

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

---

3 JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING

4 In the Matter of the  
5 2024-2025 EXECUTIVE BUDGET ON  
6 HIGHER EDUCATION

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7 Hearing Room B  
8 Legislative Office Building  
9 Albany, New York

10 February 8, 2024  
11 9:39 a.m.

12 PRESIDING:

13 Senator Liz Krueger  
14 Chair, Senate Finance Committee

15 Assemblywoman Helene Weinstein  
16 Chair, Assembly Ways & Means Committee

17 PRESENT:

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

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

22 Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy  
23 Chair, Assembly Higher Education Committee

24 Senator Toby Stavisky  
Chair, Senate Higher Education Committee

Senator John C. Liu

Assemblyman Robert Smullen

Senator Gustavo Rivera

1 2024-2025 Executive Budget  
Higher Education  
2 2-8-24

3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

5 Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman

6 Assemblyman Harvey Epstein

7 Senator Robert Jackson

8 Senator Lea Webb

9 Assemblywoman Monique Chandler-Waterman

10 Assemblywoman Monica P. Wallace

11 Senator Dean Murray

12 Assemblywoman Phara Souffrant Forrest

13 Senator Iwen Chu

14 Assemblyman Scott Gray

15 Assemblywoman Monica P. Wallace

16 Senator Peter Oberacker

17 Assemblyman Erik M. Dilan

18 Assemblywoman Chris Eachus

19 Assemblywoman Karen McMahon

20 Assemblywoman Sarah Clark

21 Assemblyman Ed Flood

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4 LIST OF SPEAKERS

5 STATEMENT QUESTIONS

6 Dr. John B. King, Jr.  
Chancellor  
7 State University of New York  
-and-

8 Félix V. Matos Rodríguez  
Chancellor  
9 City University of New York 10 29

10 Dr. Guillermo Linares  
President  
11 NYS Higher Education  
Services Corporation  
12 (HESC) 159 168

13 Dr. James Davis  
President  
14 Professional Staff Congress/CUNY  
-and-

15 Dr. Frederick E. Kowal  
President  
16 United University Professions  
-and-

17 Allen Williams  
President  
18 New York Community College  
Trustees  
19 -and-

20 Andrew Sako  
President  
21 Faculty Federation  
of Erie Community College 209 221

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3 LIST OF SPEAKERS, Cont.

4 STATEMENT QUESTIONS

5 James McCartney  
Director  
6 NYS University Police Lieutenants  
Benevolent Association  
7 President  
PBA of New York State

8 -and-  
Bradley Hershenson  
9 Business Agent  
CWA 1104-Graduate Student  
10 Employees Union (GSEU)

11 -and-  
Donna Stelling-Gurnett  
12 President  
Association of Private  
Colleges (APC)

13 -and-  
Jennifer Tassler  
14 VP for Government Relations and  
Strategic Affairs  
15 New York State Academic Dental  
Centers (NYSADC)

16 -and-  
Lola W. Brabham  
17 President  
Commission on Independent  
18 Colleges and Universities  
(CICU)

273 290

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23  
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3 LIST OF SPEAKERS, Cont.

4 STATEMENT QUESTIONS

5 Arturo Soto  
Secretary  
6 CUNY Coalition for Students  
with Disabilities (CCSD)

7 -and-

8 Blair Horner  
Executive Director  
New York Public Interest  
9 Research Group (NYPIRG)

-and-

10 Deidra Nesbeth  
Director  
11 Fostering Youth Success Alliance  
-and-

12 Alexandra Sisti  
Founding Member  
13 District 1 Youth Advisory Board  
-and-

14 Dr. Marcy Ferdschneider  
Assistant Vice President,  
15 Student Health on Haven  
Columbia University

16 -and-

17 Samuel Rowser  
Executive Director  
On Point for College

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1                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Welcome. This  
2 is the budget hearing on Higher Education.

3                   Good morning. I am Helene Weinstein,  
4 chair of the New York State Assembly's Ways  
5 and Means Committee and cochair of today's  
6 hearing.

7                   Today we begin the 10th in a series of  
8 hearings conducted by the joint fiscal  
9 committees of the Legislature regarding the  
10 Governor's proposed budget for fiscal year  
11 2024-'25. And the hearings are conducted  
12 pursuant to the New York State Constitution  
13 and the Legislative Law.

14                   Today the Assembly Ways and Means  
15 Committee and the Senate Finance Committee  
16 will hear testimony concerning the Governor's  
17 proposed budget for higher education.

18                   I'll introduce the members from the  
19 Assembly. After that my cochair,  
20 Senator Krueger, will introduce the members  
21 from the Senate, and then our ranking members  
22 will introduce the members of their  
23 conference.

24                   So, so far from the Assembly we have

1 Assemblywoman Fahy, who is the chair of our  
2 Higher Ed Committee. We have Assemblymember  
3 Chandler-Waterman, Assemblymember Clark,  
4 Assemblymember Dilan, Assemblymember Eachus,  
5 Assemblymember Epstein. And I am sure there  
6 will be some other members who will be  
7 joining us.

8 Senator Krueger, if you'd like to  
9 introduce your colleagues.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
11 much.

12 We've been joined by Higher Ed Chair  
13 Toby Stavisky, John Liu, Lea Webb, Robert  
14 Jackson, Iwen Chu, Gustavo Rivera.

15 And my Republican ranker, Tom O'Mara,  
16 is going to update us with his members.

17 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you,  
18 Chairwoman.

19 On our side we're joined by  
20 Senator Peter Oberacker this morning.

21 Good morning.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good morning.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Ra,  
24 our ranker on Ways and Means, will introduce

1 his colleagues.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

3 Good morning. We're joined by  
4 Assemblymember Smullen, our ranking member on  
5 the Higher Education Committee, as well as  
6 Assemblymembers Gray and Flood.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

8 So just a little bit of the ground  
9 rules for today. The time limits: The  
10 governmental witnesses will have 10 minutes  
11 to present their testimony. The  
12 nongovernmental witnesses who are on the  
13 schedule will have three minutes to present  
14 their testimony.

15 And we just encourage everyone to not  
16 read their testimony, because sometimes  
17 that -- particularly the nongovernmental  
18 witnesses, that three minutes comes right  
19 after you've said hello, given us greetings.  
20 Just get to the substance of what you'd like  
21 us to hear.

22 As for the legislators, the chairs of  
23 the committees, the two Higher Ed chairs,  
24 today will each have 10 minutes and a second

1 round of three minutes if desired. And  
2 again, the time frame is for both the  
3 question and please leave time for the  
4 witnesses to answer.

5 Ranking members of the two committees  
6 will get five minutes each to ask questions  
7 and hear the answers. And all other members  
8 of the relevant -- of the Higher Ed Committee  
9 or Ways and Means will have three minutes  
10 each.

11 And just to the legislators, please  
12 let us know as soon as possible if you want  
13 to be on the list to ask a question. And if  
14 you text me or Senator Krueger and we don't  
15 respond, don't assume you're on the list. We  
16 had some issues yesterday.

17 I would also just ask people to note  
18 we have time clocks all over the hearing  
19 room. And as I mentioned, that they are both  
20 for the question and the answer.

21 And I'm delighted now to call upon the  
22 first two witnesses. First, John King,  
23 chancellor of the State University of  
24 New York. Last year you were interim

1           chancellor, so we're happy that you're here  
2           in your official position as chancellor.

3                     And after Chancellor King speaks, we  
4           have the chancellor of the City University of  
5           New York, Félix Matos Rodríguez.

6                     So we would ask, Chancellor King, if  
7           you could start. We'll then go to  
8           Chancellor Rodríguez, and then we will have  
9           I'm sure questions from the panel.

10                    SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Good morning,  
11           Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky and Fahy  
12           and Ranking Members O'Mara, Ra and Smullen.  
13           Appreciate the opportunity to join you today  
14           alongside my friend and colleague Chancellor  
15           Matos Rodríguez.

16                    There are no greater testaments to the  
17           power of public higher education than SUNY  
18           and CUNY, and we owe an incredible debt of  
19           gratitude to the Senators and Assemblymembers  
20           in this room, to your colleagues, and to  
21           Governor Kathy Hochul.

22                    Since returning to New York to assume  
23           this role just over a year ago, I've  
24           prioritized visiting each of our 64 campuses,

1 and I'm grateful to many of you for joining  
2 those visits. I come before you today filled  
3 with tremendous pride in our system and, most  
4 importantly, in the students we are  
5 privileged to serve, and the faculty and  
6 staff making extraordinary life-changing  
7 contributions on our campuses every day.

8 SUNY is on the move, with remarkable  
9 progress on multiple fronts. We are making  
10 it clear that there is a place at SUNY for  
11 every New Yorker. SUNY campuses are climbing  
12 in national rankings and, even more  
13 importantly, being recognized as powerhouses  
14 of social mobility. And SUNY continues to  
15 sit at the heart of New York State's strategy  
16 for economic development with our education  
17 and training programs and cutting-edge  
18 research boosting diverse areas of emerging  
19 commerce.

20 For the first time in a decade, SUNY  
21 enrollment is up, and it is up across every  
22 sector of our system. While the overall  
23 enrollment gain from fall '22 to fall '23 was  
24 1.1 percent, we saw a much larger 4.3 percent

1           increase in first-time undergraduate  
2           enrollment, a leading indicator of future  
3           growth.

4                     Our gains in enrollment fuel and are  
5           in turn fueled by the four pillars the SUNY  
6           Board of Trustees and I have established:  
7           Student success, research and scholarship,  
8           diversity, equity and inclusion, and economic  
9           development and upward mobility. SUNY is  
10          committed to leading the nation in access and  
11          degree completion. College affordability is  
12          a vital component of student success, and I'm  
13          proud of our extraordinary value, with  
14          52 percent of in-state undergraduates  
15          attending SUNY tuition-free.

16                    SUNY is making strides toward meeting  
17          Governor Hochul's charge to double research.  
18          We are laying the groundwork to establish  
19          New York's leadership in AI, biotech,  
20          semiconductor packaging and sustainability  
21          and renewable energy, among so many other  
22          areas.

23                    While some states seek to turn back  
24          the clock on diversity, SUNY and New York are

1 committed to doing even more. We are  
2 strengthening recruitment pipelines for all  
3 students from all backgrounds, and diverse  
4 faculty and campus leadership.

5 In the wake of Hamas's horrific  
6 terrorist attack on Israel on October 7th, I  
7 also want to emphasize that SUNY is standing  
8 up to racism, xenophobia, antisemitism,  
9 Islamophobia, and other forms of hate. As  
10 always, the safety of our students, faculty  
11 and staff is paramount. I'd be happy to  
12 answer questions about the steps we are  
13 taking.

14 And SUNY is proudly working with  
15 government and employer partners to make  
16 targeted investments in workforce development  
17 in high-demand sectors and expanding  
18 internship opportunities across SUNY, with  
19 the goal to ultimately reach every SUNY  
20 student.

21 I also want to note SUNY's commitment  
22 to excellence in operational and fiscal  
23 stewardship, including the difficult  
24 decisions necessary to ensure fiscal health.

1                   Let me now turn to the ways in which  
2                   SUNY students, faculty, staff and the broader  
3                   SUNY community are benefiting from the  
4                   investments made by the Executive and  
5                   Legislature in last year's budget, which  
6                   provided the largest operating aid increase  
7                   for SUNY in more than 20 years.

8                   The '23-'24 enacted budget included  
9                   \$163 million in increased direct state  
10                  support for our state-operated campuses, with  
11                  commitments in the State Financial Plan of an  
12                  additional \$54 million in each of the next  
13                  two fiscal years. We remain incredibly  
14                  grateful for these resources.

15                  SUNY prioritized ensuring that all  
16                  state-operated campuses received a  
17                  significant funding increase, since every  
18                  campus has both needs and growth  
19                  opportunities. We dedicated approximately  
20                  \$40 million to recurring annual state  
21                  investment in student mental health, services  
22                  for students with disabilities, addressing  
23                  food insecurity, paid internships, and  
24                  expanding research opportunities.

1 Support from the Legislature also  
2 provided \$3 million towards eliminating fees  
3 charged to graduate students who work on  
4 campus.

5 In addition, the enacted budget  
6 maintained the 100 percent community college  
7 funding floor, preserving \$79 million in  
8 state support that would have otherwise been  
9 lost.

10 And the \$75 million SUNY  
11 Transformation Fund is already making an  
12 extraordinary difference. Most notably,  
13 25 campuses are adopting ASAP and ACE, the  
14 nation's leading models for increasing  
15 student completion. These initiatives were  
16 pioneered at CUNY and proven through  
17 randomized controlled trials.

18 Finally, we're grateful for the  
19 continued investment in SUNY's capital needs.  
20 This includes approximately \$1.6 billion in  
21 the '23-'24 budget, which also recognized the  
22 importance of debt service relief for our  
23 hospitals.

