MURRAY: We'd definitely get more in Long Island, I'll guarantee you that.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Yes. Yes, you would. There you go.

SENATOR MURRAY: But then I bring that up also -- and when we're talking about TAP and we talk about the Graduate TAP, which was eliminated in 2010, what do you think of bringing back the Graduate TAP but focusing it on high-need and impact fields such as nursing, things of that nature? What would your thoughts be on that?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: We -- well, APC would absolutely support that. It's actually part of my written testimony. Reimagining Graduate TAP I think would be a great idea.

SENATOR MURRAY: Anyone else want to

chime in?

MR. HORNER: Well, our view would be, you know, at some point how do you determine who's in -- what programs are in and what programs are out? I mean, to some extent it's in the eye of the beholder.

We'd like to see Graduate TAP restored across the board.

SENATOR MURRAY: Okay. That's all I have. Thank you very much.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman Hyndman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you, Chair Weinstein.

So if you were here all day you saw the New York State Education Department listed all the reasons why the nursing licensure compact should not exist. But even with the Governor's budget on the initiatives, it would take five, maybe six years for those nurses -- the influx programs to come into the State of New York.

So we have a deficit. We have nurses

that are retiring. We have nurses that are getting paid more to go to other places -- less taxes, less headaches. So your plan, your program would allow for immediate, almost -- if New York was to adopt it -- of an influx of nurses into a state that desperately needs it.

Are there any states close by that have the nursing compact?

And just because of time, and to Donna, a lot of times there's a conflation -- we conflate proprietary colleges with proprietary non-degree-granting. I still think there's a lot of education in New York State. But I will say this; Plaza College has a great simulated nursing room that I know my colleagues want to get funding for that, or allow that in the State of New York, but your sector already has that.

And the investment that's in a lot of these proprietary colleges -- I should change it to APC, I need to make sure I get the name right --

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Thank goodness

it's still at least APC, right?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay, good. Thank you.

A lot of your sector puts the money right back in, because the facilities -- the dental assistants -- are wonderful.

So how do you make sure you get more of that information out? Especially because the students were here earlier.

So the nursing question first, and then -- I'm sorry, please.

MS. LIVANOS: Thank you so much for your question.

So to answer your question about adjoining states. So Vermont, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey are all members of the nurse licensure compact. And there is pending legislation in almost every state that has not yet adopted it. So there is great interest.

Obviously the COVID-19 pandemic and the workforce crisis that states are experiencing has generated interest and stronger interest in joining the nurse

licensure compact.

I think you're absolutely right, there needs to be both short-term and long-term solutions for the nursing workforce shortage.

One thing that's really important I think to this committee and the work on higher ed is that there was a survey of nursing education consultants at boards of nursing across the country, and they found that it was -- the NLC was an important tool in helping to facilitate the hiring of faculty and adjunct faculty at nursing programs. That it was increasing access to clinical sites and decreasing barriers for distance education programs to expand and meet nurses where they are and students where they are, maybe in rural or underserved areas.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: And just to answer your question about how we can better educate folks about the good work that's happening on APC member institutions' campuses. You know, I think it's a matter of

bringing our students to Albany, like we have. And, you know, making sure that we invite you to come visit our campuses, because we love to have the Legislature come and visit and meet with us, so ...

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Toby Stavisky.

SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

Just real -- really very briefly.

First, Blair Horner, thank you for what you're doing with NYPIRG. I know you go back a long way with NYPIRG -- so do I, in a sense. And we appreciate your comments here today, and I agree with you.

In terms of the proprietary colleges, I am delighted that the Assemblywoman just mentioned Plaza, because although it's not in my district, I've been there many times and they really have an interesting program. And they just opened -- they just did a groundbreaking maybe sometime last year or so, for their nursing program. So they are meeting the needs of the community.

And we also at the same time should

mention Monroe, which is another good proprietary school.

So we thank you for your sort of a niche higher education. You're helping a certain segment of students, and they do -- I know they stay in the community.

And to the other panelists, we thank you very much for coming.

Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblyman Epstein.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: First I want to thank you for staying so late. I really appreciate it, so I'll be quick.

Also, President Gurnett, I just want to talk to you a little more about -- because we've been hearing a lot about proprietary schools all day long, and you mentioned that they combine the default rate for your schools as well as the non-degree-granting institutions.