24 These investments in SUNY pay off.

1 For every dollar of state funding invested in  
2 SUNY, the state enjoys nearly \$9 in economic  
3 return.

4 Let me now turn to Governor Hochul's  
5 '24-'25 Executive Budget, which makes crucial  
6 investments in SUNY's future. Among the many  
7 highlights are increased and ongoing  
8 operating support for all SUNY campuses. The  
9 Executive Budget fulfills the state's  
10 commitment to an additional \$54 million  
11 increase in operating funds for  
12 state-operated campuses. In addition, the  
13 Executive Budget maintains the 100 percent  
14 community college funding floor, avoiding  
15 \$85 million in lost direct state tax support.

16 Capital investment. The Executive  
17 Budget invests 650 million to address SUNY's  
18 capital needs, including critical maintenance  
19 and new capital investment.

20 Empire AI. Governor Hochul's  
21 Empire AI initiative will position New York  
22 as a national leader in AI research and  
23 economic development. Our four university  
24 centers will harness the power of AI to

1 expand research through this consortium, and  
2 we are especially grateful that UB has been  
3 selected as the host site.

4 A stronger SUNY Downstate. Downstate  
5 Health Sciences University is a gem of the  
6 SUNY system. However, Downstate's main  
7 hospital building has weathered years of  
8 financial instability and fallen into  
9 disrepair. As part of a plan for a stronger  
10 Downstate, I'm deeply grateful for the  
11 Governor's willingness to make a \$300 million  
12 capital investment at SUNY Downstate to cover  
13 the hospital's substantial deficits during  
14 the transition and to provide more modest  
15 operating support going forward.

16 We are working with the community to  
17 pursue a path that will advance the future of  
18 Downstate's unique role in preparing  
19 excellent, diverse healthcare professionals;  
20 preserve inpatient services to be performed  
21 by SUNY Downstate staff in partnership with  
22 other hospitals; sustain and expand  
23 outpatient services to fill healthcare gaps;  
24 and address the significant health

1           disparities facing New Yorkers.

2                   Universal FAFSA completion. New  
3           Yorkers leave \$200 million per year in  
4           federal financial aid on the table by not  
5           completing the FAFSA. And state after state  
6           has shown that making the FAFSA universal  
7           expands college access. Governor Hochul's  
8           plan envisions every high school senior  
9           either completing the FAFSA, the New York  
10          State DREAM Act application, or signing a  
11          waiver passing on the opportunity to apply.  
12          All students will still be able to graduate.

13                   SUNY Service Corps. The Executive  
14          Budget provides \$2.75 million for SUNY to  
15          launch the Empire State Service Corps, in  
16          partnership with Lieutenant Governor Delgado.  
17          This program, modeled after a similar effort  
18          in California, will allow hundreds of SUNY  
19          students to engage with local community-based  
20          organizations and deepen their learning in  
21          the process.

22                   SUNY is appreciative for such a strong  
23          and forward-looking Executive Budget.

24                   Thank you again for your steadfast

1 support for SUNY, your commitment to public  
2 higher education, and the opportunity to join  
3 you today. I look forward to working  
4 together toward the '24-'25 enacted budget  
5 and to invest in the future of SUNY's  
6 students and the communities we are  
7 privileged to serve.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,  
9 Chancellor.

10 Now, Chancellor Rodríguez.

11 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Good  
12 morning, Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky  
13 and Fahy, distinguished members of the  
14 Assembly and the Senate finance committees,  
15 staff, guests, and my good friend and partner  
16 Chancellor King. I am Félix Matos Rodríguez,  
17 or whatever is left of him. Proud to serve  
18 as the chancellor of the City University of  
19 New York.

20 I want to thank Governor Hochul and  
21 you in the State Senate and Assembly for your  
22 continued commitment to public higher  
23 education. Your support over the past two  
24 years has been critical to the important

1           contributions CUNY has made to New York's  
2           rebound from the pandemic.

3                       Now CUNY's building a strategy to make  
4           our university even more impactful as an  
5           agent of change and one of the state's most  
6           potent economic engines. Last June we  
7           unveiled an ambitious strategic roadmap  
8           called "CUNY Lifting New York," a detailed  
9           plan for bolstering the already profound  
10          impact our university makes in the city,  
11          region and state. I invite you to review it  
12          if you haven't done so; I believe you have  
13          copies of the roadmap on your desk in front  
14          of you.

15                      CUNY is integral to the lifeblood of  
16          New York City. More than 80 percent of our  
17          50,000 annual graduates stay in the city,  
18          diversifying every sector of the city's  
19          workforce and contributing to every aspect of  
20          its economic and civic life. CUNY alumni in  
21          New York account for about 70 billion in  
22          annual earnings. That is close to 5 percent  
23          of the state's GDP. Each taxpayer dollar  
24          invested in CUNY returns at least \$15 to

1 New York State. To quote a Daily News  
2 editorial last spring, "Every dollar in is a  
3 dollar that is magnified and keeps New York's  
4 economy humming along."

5 Today I want to highlight a few areas  
6 of recent success that are already advancing  
7 our "CUNY Lifting New York" strategy.

8 One, we continue to transform how we  
9 prepare students for careers and creating  
10 direct and sustainable pipelines to  
11 employers. Over the last year, we launched a  
12 \$1.8 million initiative to get more CUNY  
13 students into paid internships that are  
14 embedded in their degree programs, and we  
15 provided internship opportunities to  
16 4,000 students.

17 We also added a centralized point of  
18 contact to help more than 1,000 private-  
19 sector employers tap into the tremendous pool  
20 of talent on our campuses. And our CUNY  
21 Inclusive Economy initiative is expected to  
22 engage an additional 2,700 students this  
23 academic year.

24 We are also aggressively raising

1 external funds to bolster our fast-growing  
2 research enterprise and advance our  
3 programmatic initiatives. Last year, CUNY  
4 researchers secured a record external funding  
5 of \$638 million, and we are on track this  
6 year to surpass that record.

7 Last month, we received the  
8 university's largest philanthropic donation  
9 ever, a \$75 million gift from the Simons  
10 Foundation. The gift earmarks \$50 million to  
11 recruit 25 cutting-edge computational science  
12 faculty and \$25 million to participate in  
13 Governor Hochul's proposed Empire AI project.  
14 This work is interconnected to our efforts to  
15 leverage advances in AI in our ongoing  
16 student success network. One example of our  
17 partnership is the one with the National  
18 Institute for Student Success. They're  
19 conducting an assessment, and their  
20 assessment will help us develop a new  
21 generation of AI-powered programs that reduce  
22 obstacles to graduation for many students  
23 systemwide.

24 Number three is our wide-ranging

1 program of capital projects. Last week, for  
2 example, we opened a \$95 million nursing  
3 facility at Lehman College in the Bronx.  
4 Funded primarily by the state, it's a  
5 building that will offer high-quality  
6 healthcare education to underserved  
7 populations and help to address our state's  
8 increasingly severe nursing shortage.

9 CUNY graduates an average of  
10 1,800 nurses annually, representing about  
11 half of the nurses entering New York City's  
12 workforce each year.

13 A fourth area that I want to highlight  
14 is CUNY's actions to combat hate,  
15 antisemitism and Islamophobia, and be  
16 proactive in creating campus communities  
17 built on trust, understanding and inclusion.  
18 Over the past year we have taken many steps  
19 to combat antisemitism and other forms of  
20 bigotry, and I'm happy to take your questions  
21 on that and many of them are outlined in our  
22 larger testimony.

23 Lastly, we are fixing long-term flaws  
24 in our transfer system. For years many

1           associate-degree students have lost credits  
2           toward their major when they transfer. By  
3           the end of next year, students will be able  
4           to transfer without losing credits earned in  
5           their major. We estimate that the improved  
6           process will save students who transfer, on  
7           average, four excess credits and about \$1,220  
8           in tuition by the time they graduate. That's  
9           money in their pocket or that's money that  
10          the state is saving in TAP.

11                        This is just a sampling of our recent  
12           successes and efforts, and they reflect our  
13           aspirations and plans for the coming years.  
14           Those plans are always -- and now more than  
15           ever -- dependent on the sustained support of  
16           our elected leaders here in Albany. So let  
17           me turn to the Governor's Executive Budget.

18                        We are encouraged by the additional  
19           operating and capital funding in the  
20           Executive Budget. The Executive Budget  
21           builds on the additional funding for CUNY  
22           that Governor Hochul, you, and your  
23           colleagues appropriated over the last two  
24           years.

1                   For CUNY's operating budget, there is  
2                   an increase of \$36 million in operating  
3                   support for our senior colleges, which will  
4                   help cover fixed cost increases and enable us  
5                   to continue to build on the key initiatives  
6                   that remain central to CUNY's mission.

7                   The Executive Budget also includes an  
8                   increase of \$69.5 million for fringe  
9                   benefits. And the Executive Budget maintains  
10                  the community college funding floor at 100  
11                  percent of the previous year's funding, which  
12                  is crucial to avoiding a significant  
13                  reduction in funding for our community  
14                  colleges.

15                  For CUNY's capital budget, the  
16                  Executive Budget provides critical  
17                  infrastructure investments to modernize our  
18                  25 campuses with an allocation of  
19                  \$441 million. This support will enable us to  
20                  maintain our campuses in a state of good  
21                  repair and make strategic investments in new  
22                  facilities.

23                  As some of you are aware, we've also  
24                  been facing a structural deficit since 2020



1 shown signs of more fiscal distress, as well  
2 as additional shared services in areas such  
3 as IT, collections, and optimizing class  
4 scheduling.

5 On the revenue side, we are vigorously  
6 continuing strategies to boost enrollment and  
7 retention.

8 The State Financial Plan released with  
9 the Executive Budget states that CUNY is at  
10 various stages of negotiating contracts with  
11 its labor unions. We are pleased that we  
12 reached a tentative agreement covering over  
13 10,000 employees represented by CUNY's  
14 classified staff unions, including District  
15 Council 37 and Teamsters Local 237. We are in  
16 negotiations with the Professional Staff  
17 Congress and are committed to bargaining in  
18 good faith to reach a fair settlement soon.  
19 These new labor contracts with our talented  
20 and dedicated faculty and staff are  
21 necessary, but are not without increased  
22 costs to the university.

23 Although we have seen a roughly  
24 2 percent increase in enrollment, we're still

1 far below pre-pandemic levels. We are down  
2 about 40,000 students from the fall of 2019.  
3 This has a major impact on our bottom line.  
4 For example, CUNY lost \$140 million in  
5 tuition revenue between fiscal years 2020 and  
6 2022 when enrollment dropped by 14 percent.  
7 Like the state, city, and other public  
8 entities like the MTA, we were aided by  
9 federal stimulus funds that helped cover the  
10 lost revenue and pandemic-related expenses --  
11 but these one-time funds will be exhausted by  
12 the end of the fiscal year.

13 With your continued support and that  
14 of the Governor, we will continue to make  
15 progress in our ambitious vision to transform  
16 CUNY into the nation's foremost  
17 student-centered urban university system.  
18 And I thank you all for your strong support  
19 and partnership, and look forward to your  
20 questions.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
22 Thank you, Chancellor.

23 Before we begin some questions from  
24 colleagues, I'd like to just acknowledge that

1           Alicia Hyndman and Jo Anne Simon,  
2           Assemblymembers, joined us at the beginning  
3           of this hearing.

4                     And we will now go to the chair of the  
5           Assembly's Higher Education Committee,  
6           Pat Fahy, for questions.

7                     And I just -- for members who haven't  
8           been here before, and for witnesses, we have  
9           a new microphone system. So sometimes you  
10          have to press down hard to get that red ring  
11          to turn to green.

12                    Assemblywoman Fahy.

13                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Thank  
14          you, Chair. And again, great to see you back  
15          and have you with us today.

16                    And thank you to both chancellors for  
17          very thorough testimony. I have a whole host  
18          of questions, and at least for once I don't  
19          have three minutes, but we've got a lot of  
20          questions to get through.

21                    First a couple of comments. I want to  
22          start by saying thank you, thank you, to both  
23          of you. While I didn't tour every campus, I  
24          toured a number of them, and I want you to

1 know you, your staff and each of the  
2 presidents of those colleges could not have  
3 been more gracious, especially with some of  
4 those last-minute tours that I was able to  
5 do. So very much appreciate that.

6 I also appreciate a number of things  
7 that you mentioned, which we'll try to get  
8 back to momentarily. But you both referred  
9 to some of the Supreme Court setbacks last  
10 year, not long after I came into this  
11 position -- and really appreciated your  
12 responsiveness. We all value the diversity  
13 on our campuses, and thank you for the  
14 continued momentum forward to increase that  
15 diversity despite the challenges that we have  
16 received.

17 Funding. I want to commend you both  
18 for issuing your fiscal reports that were  
19 requested last year in our final budget  
20 agreement. There was the request that we get  
21 a fiscal report to really try to address  
22 these years of disinvestment and what it  
23 might take to turn those around. Both of you  
24 have issued very, very sobering reports, and

1 I am glad that it caught a lot of attention.

2 I want to turn to both of you to talk  
3 about -- while you addressed many of those  
4 issues in your testimony, I think it's  
5 important that you highlight what the  
6 outyears will bring if we don't turn around  
7 this disinvestment. And with that I should  
8 add I'm very proud of the work done by those  
9 sitting here, as well as so many in the room  
10 here today, to finally provide substantial  
11 investments. And I thank the Speaker as well  
12 as the Senate Leader on that as well.

13 So we turned it around last year. You  
14 followed through. Both of you have had  
15 enrollment increases for the first time in  
16 multiple years. That has made a difference.  
17 I'm really hoping the FAFSA -- I commend the  
18 Governor for including that in the budget. I  
19 hope that's going to also turn around the  
20 enrollment.

21 With that, I would like you to address  
22 if there's anything that you missed, again,  
23 from those very sobering reports, and we  
24 appreciate you getting those to us in a

1           timely fashion.

2                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thanks so much,  
3 Chair Fahy, and really appreciate your  
4 leadership. Grateful for the 163 million  
5 last year. Grateful that the Governor has  
6 54 million in this year's budget.

7                   But as you look out over a 10-year  
8 period, expenses will continue to grow.  
9 Goods and services will cost more, and  
10 salaries will cost more. We just completed a  
11 very strong contract with UUP; well-deserved  
12 raises. But that will add \$86 million in  
13 costs to the SUNY system this year.

14                   And so in order for us to keep up with  
15 those rising costs we either need increases  
16 in direct state support or tuition increases.  
17 But we need a revenue source. Otherwise,  
18 when you look out 10 years, we have a billion  
19 dollar deficit. So modest investments over  
20 time will make the difference.

21                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

22                   Chancellor Matos Rodríguez.

23                   CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

24 Thank you. And thank you for your

1 leadership, and thank you, it's been great to  
2 have you coming to visit our campuses and  
3 have some of the hearings there. So  
4 appreciate that, the visits and the support.

5 Clearly we -- in the report that we  
6 provided, we want to make sure that we  
7 provided all of you with the best clear  
8 roadmap of where we see the future in terms  
9 of the investments that are needed for us to  
10 have the kind of excellence that you expect  
11 in our campuses.

12 And in our case the cost of the  
13 collective bargaining -- which, you know, in  
14 our budget request we estimate that it will  
15 be around \$184 million. We have not settled  
16 the contract with our faculty like SUNY has,  
17 right, so that's a projection based on a  
18 contract that mirrors theirs, and we'll have  
19 to negotiate in good faith and see where ours  
20 end. But we wanted to provide a projection  
21 for all of you.

22 But those are indispensable costs, to  
23 be able to build all the incredible  
24 programming that you're all proud of that we

1 are proud of, that makes the university  
2 distinct, is based on our human capital.  
3 Which is 85 percent of our cost, right? If  
4 that is not benchmarked, if that is not  
5 protected, right, the rest of the operation  
6 will suffer. And we have, I think, a vision  
7 of cost cutting and discipline on our end,  
8 but we need the additional investments from  
9 all of you to make that path one that's  
10 sustainable.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. I've  
12 got a few more questions I want to get to,  
13 but I want you to know that we have launched  
14 a "Turn on the TAP" campaign to really help  
15 you with those enrollment costs of increasing  
16 TAP, which also has really not kept pace with  
17 inflation at all, especially for the last  
18 25 years, and it's only a 50-year program.  
19 So we'll continue to work with you as well as  
20 on that very essential operating aid, as well  
21 as on the capital that both of you mentioned.

22 I would also be remiss if I didn't  
23 mention the internships. Thank you for  
24 mentioning that. The CUNY internships, I saw

1           in your testimony you mentioned 4,000. As  
2           we've talked about, both of you, I've  
3           mentioned a number of times I would hope that  
4           we could get to a goal that every student,  
5           every student before they graduate would have  
6           an opportunity in an internship program,  
7           because that will also help keep them in  
8           New York even though all of your stats are  
9           impressive. We need to keep those students.

10                   A couple of other questions. Students  
11           can't learn if they don't feel safe. It's a  
12           prerequisite for being able to focus on your  
13           academics. So thank you, both of you, for  
14           addressing this extraordinary rise in hate  
15           and threats of violence on campus,  
16           particularly with antisemitism as well as  
17           racism and Islamophobia.

18                   Chancellor King, you have  
19           particularly -- we've had many conversations  
20           about this. Can you briefly mention the  
21           Title VI and how you have trained I know  
22           hundreds of staff, as well as each of your  
23           presidents, to be immediately responsive so  
24           that students can feel safe?

1                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Look, student  
2                   safety is our top priority. Title VI of the  
3                   Civil Rights Act requires that campuses  
4                   protect students from discrimination or  
5                   harassment on the basis of race or ethnicity.  
6                   And so we've been very clear that there's no  
7                   place for antisemitism at SUNY. We've  
8                   provided training for our senior staff on  
9                   their responsibilities under Title VI. We've  
10                  also deployed our university police  
11                  department to provide additional security for  
12                  Shabbat services, for vigils and protests.

13                  We want our campuses to be places  
14                  where students feel safe and where they can  
15                  engage in dialogue with real disagreements  
16                  about policy matters. But no student should  
17                  ever feel unsafe, and we're working to ensure  
18                  that.

19                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. I  
20                  agree. We need to maintain that civil  
21                  discourse and encourage civil debate, which  
22                  is what our campuses are supposed to be the  
23                  centers of.

24                  Anything else on that, Chancellor?

1 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I  
2 would only echo what the chancellor has said.  
3 On our end we've been very proactive on this  
4 front. We were very proactive because the  
5 race hate and antisemitism preceded  
6 October 7th. October 7th just escalated that  
7 to a different level.

8 So we've had a partnership with our  
9 Hillels. Several of them are doing a deeper  
10 dive into campus culture, we're part of that,  
11 with a survey of climate and review of  
12 policies. So we're working with them to do  
13 that.

14 We have some of the money from the  
15 state -- we've provided grants to our  
16 campuses so they have workshops, symposia,  
17 activities -- training, so we also get to  
18 better understanding. And we've also worked  
19 very hard -- I mean, many of our campuses are  
20 urban campuses, so our campuses mix with the  
21 city. So we work very closely with NYPD in  
22 providing safety and making sure that people  
23 that want to use their First Amendment do  
24 that in an appropriate way.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Yes. Yes. We  
2 definitely want to encourage that.

3 Thank you. I have three other things  
4 that I want to get to very briefly, but I'm  
5 going to start with community colleges. But  
6 we do want to talk about AI -- and I'm hoping  
7 not to do it in another 10 minutes -- and  
8 certainly the SUNY Downstate hospital, which  
9 has lots of concerns there. Thank you for  
10 mentioning it, Chancellor King.

11 Can we briefly talk about the  
12 community colleges? And the colleges -- I  
13 know the SUNY colleges have talked about an  
14 additional \$97 million on top of the  
15 100 percent floor. We know they are key to  
16 growing AI. I think all of us want to make  
17 this the epicenter of the country, if not the  
18 world, for AI investments. Can you talk  
19 about community colleges?

20 And certainly, Chancellor Matos  
21 Rodríguez, I know your community colleges  
22 have also struggled at times, but this is key  
23 to turning it around. And we've got 30  
24 seconds. Thank you.

1                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Community  
2 colleges are a vital engine for workforce  
3 development. We're really grateful for the  
4 TAP for non-credit workforce programs that is  
5 already making a big difference on campuses.

6                   The community college presidents have  
7 a proposal for \$97 million to allow them to  
8 do more high-demand workforce training.  
9 Think about Onondaga Community College and  
10 preparing the workforce for Micron. That's  
11 going to be huge for Central New York.

12                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Great point.  
13 Thank you.

14                   Chancellor Rodríguez.

15                   CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:  
16 Well, on our end too, you know, we've -- our  
17 community colleges have suffered from the  
18 budget cuts on the city side, right. And we  
19 are doing advocacy to make sure that we  
20 restore that --

21                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

22                   CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: --  
23 along with enrollment.

24                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

1 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: But  
2 they're a key part of our pipeline also to  
3 the four-year schools.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,  
5 Chancellor.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you, Chair.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And this  
8 actually might be a good time to mention that  
9 there may, as the day goes on, be questions  
10 that you will not have enough time to fully  
11 answer. So please, after the hearing, send  
12 us in writing, to Senator Krueger and myself,  
13 the responses and we'll make sure to share  
14 with all of our colleagues.

15 Before we go to the Senate, I just  
16 wanted to acknowledge we've been joined by  
17 Assemblywoman Wallace.

18 And we go to the Senate.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

20 We go to the chair, Senator Toby  
21 Stavisky.

22 SENATOR O'MARA: I would just like to  
23 add that we've been joined by Senator Dean  
24 Murray on our side. Thank you.

1 I'm sorry.

2 (Mic problem; off the record.)

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you both for  
4 your testimony.

5 Before I get to other subjects, let me  
6 address one issue that I think you started to  
7 address, and I want to just pick up on that.  
8 And that involves the issue of Downstate, the  
9 medical school for downstate students. I was  
10 looking at last year's testimony, and I asked  
11 you -- you had spoken last year about the 19  
12 distressed SUNY hospitals. And this question  
13 is obviously for Chancellor King.

14 And then I asked you about Downstate,  
15 because it wasn't mentioned. And there have  
16 been problems with Downstate going back to  
17 10 or 15 years, if not longer. And you had  
18 talked -- it was sort of a generic answer  
19 about the importance of Downstate, which I  
20 know you recognize. But now it's sort of  
21 being dealt with at the last minute.

22 When did discussions on the future of  
23 Downstate begin? Approximately.

24 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Well, this is,

1 as you know, a 15-, 20-year conversation  
2 about the challenges at Downstate. Last  
3 session we had a budget ask around a  
4 significant help for the deficit at  
5 Downstate. We didn't get that. We did get  
6 some debt relief, thanks to your leadership,  
7 which we appreciate.

8 But we came into this year knowing  
9 that we would face a \$100 million deficit.  
10 We will run out of cash to continue to  
11 operate by the summer. And so once we didn't  
12 get additional funding in last year's enacted  
13 budget, we began conversations with the  
14 chamber about strategies for how to address  
15 the deficit and how to address the  
16 significant capital needs.

17 As you know, there's been a history of  
18 disinvestment, and capital is deteriorating,  
19 the building has flooding regularly,  
20 temperature-control issues, and is at real  
21 risk of catastrophic failure and harm to  
22 patients and staff.

23 And in our conversations with the  
24 Governor, the Governor was willing to make an

1 extraordinary investment, 300 million in  
2 capital, covering the deficits for two years,  
3 which is another \$200 million, as well as  
4 ongoing operating support.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, I get that  
6 part. But did you discuss, for example, the  
7 issues with the administration at Downstate?  
8 You mentioned the Executive.

9 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: So there's an  
10 ongoing conversation with leadership at  
11 Downstate.

12 It's really important to distinguish  
13 as well between Downstate Health Sciences  
14 University and the hospital. And the  
15 challenges that have driven our  
16 Transformation Plan for the hospital are  
17 about saving the hospital. The Health  
18 Sciences University is, as you know,  
19 providing a critical service for the state in  
20 terms of the diverse healthcare workforce.

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: So have you  
22 discussed this, for example, with the  
23 president of Downstate or the dean?

24 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: With

1           President Riley?

2                   SENATOR STAVISKY:  With  
3           President Riley.

4                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING:  Yeah, we've had  
5           an ongoing discussion since I started as  
6           chancellor in January.

7                   SENATOR STAVISKY:  Since you started.  
8           Did that occur down at Downstate, or was that  
9           on Zoom or --

10                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING:  I visited  
11           Downstate very early on.  I've been back to  
12           Downstate.  I was very pleased --

13                   SENATOR STAVISKY:  Was that with  
14           Dr. Riley?

15                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING:  Yeah.  And was  
16           very pleased to be back at downstate this  
17           summer for the Premed EOP program which we're  
18           very grateful for --

19                   SENATOR STAVISKY:  So you and he  
20           would -- I don't mean to interrupt, but I'm  
21           watching the clock.

22                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING:  Yes.  Yeah.

23                   SENATOR STAVISKY:  You and he were  
24           down there at Downstate this summer

1           discussing the issue.

2                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We've had  
3 multiple conversations, again, since I began  
4 in January. At Downstate, in Albany, on the  
5 phone. Our senior vice chancellor for health  
6 and hospitals has been very engaged with  
7 Downstate trying to figure out a path to save  
8 the hospital.