So what is the, you know, five years after graduation default rate, and the default rate for students that don't graduate

from the proprietary schools that you represent?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: That's actually -- that's actually a very good point. I'm glad you raised that, because there is no official five-year-cohort default rate. Right now the U.S. Department of Education calculates a three-year-cohort default rate, and APC members do very well in that.

But the five-year-cohort default rate that was referenced in that article is really a projection based on some research that was done at what it would be. So it's really kind of hard to say, you know, what it would be.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So your schools don't keep records of default rates for their graduates or non-graduates?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: They do. They do. What I am saying is the U.S. Department of Education doesn't necessarily calculate that.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: But you -- you

have 11 institutions. I assume that you have that kind of data. So could you share what that is?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I don't have it right here with me today, but I could ask them.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Yeah, I would appreciate that. Because honestly, if we're not -- if we're mixing apples and oranges, we'd like -- I mean, data helps drive the whole conversation. Right?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Mm-hmm.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So if we have the actual data, we can then say, okay, based on the data, this is what we know.

You know, we've talking a lot about like why students aren't finishing school, why are people dropping out, why are we seeing less enrollment. And, really, data drives this conversation.

We heard a lot around hunger and sexual violence and reproductive health as factors in why people are no longer continuing in schools. And so that I assume

applies not just for the public institutions but also the proprietary schools as well.

So if you could get us data that will help us understand what those issues look like so we can really make informed good policy decisions -- because you asked to extend TAP. I don't know if that's a good or a bad policy decision because I don't have any data to go along with that.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Right. Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So until we have that data, it's really hard to make good informed decisions.

So it would be great to see your -- you know, you said there's three-year, but five-year, and also maybe your four-year or five-year graduation rates for your students, how many, you know, people who apply get in, and then how many people drop out and kind of what issues students have with getting TAP or not getting TAP.

We've heard earlier from HESC around kind of, you know, half the people who apply for TAP don't even get it. And we don't know

why. So we need to know why people aren't getting TAP when they might be eligible and what barriers that we may need put into place. Maybe it's what you raised earlier about people being -- in their taxes being labeled as independents, and then the threshold's too low. And that might be it, but we just don't know until we have all of the data.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Right. Absolutely.

I will say the APC website has a wealth of data. We have a lot of our graduation rates listed there, and there's a lot of good information on there.

ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great. Thank you.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Sure.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Ra.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Good evening. Thank you guys for sticking it out here with us.

Regarding the Association of Private Colleges -- I want to acknowledge the new name -- with the part-time TAP, you know,

you're talking about, and I think this is certainly going on across the spectrum with higher education, people adapting to whatever they're trying to do, coming out of the pandemic.

So, you know, what does that look like for that student who says to themselves, I would like to go if I had access to part-time TAP, but I don't. Are they just not seeking education? Are they going somewhere else?

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: No, I think that probably APC member institutions are working with them, you know, and just -- we offer, I think the latest numbers we have, over $100 million in institutional aid. So I think that they are probably just getting the aid they need from the institution instead, or from other areas as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, great. And I know you had -- there was one other -- what you talked about with, you know, you had data in terms of how many students would benefit from the part-time piece.

What about the -- this two-year

program gap where, just because they're at an institution that only offers two-year programs, that they can't access the full award? Do you know how many students might be able to benefit --

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I think it's a very small number, to be honest with you. There's only two institutions that I can think of. One is Island Drafting, on Long Island, which has about 100 students. And the other -- and this is not an APC member, so I'm not sure, but Long Island Business Institute I believe also offers just two-year programs. Again, maybe 200 or 300 students.

So I'm glad that you asked me that question, because that's an important -- it's an important piece. It was a change that was made I believe in 2014, and we would love to see that restored.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: So small financially, but I'm sure would be a major difference --

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Yes, definitely. But it would have a huge impact.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: -- to those students.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I just had a opportunity to go say hi to a bunch of your students --

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: That's right.

ASSEMBLYMAN RA: -- outside who were all from Long Island and the Bronx and Westchester, so it was nice to meet them.

So thank you.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Great. Thanks.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Senate?

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

Hi. For Nicole from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing.

So you're not a New York organization, you're a national organization, right?

MS. LIVANOS: Correct.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So New York State has historically not wanted to join this compact or the doctor's compact. Can you make -- can you explain to me why we've historically not been interested and why

we're wrong?

(Laughter.)

MS. LIVANOS: How much time do you -- no, just kidding.

(Laughter.)

MS. LIVANOS: Thank you for your -- yeah, thank you for your question, Senator.