9                   SENATOR STAVISKY: My question, then,  
10 is I found out about this the Monday --  
11 Martin Luther King Day, when you called me,  
12 the day before the Governor released her  
13 budget. I heard during the Health Department  
14 hearing that the commissioner of Health read  
15 about it in the newspaper.

16                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Again, we're  
17 very fortunate the Governor included in the  
18 Executive Budget the funding that would  
19 provide capital support to save the hospital,  
20 to allow us to build a new \$300 million  
21 outpatient facility --

22                   SENATOR STAVISKY: All right. But to  
23 ask us -- I'm questioning how we can get  
24 additional information during this

1 time frame.

2 Let me ask you a couple of other  
3 questions --

4 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Sure.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: -- real quick,  
6 because I do want to get on to other  
7 subjects. But this, I must tell you, is of  
8 great, great concern to me, quite frankly, as  
9 chair of the committee, but also to the  
10 legislators who represent the Central  
11 Brooklyn area -- and even most importantly,  
12 to the people who use this facility, these  
13 facilities, for their healthcare, as  
14 healthcare providers.

15 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Look, I  
16 understand, Senator. And as we've discussed,  
17 you know, this is the community I grew up in.  
18 It's a healthcare community I know well. My  
19 earliest memory of a hospital is when I was  
20 at Kings County with my mom when she had a  
21 heart attack, passed away when I was eight.  
22 So I know the community needs very well. I  
23 appreciate folks' frustration with the  
24 history of disinvestment in Central Brooklyn.

1                   And my goal here is to strengthen the  
2                   Health Sciences University and to preserve  
3                   and expand the health services for the  
4                   community.

5                   SENATOR STAVISKY: So to accomplish  
6                   this you've outlined some general actions  
7                   that we ought to take. And we're not  
8                   disagreeing in terms of the needs.

9                   Do you need a CON, a Certificate of  
10                  Need, from the Health Department, for  
11                  example?

12                 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We're working  
13                 through now with the staff at Downstate, as  
14                 well as with Health + Hospitals, as well as  
15                 with DOH, the details of the process that  
16                 would need to take place in the coming weeks  
17                 and months.

18                 It's important to say that as part of  
19                 this plan, in addition to building a new  
20                 outpatient facility, the bulk of the  
21                 inpatient services would move across the  
22                 state to a SUNY Downstate dedicated space  
23                 within Kings County.

24                 The staff, the vast majority would go

1 over to that SUNY Downstate dedicated space,  
2 and they would continue to provide services  
3 as SUNY Downstate employees in a SUNY  
4 Downstate identified area. But the capital  
5 conditions at Kings County are significantly  
6 superior to the conditions at Downstate.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: I asked about the  
8 CON. Is there going to be an application for  
9 that or not?

10 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Again, those  
11 are -- that's a process we are working  
12 through with the staff at Downstate, with  
13 Health + Hospitals, and with the Department  
14 of Health over the coming weeks and months.

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: Are you planning to  
16 request a Health Equity Impact Assessment  
17 statement? And if so, who would provide  
18 that?

19 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Again, that's a  
20 determination that will be made in the coming  
21 weeks and months, along with Health +  
22 Hospitals and the Department of Health.

23 I will say the Department of Health  
24 recently issued a health equity report for

1 Central Brooklyn that emphasized many of the  
2 areas that this plan addresses, the dire need  
3 for additional urgent care, primary care,  
4 preventive care. And that's one of the  
5 reasons we're so appreciative of the  
6 Governor's willingness to invest \$300 million  
7 in the new outpatient facility.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Did that DOH report  
9 include capital, or was it just --

10 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: The DOH report  
11 was focused on --

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: I know that.  
13 That's why I asked what --

14 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: -- the  
15 conditions of services in the area, but it  
16 called for -- it highlighted, rather, the  
17 need for additional outpatient services,  
18 including the training of primary care  
19 doctors, which is a critical role that  
20 Downstate can play.

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: Can we assume that  
22 you're going to continue to work with the  
23 Department of Hospitals on these issues that  
24 are facing the Central Brooklyn community?

1                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Absolutely.  
2                   With the Department of Health, with Health +  
3                   Hospitals, and with the community. And just  
4                   yesterday we laid out a whole community  
5                   engagement process as we worked through  
6                   implementation of the principles that the  
7                   Governor established.

8                   SENATOR STAVISKY: Real quick, because  
9                   I have 39 seconds. There have been rumors  
10                  about CUNY -- about SUNY housing appearing on  
11                  your campuses. Can you --

12                 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, the --  
13                 you know, we share the Governor's commitment  
14                 to address the issue of housing. It's  
15                 certainly hampering the state's well-being  
16                 and economic development.

17                 The Governor asked state agencies to  
18                 identify state properties where housing could  
19                 be developed. And in those conversations we  
20                 shared a list of places where there's the  
21                 possibility for development. In particular,  
22                 there are places where our campuses are very  
23                 eager to have additional housing for staff.  
24                 And so that's one of the things we're talking

1 through with the chamber.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you,  
3 Chancellor. I'll ask additional questions,  
4 follow-up questions later. Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

6 So we go now to the ranker on  
7 Higher Education, Assemblyman Smullen, five  
8 minutes.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Thank you very  
10 much, Chair.

11 This is really important testimony  
12 today because education for all New Yorkers  
13 is a critical thing, and public education is  
14 even more so. It's a matter of fundamental  
15 equity for New Yorkers. So I'd like to start  
16 actually with Chancellor King. I know we've  
17 been talking about rural equity and what's  
18 fair for New Yorkers. How is the funding  
19 formula for community colleges coming along?  
20 You know, I did note in the budget that the  
21 Governor put out that it stayed flat. So  
22 flat in an inflationary period is a cut. And  
23 I'm very concerned about funding our  
24 community colleges because those are the

1 gateways for many students in rural areas to  
2 be able to make their foray into higher  
3 education.

4 So could you address how we're working  
5 to actually fully fund our community  
6 colleges? Because they have a different  
7 funding model than the other SUNY campuses,  
8 and it's becoming even more precarious, in my  
9 mind.

10 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Appreciate the  
11 question, Assemblyman. And appreciate  
12 your having joined me on visits to campuses  
13 and your interest in community colleges.

14 I will say community colleges have  
15 lost significant enrollment over the last  
16 decade. That's probably the biggest  
17 financial challenge.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Why have they  
19 lost enrollment?

20 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Well, it's a  
21 mix of factors. Certainly, you know, we've  
22 seen that nationally, a decline in community  
23 college enrollment. Some of it has to do  
24 with folks making the choice to go directly

1           into jobs. Some of it has to do with folks  
2           not having the resources to go to college.

3                     One of the reasons why TAP reform and  
4           Pell reform is so promising, because the  
5           purchasing power of TAP and Pell have  
6           diminished over the last two decades.

7                     So resources are a constraint. The  
8           competition with the economy is a constraint.  
9           But what we see is that as our community  
10          colleges adjust and offer programs  
11          specifically that help provide a pathway into  
12          the workforce, we are seeing great demand  
13          there. It's one of the reasons we are so  
14          appreciative of the TAP for workforce  
15          development programs.

16                    The Governor's budget, you know,  
17          maintains the funding floor, which protects  
18          what would otherwise be an \$85 million cut if  
19          the funding was based solely on enrollment.  
20          As I mentioned earlier, the community college  
21          presidents have a proposal around an  
22          additional operating investment focused on  
23          workforce opportunities and their role in  
24          preparing the semiconductor workforce we

1           need, the green jobs workforce we need, the  
2           nurses and allied health field folks that we  
3           need.

4                       And so we are eager to have a fuller  
5           conversation with you and your colleagues  
6           about how we might enhance community college  
7           funding specifically around workforce needs.

8                       ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN:  Yeah, thank you  
9           very much for that, because one of the  
10          programs that's been very successful in my  
11          mind is the P-TECH program, Early College  
12          High School.  And, you know, I see an  
13          opportunity with the community colleges of  
14          how they're spread throughout the state to  
15          actually being -- taking more of a role,  
16          educating more high schoolers in more  
17          technical aspects.

18                      You know, I would love to see that  
19          every college in the state would have a  
20          program for Early College High School to  
21          teach like AP physics to high schoolers.  
22          Otherwise, it's not available to these rural  
23          kids who then are at a disadvantage when they  
24          go to apply to schools that require a lot of

1 technical advanced learning in order to be  
2 admitted to them, that sort of thing. It  
3 puts our rural kids at a comparative  
4 disadvantage.

5 So regarding the full-time-equivalent  
6 funding model itself, we've talked in the  
7 past about having it on a rolling 10-year  
8 average to prevent it from being the ups and  
9 downs of the countercyclical nature of  
10 community colleges. Would that be a helpful  
11 paradigm in order to get the budgeting right  
12 for these community colleges? They get  
13 one-third of their funding from the state,  
14 they get one-third from the students, they  
15 get one-third from the communities, the  
16 property taxpayers primarily in those areas.  
17 How are we able to -- you know, to level this  
18 funding out so it's steady for them?

19 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, we'd  
20 certainly be open to a conversation about  
21 that.

22 I will say the floor over recent years  
23 has been critical. And I would not want to  
24 depart from the community college funding

1 floor. The community colleges are really  
2 counting on that for their planning.

3 That said, a larger conversation about  
4 the level of funding as well as ways to level  
5 it out over time as enrollment shifts -- we  
6 certainly would be open to that conversation.

7 One of the keys for us is, though,  
8 converting the folks who are in workforce  
9 development programs that are non-credit into  
10 students in degree programs. You know, we  
11 have 1.4 million students we serve each year  
12 at SUNY, but a million of them are in  
13 these -- are in programs other than the  
14 degree programs. And so we've really got to  
15 get better at that.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: If we had lots  
17 of microcredentialing, that would be awesome.

18 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Absolutely.  
19 absolutely.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Thanks,  
21 Chancellor.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

24 Senator Murray.

1                   SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you, Chair.

2                   And thank you both for being here.

3                   A couple of quick questions. First,  
4                   on the -- we have a migrant issue, we have a  
5                   housing and shelter problem. There's been  
6                   talk of possibly using SUNY or CUNY campuses.  
7                   Where does that stand now? Is that currently  
8                   happening? Are there still talks going on?  
9                   Where are we?

10                  SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: You know, look,  
11                  the state is facing this humanitarian crisis.  
12                  The Governor asked last year for all state  
13                  agencies to identify how they could help to  
14                  address this humanitarian crisis. We  
15                  responded to that request.

16                  But to date, it has not been necessary  
17                  to have folks housed at our facilities. We  
18                  have one program that's longstanding with a  
19                  nonprofit at Buffalo State. But other than  
20                  that, we really haven't had a role so far.

21                  SENATOR MURRAY: Okay. Thank you.

22                  There's pending legislation now --  
23                  sorry, I only have three minutes, so --  
24                  there's pending legislation right now that

1 would require project labor agreements on  
2 projects of 3 million or more. It's working  
3 its way through the Legislature now. It has  
4 a lot of support. What are your thoughts on  
5 that?

6 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We're certainly  
7 open to conversation about how the PLA law  
8 could work. You know, I think there are  
9 different needs in different regions of the  
10 state. So we'd want to talk through the  
11 implications for timelines for construction  
12 projects depending on the region of the  
13 state. But certainly open to the continued  
14 conversation on that.

15 SENATOR MURRAY: Are there any  
16 particular sticking points that you see?

17 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Again, I think  
18 it goes down -- it comes back to regional  
19 differences across the state, and places  
20 where there are real labor-supply shortages  
21 and what that would mean for our ability to  
22 complete projects. But we're very open to  
23 the conversation.

24 SENATOR MURRAY: What about yourself?

1 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I'm  
2 not familiar with the legislation, so I  
3 cannot comment. So look forward to finding  
4 out more and being able to respond.

5 SENATOR MURRAY: Okay, very good.

6 And then finally, you had mentioned  
7 research. And I know at SUNY Stony Brook I  
8 talked to President McInnis last year about a  
9 lot of the great projects they have going on,  
10 but also about public/private partnerships  
11 and investing from the outside. They're  
12 doing a fairly good job, but could be better.  
13 What are your thoughts on that?

14 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: One of the  
15 things that was very helpful was the  
16 inclusion in last year's enacted budget of  
17 the endowment match. As you know, for  
18 Stony Brook that has already translated into  
19 a \$500 million unrestricted gift that will be  
20 matched with state funds. That's very  
21 helpful to the long-term future of research  
22 at Stony Brook.

23 Stony Brook also is fortunate to be  
24 selected to lead the construction of a

1           \$700 million Climate Change and Resilience  
2           Campus at Governors Island, and that is  
3           another public-private partnership. So we're  
4           certainly trying to leverage those kinds of  
5           private/public partnerships.

6                         Here in Albany the Governor recently  
7           announced a \$10 billion investment at  
8           Albany NanoTech. That is another  
9           private-public partnership, to drive  
10          research.

11                        SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you so much.

12                        CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

13                        CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman Ra  
14          for five minutes, ranker.

15                        ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

16                        Good morning, Chancellors.

17                        I want to go back to the antisemitism  
18          issue, in particular for Chancellor  
19          Rodríguez. And if we have time, I'd be  
20          interested in, Chancellor King, your  
21          elaborating a little bit about measures that  
22          have been taken.

23                        But as you know, you know, prior to  
24          October 7th this was a hot topic at CUNY, an

1 issue. I know you talked about some of the  
2 initiatives that have been taken. And I  
3 certainly, you know, appreciate that you came  
4 out rather strongly when it came to student  
5 groups that were, you know, participating in  
6 protests that I think were causing our  
7 Jewish students to feel unsafe. So I  
8 appreciate that, and I hope you'll remain  
9 steadfast with those Jewish students.

10 But where do you think CUNY is at this  
11 point in addressing this problem? You know,  
12 every time there's some type of incident --  
13 and, you know, I'm right over the Nassau  
14 border, so I certainly have -- I know every  
15 year you make a point of telling us, you  
16 know, students and staff that we have in our  
17 districts. So it's certainly a big concern  
18 for our constituents, what's going on there.

19 So if you can give me a little bit  
20 more about what we're doing to make sure our  
21 Jewish students feel safe at this very  
22 difficult time.

23 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So  
24 thank you for the question.

1                   And I mentioned that, you know, we  
2                   designed, even before October 7th, a plan to  
3                   address it because the cases were on the  
4                   rise. We put funds from the Assembly that we  
5                   gave to the campuses as grants for them to be  
6                   able to do training programs, initiatives,  
7                   exhibits, educational work, right, to be able  
8                   to address some of these issues -- mostly  
9                   from a proactive standpoint as opposed to  
10                  dealing with things when they occurred.

11                  We have been also having direct lines  
12                  of communication with the Hillels on our  
13                  campuses. We have piloted a campus climate  
14                  initiative on seven of our campuses, taking  
15                  feedback from them. I'll give you one  
16                  example. I established an Advisory Council  
17                  on Jewish Life that has been giving me  
18                  feedback about things that we could do  
19                  better. I'll give you one concrete example.

20                  It is New York State law and CUNY  
21                  policy that faculty need to accommodate  
22                  students if they want to observe a religious  
23                  holiday, that they be absent from the  
24                  classes. We got feedback from the students

1 in the community that that was something that  
2 not always, and we initiated a campaign using  
3 student voices to let them know what CUNY  
4 policy was and what New York State law is.  
5 Right?

6 And that was a way to say that we're  
7 listening to their concerns and sending a  
8 message of inclusion, of safety on the  
9 campuses. We will continue to do more. And  
10 we take that very seriously. And any  
11 feedback that you might have, or your  
12 colleagues, I'll be happy to listen to that  
13 too.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Sure. And can you  
15 give me any sense of what you're learning  
16 from the portal in terms of, you know, the  
17 number of incidents going up or down? I  
18 think we know at large we've seen a huge  
19 uptick in these types of incidents in recent  
20 months. But since the portal has been up,  
21 have you seen any trends with regard to  
22 incidents?

23 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:  
24 Well, thank you for the question.



1           that.

2                       And what we have done, to your  
3           question too, in some of the campuses that  
4           have had sort of higher numbers of incidents  
5           reported, we've been able to deploy some  
6           resources to help them expedite the  
7           resolution of those complaints.

8                       ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

9                       And Chancellor King, anything you have  
10          on the issue in 30 seconds?

11                      SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'd just add  
12          that, you know, I'm very proud of the work  
13          that our presidents and staff on our campuses  
14          have done to try to defuse issues, to try to  
15          create a climate for positive, safe exchange  
16          of ideas.

17                      But this is an area where we have to  
18          be ever-vigilant. And we've just been very  
19          clear at SUNY, we're not going to tolerate  
20          antisemitism. We're going to take action.  
21          Every time there's a bias incident report,  
22          we're going to investigate it and make a  
23          determination on what next steps are  
24          necessary.

1                   CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And  
2                   687 students from CUNY in your district,  
3                   since you brought that up.

4                   ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you,  
5                   Chancellor.

6                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: To the Senate.  
7                   (Inaudible; off the record.)

8                   SENATOR RIVERA: Hello, Chancellor. I  
9                   only have three minutes, so I'm going to  
10                  get -- there's three questions that I have as  
11                  follow-up to Senator Stavisky's questions  
12                  regarding SUNY Downstate. And we've had  
13                  conversations about this. But I have three,  
14                  so I'm going to ask them all and then I will  
15                  give you the opportunity.

16                  Number one, you keep referring to  
17                  money that has been committed to actually --  
18                  to make this transformation happen, both on  
19                  the capital side and the operational side.  
20                  Can you tell us where in the budget that is?  
21                  That's number one.

22                  Number two, there was a series of  
23                  questions that the -- that Senator Stavisky  
24                  asked about -- both about the Certificate of

1           Need and also Health Equity Impact  
2           Assessments. And sincerely, both of those  
3           questions you really did not answer them  
4           well. The notion -- and this is why I wanted  
5           to get into whether you felt that we're  
6           talking about processes that are required for  
7           basically any other health institution around  
8           the state that is trying to do anything as  
9           what -- that is close to what you're  
10          suggesting you want to do at SUNY Downstate.  
11          So the fact that you're saying, Well, we  
12          might get into that, you didn't answer the  
13          question directly of whether that's going to  
14          be sought or not, which is truly  
15          unacceptable. But I wanted you to have a  
16          chance to kind of explain yourself there. I  
17          should tell you there's a piece of  
18          legislation I've introduced to kind of make  
19          it so that every institution has to go  
20          through the same thing.

21                    But regardless, the third one is  
22                    related to the community involvement process.  
23                    You stated just -- earlier referred to  
24                    something that happened yesterday,

1 February 7th, as relates to community  
2 involvement. Which if I had any  
3 conversations with any of my colleague who  
4 represent the area, any of the community  
5 organizations that are there, some of the  
6 folks who work there or represent the people  
7 who work there, all of them are -- have been  
8 very clear, in every conversation that I've  
9 had, and certainly every public comment that  
10 they've made, that the community involvement  
11 process has been nonexistent or a failure so  
12 far.

13 So the fact that you're saying proudly  
14 you did something yesterday on something that  
15 you announced a couple of weeks ago that the  
16 Department of Health, as was stated, right  
17 there on the record told me that they found  
18 out that this was happening from you, from  
19 the press, all of that stuff.

20 So those are the three things.  
21 Where's the money? Please be specific.  
22 Number two, the Certificate of Need process.  
23 And number three, do you sincerely think that  
24 the process you've gone through so far as far

1 as community involvement has been a good one?

2 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Again, to be  
3 clear, our goal is to protect the Health  
4 Sciences University, strengthen it, and to  
5 preserve and expand health services in the  
6 community.

7 The funding that the Governor  
8 committed to in the Executive Budget is in a  
9 fund -- I believe it's called the Hospital  
10 Transformation Fund. But we can get you the  
11 specific reference to the --

12 SENATOR RIVERA: Please do. We'll  
13 follow up with whomever. Raise your hand who  
14 we're following up with.

15 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yes, Val Grey,  
16 our senior vice chancellor for health and  
17 hospitals, can follow up. And we've also  
18 briefed Senate staff on that.

19 So that's the source of the funding.  
20 As the enacted budget is finalized, there may  
21 be other places to address some of the  
22 funding. One of the goals is to have an  
23 expanded simulation lab, for example, at  
24 Downstate to support the training of nurses.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. We  
2 go to Assemblyman Epstein, three minutes.

3 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Good morning.  
4 Thank you both for being here.

5 So TAP, expanding opportunities for  
6 people to get TAP, I hear you both saying  
7 that. So do you agree on increasing the  
8 minimum award, allowing more semesters of  
9 TAP, and allowing TAP for grad school for  
10 students, both of you?

11 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: More TAP would  
12 be great. Raising the income threshold would  
13 be great. When we had our TAP hearing,  
14 you'll recall, I pointed out that the income  
15 threshold of \$80,000 --

16 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I only have  
17 three minutes, so I --

18 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Oh, sorry.  
19 Just that the income threshold at \$80,000, if  
20 it had gone up with inflation since 2000, it  
21 would be \$145,000.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great.

23 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: More  
24 TAP, all over, good. Increasing the

1 eligibility, good.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great. Thank  
3 you.

4 And so I wanted just to talk about  
5 greening your campuses. And so we have the  
6 Environmental Bond Act. You know, our  
7 government lands are a real place where we  
8 could do wind, solar, have our students get  
9 involved in composting -- there's so many  
10 opportunities there. I'm wondering if you  
11 both -- I know you've talked about green  
12 plans, and like quickly, can we hear what we  
13 can do to help you move forward in that  
14 agenda?

15 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah. We're  
16 very focused on this. We appointed our first  
17 ever chief sustainability officer, who's  
18 leading in this work.

19 There are two -- the major challenge  
20 is capital. We have an over \$8 billion  
21 capital backlog across the system. We've  
22 prioritized, in the use of any capital  
23 dollars we get, we move up in the project  
24 list projects that will move towards energy

1 efficiency, help us get towards net-zero.  
2 But we need more. And we have a specific  
3 proposal around a \$100 million clean energy  
4 fund, which would help us implement the  
5 energy master plans that we've gathered from  
6 our campuses. But that would be hugely  
7 helpful.

8 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: On  
9 our end, too, if you saw our budget request  
10 on capital, we made a specific ask precisely  
11 about those things to be able to {inaudible}  
12 sustainability goals for the state.

13 So be happy to do a deeper dive on  
14 that. But we concur, I concur with  
15 Chancellor King too that for that, if you  
16 could have, you know, dollars that go to  
17 that, it would be helpful to advance all  
18 those goals. In addition to that, it helps  
19 the entire state of good repair of our  
20 facilities.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And just for the  
22 CUNY system, I know the issue of dorms is a  
23 big issue and having dorm space. Obviously  
24 on a lot of our SUNY campuses we have them,

1 but mostly we don't on CUNY. How do we  
2 expand those opportunities to get students  
3 into our CUNY system knowing they may have a  
4 place to live? As you know, the city is one  
5 of the most expensive cities in the country.

6 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Well, so we  
7 have a study that we're concluding about what  
8 we can do. We've been mostly a commuting  
9 campus, so that's the challenge for us. The  
10 same forces that affect housing for  
11 New Yorkers affect our students. So we want  
12 to see if we can find a way that we can  
13 leverage our real estate, our assets, to be  
14 able to provide more funding so that it's far  
15 more affordable to many more of our students.  
16 And we have a plan coming out, and we're  
17 probably going to launch a couple of projects  
18 around that.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great. Happy to  
20 be helpful there. Thank you.

21 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:  
22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1 Senator John Liu.

2 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

3 Good morning, gentlemen.

4 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Good  
5 morning.

6 SENATOR LIU: Thank you for joining  
7 us. I've got a few questions and not much  
8 time.

9 In the past, has the state funded the  
10 negotiation increase -- cost increases? Has  
11 the state --

12 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: The  
13 labor contracts?

14 SENATOR LIU: Yes.

15 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I  
16 think before 2011 or so, yes.

17 SENATOR LIU: Is that true for SUNY  
18 also?

19 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Well, I started  
20 last January. So I'll get you a rundown of  
21 the history on that.

22 SENATOR LIU: Okay. But in the  
23 current budget there's no provision for labor  
24 contract cost increases?

1                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: That is right.

2                   SENATOR LIU: Okay, thank you.

3                   This is for Chancellor King.

4                   Chancellor King, we had spoken at length in  
5                   the aftermath of the Supreme Court -- the  
6                   appalling Supreme Court decision on  
7                   affirmative action, and we all understand how  
8                   badly it hurts Black and brown students  
9                   across the country.

10                  But I had asked you about how it hurts  
11                  yellow students -- I'm sorry, Asian-American  
12                  students. And you were going to talk about  
13                  it with the Governor, get more resources, get  
14                  a better understanding how it may affect  
15                  Asian-American students. Any progress on  
16                  that?

17                  SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Look, our  
18                  Asian-American percentage has gone up at SUNY  
19                  over recent years. I have every expectation  
20                  that it will go up again this year, based on  
21                  that historical pattern.

22                  The board adopted a very clear  
23                  resolution to help campuses use every  
24                  available legal tool to continue to advance

1           our broader commitment to diversity, looking  
2           at first-gen status, low-income status,  
3           adversity a student may have overcome in  
4           their school or community, if a student is a  
5           veteran, if a student is an AmeriCorps alum.

6                        So we are hopeful that we can continue  
7           to advance our values around diversity. And  
8           we'll get you numbers as soon as we have them  
9           on this year's incoming class.