So I think that when we're talking about what decisions were being made and what opinions were being formed five years ago versus today, we have to consider what we've been through in the last couple of years and what the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, and that is that we need flexible licensure.

I think across the country one of the first executive orders that governors passed, or emergency legislation that legislatures considered, was licensure mobility and creating immediate flexibility for licensees, knowing how important it was that they be able to cross borders, whether it be physically or through telehealth, since all health went that way.

So I think that we're living in a

different world now. And so I think states that may have been concerned, as Chair Fahy mentioned, about what standards our state requires versus the state next door -- that some of those conversations are being heard in a different light now, knowing the great need and the fact that for registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, licensure standards across the states are very uniform.

Practice and scope of practice laws for registered nurses and licensed practical nurses are very standardized. That's different from other professions that still have a lot of lack of uniformity. But for nursing, that is there.

So I think that as we're facing the shortages that we are today, states across the country are looking to compacts and compacts are gaining more popularity. More and more healthcare professionals are looking to them to really meet the demands of modern healthcare and also have it as a tool in the toolbox for emergency responses. Heaven forbid we run into something like COVID

again.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

So you're not at the wrong hearing, because it's the scope of practice in licensing, but tomorrow we're going to spend the whole day here at a Health Committee meeting -- and I'm hearing it's starting at 10:00 a.m., not 9:30 a.m., just so everybody knows that.

And I'm going to look for someone tomorrow to ask that same question: What's changed, and why aren't we doing this now, or why should we? So thank you for your response.

MS. LIVANOS: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to Assemblywoman Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

I have a couple of questions. One is, you know, we've had a nursing shortage for a long time. It's a national shortage. So the compact issue and whether and how that really helps the shortage at all is still a big question to me, so I'd like to have that

addressed.

But also on the proprietary schools -- you know, a number of them are in my district in downtown Brooklyn, right, and ASA is one of those. And one of the questions I have is ASA, for example, originally started experiencing a lot of difficulty because the head of the ASA was accused of multiple sexual assault violations, was cashiered out, and then came back -- because these are family-owned institutions, very often.

So how is it that your organization is able to sort of monitor that? Because it wasn't necessarily an education-quality issue, as far as we know. It wasn't necessarily a debt issue, as far as we know. It was bad behavior.

So the two of those questions, you can -- however you take it, whichever one.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Go ahead.

MS. LIVANOS: Okay. Thank you so much for your question.

So I would say that how the compact can impact the nursing workforce shortage, if

we can look to the 39 member jurisdictions that are part of the compact today, and the fact that immediately upon COVID hitting they had 34 states where they could pull nurses and recruit nurses forward to deal with what I would call acute emergencies, right -- hotspots that were developing across the country. They immediately could pull from this work force. That's during times of emergency.

I think what we're seeing now, too, is that technology is moving in the direction of where patients are demanding care where they are. They're more and more demanding, you know, follow-up care via telehealth. And so I think that there's an opportunity to help the workforce reach more patients, and that includes calling on nurses that are both in-state as well as out-of-state to reach New York patients as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Okay, so I would say -- first of all, I just would like to point out that ASA is not now nor has it

ever been a member of APC, just to make sure that that's clear.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you. I understand. I appreciate you mentioning that.

MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Yes, just to be clear.

And I would say that, you know, it's a very small community, the institutions of higher ed across the sectors, all sectors. And we all work together very closely, and when there are issues that come up, obviously we're very concerned.

We worked very closely with the State Ed Department. We worked very closely with Middle States, ASA's accreditor. We worked very closely with the U.S. Department of Education as well, expressing our concerns and letting them know what we're hearing and seeing in the field, from students that are coming to our institutions to, you know, faculty or other staff members that wanted to move to a different institution.

So, you know, it's very interesting.

We expressed our concerns to, them and we're working very closely with them to make sure the students are protected and have a smooth transition to wherever they choose to go.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

Any other Senators?

SENATOR STAVISKY: We're the only two left.

(Laughter.)

SENATOR STAVISKY: Three, I'm sorry --

(Laughter.)

CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: It's around that time we get a little giddy.

So thank you for being here to present testimony. Thank you for the work you do at -- in the community.

And this will be concluding the Higher Education hearing. A reminder that tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. we will be starting the Health Committee hearing, the Health hearing. That's a change from what was published. So it will be 10:00 a.m. for the

Health hearing, here in this room.

Thank you again for being here, and this officially concludes the Higher Education budget hearing.

CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, the budget hearing concluded at 6:46 p.m.)