10                      SENATOR LIU: Yeah, I think it's  
11           important because I think the Asian-American  
12           community is fast-growing on SUNY campuses --  
13           CUNY campuses also, to be sure, but SUNY  
14           campuses in particular. And we want to  
15           understand what that Supreme Court ruling  
16           does for Asian-American students.

17                      We've been having this discussion for  
18           several months now, and it would be good to  
19           have -- to get some hard numbers on progress.  
20           Again, what SUNY is doing to make sure that  
21           there is continued recruitment of  
22           Asian-American students as well as  
23           African-American and Latinx students. You  
24           know, Black, brown and yellow.

1                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah.

2                   SENATOR LIU: And also making sure  
3 that we understand what the potential impact  
4 of that Supreme Court ruling would have on  
5 Asian-American students.

6                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yes.

7                   SENATOR LIU: Okay. And I appreciate  
8 your testimony here. It talks about the  
9 continuing Hispanic Leadership Institute, the  
10 Black Leadership Institute. I feel -- I feel  
11 like I have a complex. Maybe we'll add  
12 something else there too.

13                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'm hopeful.  
14 There is -- as you know, there is a bill and  
15 I'm hopeful that there will be an API  
16 Leadership Institute.

17                   SENATOR LIU: Thank you so much.

18                   Felo, you have a very handsome guy  
19 right in back of you, Hector Battista. Good  
20 to see him as well.

21                   CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I am  
22 blessed to have an incredible team, yes.

23                   (Overtalk.)

24                   SENATOR LIU: Sherif's not so bad

1           either.

2                       CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  Compliments  
3           will all come later.

4                       (Laughter.)

5                       CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  We go to  
6           Assemblywoman Clark.

7                       ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK:  Oh, Chairwoman,  
8           it's so great to have you back.

9                       I am going to try to be quick with a  
10          comment-question-comment in my three minutes.

11                      My first comment is I agree on the  
12          universal FAFSA.  I think it's a great idea.  
13          My question is, it's put in as Article VII  
14          language with no money coming with it.  One  
15          of the reasons we know people don't fill out  
16          their FAFSA forms is they're complicated,  
17          particularly in our urban districts, our  
18          rural districts.  I think there needs to be a  
19          pot of money that goes with it.  I don't  
20          think every school needs a coordinator.  I  
21          think we can do this through a grant program.  
22          We already have a great organization in  
23          Rochester, the Rochester Education  
24          Foundation, that supports our city school

1 district to do this.

2 But we need to give them more  
3 resources if this is going to be a  
4 requirement. We want the ones to apply who  
5 find it complicated, because they are the  
6 ones who are also leaving money on the table.  
7 So I really don't think we can just put this  
8 in there and walk away. We really need to  
9 put some dollars behind it. And I would  
10 encourage you to look at that.

11 On that, I'm going to go into TAP a  
12 bit. We heard during that TAP hearing that  
13 during the four-year from 2018 to 2022, there  
14 was a 9 percent decline in enrollment in our  
15 SUNY campuses, but a 26 percent decline in  
16 TAP. Which means that there are more and  
17 more parents and families who are either  
18 thinking the minimum award isn't enough, so  
19 they're not applying, or they're no longer  
20 qualifying because of the income.

21 So in the Governor's budget I see that  
22 she moved out 132 million from TAP due to  
23 enrollment. I don't understand why we're not  
24 using those dollars instead to increase

1 income eligibility, to increase minimum  
2 awards, to close the gap between SUNY and the  
3 maximum award. So why didn't we do that  
4 instead of removing it from TAP?

5 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: As I mentioned,  
6 I'm very supportive, we're very supportive of  
7 trying to address the income threshold for  
8 dependent students and independent students.  
9 That income threshold at \$10,000 has been the  
10 same since the mid-'80s. And that is a real  
11 challenge for families and students. And  
12 they not only make the choice not to come to  
13 college, but many of them make the choice to  
14 come to college and then struggle with food  
15 insecurity, housing insecurity because they  
16 don't have the resources.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: I would agree.  
18 And I think if we do move to universal FAFSA,  
19 and if that is something we move forward  
20 with, TAP also is going to increase. So why  
21 we're pulling any money out of it in the  
22 budget just doesn't seem to make sense to me.

23 My last thing I will quickly comment  
24 on, and maybe -- I know others are going to

1 go into it. But on the operating aid last  
2 year, you know, we really hoped more of that  
3 would go to distressed campuses. I think it  
4 was our intent in the Legislature, so we were  
5 a little frustrated that it didn't.

6 And also just a quick over -- you  
7 know, we heard from our community college,  
8 MCC is located in my district, and we were  
9 told we're still trying to do a lot to bring  
10 all their resources there to do some of the  
11 certification programs and workforce  
12 training. But they were told they could not  
13 apply for capital dollars in the SUNY  
14 allotment. I don't know if that's true or  
15 not, but I want to make sure they are  
16 eligible.

17 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: The process for  
18 community college capital, you know, is  
19 different because of the community match.

20 On the distressed campuses I'll just  
21 say, you know, all of our campuses got  
22 double-digit percentage increases. You know,  
23 two of our campuses who have the biggest  
24 challenges, Fredonia and Potsdam, had over

1           20 percent, somewhere between a 20 and  
2           25 percent increase in state support last  
3           year. They have a structural deficit.

4           CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

5           We're going to go to the Senate.

6           CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

7           Robert Jackson.

8           SENATOR JACKSON: So good morning to  
9           both of you.

10          CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Good  
11          morning.

12          SENATOR JACKSON: I've been listening  
13          since it began, and let me just tell you, I  
14          think that we're in trouble.

15                 And my question I guess to you,  
16          Chancellor Rodríguez, is if in fact the money  
17          doesn't come through from the Legislature and  
18          the Governor working together, what's the  
19          negative impact that it's going to be on this  
20          contract? And who's going to be impacted as  
21          far as staff and students? And I know we can  
22          go on but try to make it quick.

23          CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I  
24          don't know if I can say thank you for your

1 question, because obviously those are  
2 scenarios that we don't want to contemplate.  
3 And we think that we have a path, with the  
4 measures that we've taken and the additional  
5 support from the Assembly and the Senate,  
6 that we have a path forward.

7 But to be direct about your question,  
8 85 percent of our costs are individuals,  
9 people. Right? So if we -- if we don't get  
10 the support for the labor contracts moving  
11 forward, which has been the reason for the  
12 structural deficit, for the most part -- and  
13 enrollment growth is not going to solve the  
14 issue. So we'll be talking about having --

15 SENATOR JACKSON: You'll be in default  
16 on your agreement, then.

17 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: We  
18 will have to sort of go back and think about  
19 further staffing, you know, cuts and things  
20 of that nature, which would be detrimental to  
21 the student experience.

22 SENATOR JACKSON: Chancellor King, so  
23 I'm looking here at some of the questions we  
24 have from our central staff -- thank you --

1 and I'm looking at the funding for the  
2 Opportunity Program. And I see all of this  
3 red here, meaning cuts in funding for the  
4 people that may not have the highest grades,  
5 may not -- clearly don't have the income, so  
6 this is support so they can get into college.

7 Why are we doing this when we have a  
8 \$232 billion budget and \$20 billion in  
9 reserves. And if in fact maybe it's just a  
10 game that we're playing and at the end  
11 everything's going to work out -- I hope so.  
12 Maybe I'll wake up at that point in time and  
13 see the light. But right now I don't see it.

14 Give me your point of view.

15 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, look, I'm  
16 very grateful for you being a champion of the  
17 EOP. The difference EOP has made for the  
18 state is extraordinary. We are very hopeful  
19 that the cuts to EOP will be restored in the  
20 enacted budget. I'd love to see the EOP  
21 program continue to grow.

22 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay, thank you.

23 Downstate is a major issue. And I'm  
24 not even from Brooklyn, but I know the impact

1 of Downstate from a positive point of view on  
2 the community around it, and also for the  
3 doctors and all of the physicians coming out  
4 of there. And so I got an email update last  
5 night as far as how to keep it going, but I  
6 hope that's real and not just fluff. I don't  
7 need fluff. We need real talk in order to  
8 save Downstate Medical Center.

9 And I'm with my colleague Zellnor  
10 Myrie, and everybody else, to save it. So --

11 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'm committed  
12 to saving the hospital. That's what we're  
13 trying to achieve.

14 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
16 Assembly.

17 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
18 Assemblywoman Chandler-Waterman.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN:  
20 Thank you, Chancellor. Thank you, Chair.

21 My community members are very  
22 concerned -- to go off from the Senator --  
23 about the future of Downstate Hospital,  
24 especially this new plan. The stakeholders

1 were not included in this process. This plan  
2 came out before the Department of Health  
3 Equity Report was done.

4 It's called a Transformational Plan.  
5 Our community sees it as a closure of their  
6 beloved hospital. They do not agree with  
7 this plan, and I stand with my community. We  
8 are clear we need to reimagine how we make  
9 SUNY Downstate Hospital more sustainable, and  
10 the education part to provide the best for  
11 the patients and the education. We  
12 understand that. There are many areas of  
13 concern.

14 I'll start with two questions. The  
15 community involvement and time frame. What  
16 is the strategy and methods you'll be using  
17 not only to inform the community, but also to  
18 make sure they're truly included in the  
19 decision process? How many jobs will be  
20 lost? How many people are still waiting to  
21 receive their permanency after serving seven  
22 years, which is tenure or however you may be  
23 vested? How many people are still waiting  
24 for that?



1           Sorry, what's the time frame for that?

2                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Over the coming  
3 weeks and months.

4                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: And  
5 the jobs. And the permanency.

6                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: In terms of  
7 jobs, the vast majority of jobs will be  
8 preserved. All of the CSEA, PEF and NYSCOPBA  
9 employees would have roles either at the  
10 dedicated SUNY Downstate space across the  
11 street or at one of the other SUNY Downstate  
12 facilities. We have one in Bay Ridge, for  
13 example.

14                   And the only place where there would  
15 be a change around the jobs is around some of  
16 the UUP members. We tried in this plan to  
17 preserve as many jobs as possible. But there  
18 would be a --

19                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: No  
20 jobs lost.

21                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: There would be  
22 a 10 to 20 percent loss for UUP.

23                   But we're in the midst of a healthcare  
24 workforce shortage. There will be --

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: And  
2 the permanency?

3 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: -- roles for  
4 many folks potentially at other SUNY  
5 hospitals, roles at other hospitals in  
6 Central Brooklyn. And we want to work with  
7 folks to place every person.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

9 We're going to go to the Senate.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 Senator Lea Webb.

12 SENATOR WEBB: Good morning to both  
13 chancellors.

14 I'm just going to ask my questions as  
15 I have limited time.

16 So this is for Chancellor King. The  
17 Legislature fought to increase operating aid  
18 to SUNY by \$163 million last year. Myself,  
19 along with other champions, really pushed for  
20 it. My question is, with that level of  
21 historic funding, why are we still seeing  
22 campuses closing and faculty being laid off?  
23 And how were those funds distributed?

24 And then my next question pertains to

1 the community colleges. We know there was a  
2 big campaign -- again, a lot of us supported  
3 it -- the "floor plus four." The four didn't  
4 happen. And so in looking ahead at this  
5 year's budget, we know that our community  
6 colleges still need significant operational  
7 funding. There's significant disparities  
8 there between our two-year and four-year  
9 colleges. My question is, what is the plan  
10 for that?

11 And then my last question goes to the  
12 concern that I'm hearing with respect to  
13 communication around our SUNY campuses,  
14 specifically with Downstate and Upstate. We  
15 know that these facilities provide  
16 significant care, high-needs care. And so I  
17 am concerned that we're not getting  
18 information in ways that can be helpful as  
19 legislators in making decisions.

20 So those are my three questions.

21 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: So in terms of  
22 the 163 million, for which we are very  
23 grateful, we distribute really in two ways.  
24 One, every state-operated campus saw a

1 double-digit percentage increase in funding.  
2 Second, we were able to commit resources to  
3 address mental health needs across the  
4 state-operated campuses, supports for  
5 students with disabilities, expanding  
6 internships, research -- based on the  
7 principle that all of our campuses have needs  
8 and opportunities for growth. And the net  
9 result was this past fall we had over 700 new  
10 faculty hires across our campuses. So we're  
11 leveraging those dollars to grow the system.

12 That said, we have campuses that over  
13 a 10-year period saw a 40 percent decline in  
14 enrollment, or more -- in particular, Potsdam  
15 and Fredonia. And so even with a  
16 double-digit percentage increase in funding,  
17 they still have a structural deficit because  
18 they haven't adjusted their programming to  
19 match being a much smaller campus. You know,  
20 with Potsdam we're talking about going from  
21 4,000 to about 2500. They have buildings  
22 that are empty that they're paying to heat.  
23 So they really have a need to now adjust to  
24 being a 2500-student campus.

1                   But we think this -- the plan the  
2                   president has set out there will make them a  
3                   sustainable 2500-student campus. We're not  
4                   closing any campuses. We are committed to  
5                   all 64 of our institutions and trying to make  
6                   sure they have the resources to invest in  
7                   areas of growing student demand.

8                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
9                   Assembly.

10                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
11                  Dilan.

12                  ASSEMBLYMAN DILAN: Thank you, Madam  
13                  Chair.

14                  I just have a brief question for  
15                  Chancellor Matos. Some of my colleagues have  
16                  talked about your personnel issues, and I see  
17                  in your budget your fringe costs are going  
18                  up, and those have been budgeted. They've  
19                  touched around the contract negotiations, but  
20                  I think no one's asked directly: How much  
21                  are you spending on your labor contracts  
22                  throughout all the labor unions that CUNY  
23                  serves at this moment?

24                  CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So

1 the budget request that we have is -- and I  
2 will need -- 184 million to be able to cover  
3 the labor costs for last year and this year,  
4 because the contract had lapsed. Right? And  
5 that's about 41 million for the classified  
6 staff and the rest for the Professional Staff  
7 Congress.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN DILAN: Okay. And  
9 obviously you expect it to go up after this  
10 year.

11 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Yes.  
12 And that funding, as I said, thank you, is  
13 indispensable.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN DILAN: Okay. And thank  
15 you.

16 And for Chancellor King -- and I do  
17 want to thank my colleagues who are not from  
18 Brooklyn for raising SUNY Downstate. I'll  
19 take a different approach in the questioning.

20 Is your main reason for the changes at  
21 the facility -- the operating I know is a  
22 challenge. Is the main hurdle the capital  
23 from the facility?

24 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: It's really

1 both. Because of the \$100 million deficit,  
2 we have to have a solution in this budget to  
3 continue to operate.

4 But the facility challenges are  
5 significant. I was talking to a doctor  
6 recently at Downstate who was saying -- you  
7 know, it had been cold the past few days and  
8 she was worried that the pipes would burst  
9 again and make it impossible to provide  
10 services in their area of the hospital.

11 So we've got to address the facility.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN DILAN: I guess you've  
13 said privately, but what's the cost on the  
14 capital side to renovate in place as opposed  
15 to new construction?

16 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah. I mean,  
17 to construct a similarly sized facility new  
18 we project would be about \$3 billion, based  
19 on the comparables.

20 To try to do that kind of renovation  
21 in the existing building would be even more  
22 expensive -- probably on the order of  
23 \$4 billion. And you're talking about years.  
24 I mean, eight to 10 years for a new building.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN DILAN: My final question  
2 is: Have you reached out to city and federal  
3 partners on the capital side to see if they  
4 could be of assistance?

5 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We continue to  
6 talk with city and federal officials about  
7 this plan, and certainly we would love to  
8 have additional capital support. I think one  
9 of the challenges is in that service area  
10 there are about 1500 beds, of which about 700  
11 are in regular use. And so one of the  
12 hurdles to overcome is figuring out --

13 ASSEMBLYMAN DILAN: The vacancy rate  
14 of it?

15 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, the  
16 vacancy rate, exactly. Is figuring out how  
17 to fit this plan into a larger plan for  
18 Central Brooklyn.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN DILAN: Thank you,  
20 Madam Chair.

21 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: To the Senate.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
23 much.

24 Senator Oberacker.

1                   SENATOR OBERACKER: Thank you,  
2                   Madam Chair.

3                   And good morning, Chancellors.

4                   PANELISTS: Good morning.

5                   SENATOR OBERACKER: So I am a product  
6                   of SUNY. And having eight SUNY campuses in  
7                   my district, it's a very important footprint,  
8                   of course, for that.

9                   Chancellor King, you said in your  
10                  testimony there was 163 million for operating  
11                  support, 75 million for I believe it was  
12                  transformational programming, and then 54  
13                  million for a multiyear commitment for  
14                  operating.

15                  So the question is, will any of that  
16                  funding be channeled potentially to help in  
17                  reducing tuition costs?

18                  SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Right now our  
19                  budget model assumes maintaining our current  
20                  tuition costs.

21                  You know, for our students, about  
22                  52 percent of our in-state students go  
23                  tuition-free now. So these resources are  
24                  being deployed to support faculty and support

1 services for our students. Our tuition is  
2 still quite a bit lower than many of our peer  
3 institutions.

4 But we're very committed to the  
5 principle of affordability and would love to  
6 work with all of you on TAP reform and other  
7 strategies to ensure affordability.

8 SENATOR OBERACKER: Great. Thank you  
9 for that.

10 My next question. So in recent years  
11 additional operating support has been  
12 provided to SUNY and CUNY. Have those  
13 resources, from your perspective, been  
14 distributed to campuses struggling with  
15 budget deficits?

16 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah. Yes.  
17 So, you know, all of our campuses last year  
18 got a double-digit percentage increase. You  
19 know, the two campuses I mentioned earlier,  
20 Potsdam and Fredonia, got more than a  
21 20 percent increase in state aid last year.

22 But the challenges at some of our  
23 campuses where they've lost a lot of  
24 enrollment, they really have to adjust to

1 being a smaller campus going forward in order  
2 to be fiscally responsible. And that's  
3 really what we're trying to achieve.

4 SENATOR OBERACKER: And  
5 Chancellor King, we've had some discussions  
6 on green energy projects and some potential  
7 there. I am again offering my 51st Senate  
8 District as a grounds of potential testing of  
9 those policies and procedures. So please  
10 utilize it if and when you can.

11 And Madam Chair, I will cede back my  
12 27 seconds. Thank you.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
14 Assembly.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
16 Assemblyman Flood.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN FLOOD: Thank you.

18 This is for Dr. -- Chancellor King, I  
19 apologize. We spoke briefly about  
20 potentially leasing lands on properties  
21 specifically on Farmingdale State and  
22 Stony Brook. Did either President McInnis or  
23 President Nader specifically ask to have the  
24 properties there leased?

1                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: The exact  
2                   structure is still to be determined. But  
3                   both campuses are interested in the prospect  
4                   of additional housing, particularly -- I'll  
5                   give you an example. President Nader worries  
6                   a lot about how difficult it is for faculty  
7                   members to find housing they can afford on  
8                   Long Island. And so he's hopeful that if  
9                   there's a housing project on the Farmingdale  
10                  campus, it will create the opportunity for  
11                  faculty housing.

12                 ASSEMBLYMAN FLOOD: Okay. Now, has  
13                 there been any community engagement  
14                 specifically in the Stony Brook area? Just  
15                 as -- as Stony Brook resides solely within my  
16                 district, there is a tenuous relationship  
17                 between the university and the community at  
18                 best. I've had many conversations with  
19                 Dr. McInnis and her staff about exploring  
20                 and, you know, opening up more of the campus  
21                 to the community and making a more open  
22                 community, I guess, between them.

23                 So has there been any engagement with  
24                 the communities?

1                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: My  
2                   understanding is this is really the start of  
3                   a process to potentially explore the possible  
4                   development of housing. There's certainly  
5                   been conversations with the community about  
6                   the need for additional housing, including  
7                   for faculty and staff.

8                   ASSEMBLYMAN FLOOD: I believe, quite  
9                   frankly, if it was faculty and staff, that  
10                  that wouldn't be an issue. But is there any  
11                  restrictions on who could be coming?

12                 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: At this point,  
13                 this is early days of the project and just  
14                 the beginning of a conversation about the  
15                 nature of the project. But the Governor  
16                 wanted, I think, to highlight both campuses  
17                 as places where there's the potential for  
18                 housing.

19                 ASSEMBLYMAN FLOOD: And I can assure  
20                 you that the community at least in  
21                 Stony Brook does not want to add more  
22                 housing, specifically at least in rentals.  
23                 They get upset already by the amount of  
24                 Stony Brook students that fill out into the

1 neighborhood. Some of it's not necessarily,  
2 you know, logical, but there's still a lot of  
3 community outcry over it.

4 But just -- I don't have a whole lot  
5 of time left. Has there been any discussion  
6 on, you know, as these -- I know it's early  
7 discussions -- on what potential security  
8 costs could be with, you know, renting out  
9 part of this -- the facility to tenants? And  
10 what would be addressed to keep students  
11 safe?

12 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: You know, look,  
13 as I mentioned, our students' safety is a top  
14 priority for us. This is a very early-stage  
15 conversation, but that's certainly an issue  
16 that we'll want to address as either of these  
17 projects moves forward.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN FLOOD: Okay. Thank you.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

21 Senator Chen {sic}.

22 SENATOR CHU: Thank you, Chair. It's  
23 Chu. Don't worry.

24 Good morning, Chancellors --

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm so sorry --

2 SENATOR CHU: Don't worry.

3 Good morning, Chancellors. With my  
4 limited time, I need this straightened for  
5 SUNY Downstate.

6 Chancellor King, would you be able to  
7 help us understand the impact up to  
8 20 percent of the staffing rearrangement? I  
9 need to humanize this. Twenty percent,  
10 10 percent, it's a number. What positions,  
11 what job titles we're talking about? Those  
12 positions, they are facing to lose their  
13 years of building a pension, and they are  
14 foreseeing to find jobs somewhere else.

15 Could you tell us the impact? What  
16 are those job positions, what titles?

17 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah. The  
18 specific titles and positions will be  
19 determined over time through our  
20 conversations with faculty and staff at  
21 downstate as well as with H+H. In some cases  
22 it will be doctors who currently are faculty  
23 members at SUNY Downstate part of the time,  
24 and part of the time their affiliation is

1 with SUNY Downstate. Some of those doctors  
2 at the end of this process may change their  
3 affiliation, whether that's to Kings County  
4 or to Maimonides or to another hospital.

5 There's the potential, as we share  
6 space with Kings County, that there would be  
7 opportunities for shared services, and so  
8 that may -- that may result in some positions  
9 being duplicated, and so adjustments would  
10 need to be made. We certainly have other  
11 roles at other SUNY hospitals, Stony Brook  
12 among them.

13 We want to work with UUP. Remember,  
14 it's 10 to 20 percent of the UUP members at  
15 the hospital. So it's not of the total. You  
16 know, so we're talking about somewhere on the  
17 order of 175 to 375 folks. We want to work  
18 with UUP member by member to figure out how  
19 we mitigate the disruption for folks, whether  
20 that's on benefits issues, transportation  
21 issues, relocation issues.

22 But we want to minimize the impact,  
23 but it will be much -- I can say this. The  
24 impact will be much less than if we get --

1                   SENATOR CHU: Thank you.

2                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: -- to summer  
3 without money to continue to operate and  
4 there are no jobs.

5                   SENATOR CHU: Thank you. I have  
6 another question. I have another question.  
7 Thirty seconds, real quick.

8                   About the neighboring hospitals, like  
9 Maimonides, you mentioned that they are in  
10 the 85 or 70 percent capacity. What's the  
11 conversation -- are they able to absorb on  
12 the patient side the potential increase of  
13 patients? About their ER volume, are they  
14 able to adjust, or the certified beds?

15                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, so we're  
16 in conversation with Kings County and  
17 Maimonides about which services -- the bulk  
18 of the inpatient services would go to the  
19 dedicated Downstate space collocated with  
20 Kings County.

21                   But the -- so the exact impact on  
22 Maimonides will be determined in the coming  
23 weeks. But they already partner with us very  
24 closely. Many of our doctors work there as

1 well as at Downstate.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

4 We go to Assemblyman Gray.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY: Thank you very  
6 much.

7 Chancellors, thank you for coming.

8 I'm going to roll through things for  
9 Chancellor King and we'll be succinct, if we  
10 can.

11 So do we -- inventory of buildings  
12 that are fallow on SUNY state-operated -- or  
13 all SUNY campuses, do we have a handle on  
14 that? Do we know what that is right now of,  
15 you know, non-performing assets? Do we know  
16 what the burden is to the individuals by  
17 campus? Do we know also electrification? Is  
18 that included -- are SUNY campuses including  
19 that in their long-range plans? And is that  
20 part of the \$10 billion deficit? Is there  
21 any -- is there any idea of taking over some  
22 of these fallow structures so SUNY campuses  
23 can focus on their mission, which is  
24 educating students, educating young adults

1 and not necessarily worrying about empty  
2 structures?

3 And -- so I'm going to cover a lot  
4 here. So I have, as you know, five colleges,  
5 higher education, right, between private and  
6 SUNY. And in St. Lawrence County, Potsdam,  
7 we have both a college that's on the brink  
8 and we have potential for a prison closure.  
9 Right?

10 So the SUNY system in St. Lawrence  
11 County represents about 1500 jobs, right,  
12 \$93 million in payroll. Prisons represent  
13 300 jobs, \$25 million in payroll. I've got a  
14 community that sits here with tremendous  
15 uncertainty because of prison closures and  
16 the uncertainty of college campuses. So are  
17 we committed to making sure that these  
18 college campuses do not fail?

19 And then community colleges, third,  
20 third and a third, my colleague mentioned it  
21 earlier. You know, the state is at  
22 428 million in funding, the students are at  
23 580 million, and counties are at 525. Is  
24 there a plan to bring that into a third,

1           third, and third? Thank you.

2                       SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thanks for  
3 those questions, and thanks for joining me on  
4 some of the campus visits.

5                       On the first point around buildings,  
6 we should have a follow-up meeting and we can  
7 talk through our kind of inventory. You  
8 know, there are certainly campuses like a  
9 Potsdam where there are buildings that, given  
10 the reduced enrollment, they're just not in  
11 use. And I think the challenge for those  
12 campuses, as you described, is they're  
13 spending money to heat them, to preserve  
14 them, but there's no students inside. And so  
15 we've really got to tackle that. And so I'd  
16 love to work with you on that.

17                      In terms of our plans for  
18 electrification, look, we want to get towards  
19 net-zero and help the state accomplish its  
20 goals. We have 40 percent of the state's  
21 public buildings. It will take investment  
22 over time. That is not factored in. The  
23 deficit I was describing over a 10-year  
24 period is really just about operating costs.

1 But there is that capital need.

2 On Potsdam, we are committed to  
3 Potsdam's long-term success. And the plan in  
4 place there is designed to ensure its  
5 long-term success.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

7 To the Senate.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator O'Mara,  
9 ranker.

10 SENATOR O'MARA: Good morning. Thank  
11 you, gentlemen, for being here.

12 I just want to follow up on that  
13 question because I don't think we got a  
14 direct answer on the community colleges and  
15 the support of a third, a third, a third.  
16 It's my understanding that the state share of  
17 their third is currently close to  
18 \$100 million less than what the counties are  
19 contributing toward community colleges.

20 Can you address that?

21 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: This is exactly  
22 the reason for the proposal from the  
23 community college presidents for a  
24 \$97 million increase in operating support,

1 focused on workforce development because  
2 that's an area for growth.

3 At the same time, I think one has to  
4 balance that with the reality that the  
5 community college funding floor is providing  
6 an additional \$85 million that wouldn't be  
7 there if you ran the formula just based on  
8 enrollment. So I do think the state's making  
9 an important investment with the floor that  
10 we want to make sure that's preserved, and  
11 look forward to talking further about ways to  
12 move towards investing in workforce  
13 development to increase the state's support.

14 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you. And I  
15 agree with you on the importance of the  
16 floor, and it's equally important for our  
17 secondary education system to have that  
18 floor, which has been taken away from them in  
19 this year's budget. So I'm glad you're  
20 getting it, and we're going to work like hell  
21 to make sure that our secondary education  
22 gets that as well.

23 On workforce development -- and I'm a  
24 strong proponent of that, and I applaud the

1           efforts of CUNY and SUNY and the community  
2           colleges in their efforts on that. What  
3           progress is being made -- you know, we have  
4           ever-changing workforce needs, so curriculum  
5           and programs are always changing. And, you  
6           know, I know government moves slow; academia  
7           moves even slower.

8                        What is going on to maybe streamline  
9           the process of getting programs approved so  
10          that when they're needed we can get these  
11          students right in the pipeline?

12                      SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, we have  
13          significantly accelerated the  
14          program-approval process at SUNY just over  
15          the year that I've been here. I'd also say  
16          we are growing microcredentials, which were  
17          mentioned earlier, very quickly. I think  
18          we're at 600 microcredentials now. We have  
19          about 280 programs, larger microcredential  
20          programs that are going to be eligible for  
21          the TAP for non-credit workforce development  
22          programs across more than 30 campuses.

23                      So we've got a lot of momentum on the  
24          workforce development side. Green jobs,

1 semiconductor industry, nursing and allied  
2 health. And I think our campuses would say  
3 they would love more resources to try to grow  
4 those more quickly.

5 For example, last year the simulation  
6 bill allowed 30 percent of nursing hours to  
7 be done through simulation. But now we have  
8 to invest in simulation labs, training of  
9 staff, the lifelike mannequins that are used  
10 in those simulation labs. And so resources  
11 to support those things would help us fulfill  
12 our workforce development mission.

13 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Can  
14 I add two things on the green side?

15 SENATOR O'MARA: Yeah.

16 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:  
17 Quickly. (A), we -- for example, to your  
18 point, we've been doing market analysis to be  
19 able to determine any new programs that come  
20 on board, right, so we have data about what  
21 the markets need. Particularly in the online  
22 space, because we don't want to have  
23 duplication and we want to have programs that  
24 are in high demand.

1                   And we began a program with our  
2                   community colleges of looking at our applied  
3                   associate's degrees, right, which are the  
4                   ones that you're supposed to have two years  
5                   and now transfer, so then they have deeper  
6                   partnerships with industry and a lot more  
7                   embedded apprenticeships, right, so we take a  
8                   look -- so what we're saying is this two-year  
9                   program will lead to a job that we can follow  
10                  up with data and partnerships.

11                 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you for that.  
12                 And I agree with that.

13                 On financial support for students in  
14                 these microcredential programs or other  
15                 workforce-type programs that aren't  
16                 degree-ending -- and certainly I agree with  
17                 you, we want to encourage students to move on  
18                 beyond that certificate to get that degree.  
19                 It's certainly better for them in the long  
20                 run. And I understand there's some efforts  
21                 going on federally right now to get some  
22                 Pell Grant availability to these programs.

23                 Is there room for us in New York where  
24                 we should be expanding our financial

1 assistance for those types of programs that  
2 aren't degree programs?

3 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Absolutely. I  
4 mean, you know, the TAP for non-credit  
5 workforce programs is a great first step.  
6 That's something we'd love to grow over time,  
7 and we'd love to be able to provide more  
8 assistance to those students as they move  
9 into degree programs. One of the things  
10 we're doing with that initiative is saying  
11 the work that is being done in that  
12 non-credit program, if they come into a  
13 degree program, will count for credits and  
14 get them started on their path to a degree.

15 I'm very hopeful about the federal  
16 short-term Pell. It has bipartisan support.  
17 I'm hopeful that we see that soon.

18 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
20 Assemblyman Eachus.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you,  
22 Madam Chair. And welcome back.

23 A lot has already been covered, but  
24 there's a few things that I want to say. The

1 first thing I want to say is I think you two  
2 are doing a great job. The buildings did not  
3 start falling apart just this last year,  
4 okay? The debt you inherited when you came  
5 into this position are the things that we are  
6 all talking about now. So we need to  
7 understand that that's the truth.

8 It was mentioned just recently --  
9 because I was going to disagree with one of  
10 my colleagues -- we are not fulfilling our  
11 obligation as a state with the one-third  
12 funding. We are absolutely not. And I will  
13 not be pleased and satisfied until the state  
14 picks up all the costs. That's what I would  
15 be looking for.

16 I want to thank you for keeping the  
17 tuition rates flat. That certainly is a big  
18 thing. However, as we know, the fees have  
19 gone up. And what I would like you -- and I  
20 know you took care of the fees for the  
21 graduate students. Thank you for that. But  
22 what I'd like you to remember is that the  
23 fees are very onerous, especially for the  
24 high-need areas -- when you're talking about

1 science, the sciences, you're talking about  
2 nursing and so on like that. So, you know,  
3 those are the people that are affected by it.

4 And I know that there's no answer for  
5 it unless we give you a huge influx of money.  
6 But we need to keep that in mind.

7 Workforce development was just  
8 mentioned. I am for all workforce  
9 development revenue going into our community  
10 colleges especially, because you have the  
11 accounting system that can tell us whether  
12 our goals are met with that money and if we  
13 are achieving those and what the real  
14 progress is. So that's why -- and we're not  
15 hearing that, at least I'm not at this point  
16 and all.

17 And then the last thing that I'd like  
18 to ask of you is it was mentioned and it has  
19 been talked about, affordable housing, and  
20 you said that there was a list and so on like  
21 that. If that list could be sent to the  
22 chairs, who could distribute it to us so that  
23 we would know whether some of our campuses  
24 are going to be affected by that or not.

1                   So there's not really a question  
2                   there, just a couple of statements.

3                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We'll follow up  
4                   on the housing point. And really appreciate  
5                   your support on the workforce development  
6                   funding at community colleges.

7                   ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you.

8                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you. To  
9                   the --

10                  CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I --

11                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Oh, I'm sorry.

12                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: He has time left,  
13                  if you want to tell us something.

14                  CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: All  
15                  I wanted to say, because it's a theme that  
16                  has come up in a couple of the commentaries  
17                  about enrollment and community colleges. I  
18                  think that not having a standard method of  
19                  supporting early colleges in terms of a  
20                  funding formula for students to be able to do  
21                  that is one thing in the state that we need  
22                  to look at. Because if we had a sustainable  
23                  path for that, the main beneficiaries of that  
24                  enrollment and those funds will be the

1 community colleges.

2 So I think that's another thing that  
3 we need to put into the mix as we think about  
4 funding and about the pipeline from K-12 to  
5 our campuses.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

7 I think I am the last Senator, except  
8 for Senator Stavisky's second round.

9 I want to just follow up on  
10 Assemblymember Gray's point. So for years  
11 I've often said we would be much better off  
12 investing our money in colleges than prisons  
13 because some might drop out, but you have a  
14 much less recidivism rate when you have a  
15 higher education and more opportunity.

16 Do either of your universities track  
17 how many students actually do have criminal  
18 histories? And is there any way to see  
19 whether in fact I'm right, college actually  
20 is a very effective model for helping people  
21 avoid lives of crime?

22 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I don't know  
23 that we track it that way.

24 I will say that SUNY is the largest

1 provider of higher education in prisons in  
2 New York State. And those programs -- I'd  
3 love for you to join me at one of those  
4 graduations. They are changing people's  
5 lives. And so for so many students -- you  
6 know, when I was in the Obama administration  
7 and we launched Second Chance Pell to allow  
8 Pell Grants to be used for folks who are  
9 incarcerated, we called it the Second Chance  
10 Pell Program to emphasize the second chances.

11 But when you talk to the folks, they  
12 often didn't have a first chance. And they  
13 will describe how the educational experience  
14 they are having while in prison is the first  
15 time they've had a real relationship with a  
16 faculty member where they've felt fully  
17 engaged intellectually. And the recidivism  
18 rate for folks who get higher education while  
19 in prison is dramatically lower.

20 And so we need to do more of that.  
21 The restoration of TAP for incarcerated  
22 students was a very helpful step. And now  
23 with Pell restoration, I think we have a  
24 chance to even grow our programs further.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And CUNY?

2 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I  
3 don't know that we -- I mean, I will go  
4 check, do we track it in the way that you  
5 described.

6 One of the great things to be in  
7 higher ed is that if we have a question we  
8 want answered, we have great faculty that can  
9 figure out a way which we can give you a  
10 response to the question that you're  
11 addressing about that return on investment,  
12 right, that you posed. So thank you for that  
13 very thoughtful question.

14 And I just want to echo that on our  
15 end too -- and particularly I think at CUNY  
16 the John Jay College of Criminal Justice has  
17 taken the lead to be working more closely  
18 with programs in the prison system. So happy  
19 to report and give you some information about  
20 that.

21 But also happy to put some of the  
22 great minds that we have on both our campuses  
23 to get a sense of the question you're asking.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1                   So for the SUNY chancellor, obviously  
2                   both houses of the Legislature are very  
3                   concerned about the SUNY Downstate storyline.  
4                   And I know that I had asked the mayor's  
5                   people when they were up what their  
6                   understanding of this was and the impact on  
7                   an H+H hospital or other hospitals in  
8                   Brooklyn, or even the -- what I felt is the  
9                   lack of regional planning for hospital care  
10                  in the entire City of New York.

11                  I think what this Legislature needs to  
12                  see are actually memorandums of understanding  
13                  between what is expected of the H + H system  
14                  as part of this deal so we actually can see  
15                  this is what has been committed, this is what  
16                  we can hold people accountable for.

17                  My staff responded to Gustavo and I  
18                  after he asked some questions that we can't  
19                  actually find where that capital money is in  
20                  the budget. So we also think we need much  
21                  more specifics about the commitment in the  
22                  Governor's budget of this money. I don't  
23                  know if it's supposed to be coming out of  
24                  SUNY capital or some other capital. But we

1 really feel we need to understand because,  
2 you know, we just can't operate -- as you've  
3 heard, people don't feel that you've spoken  
4 enough with the community and with the people  
5 who should be at the table.

6 But from my perspective it's, okay,  
7 like where's the detail, where's the  
8 confirmations? And it's not uncommon for  
9 government to create memorandas of  
10 understanding and everybody signs it and  
11 everybody looks at it and goes, okay, this is  
12 the deal for X number of years and this is  
13 what's going to happen. And I think that  
14 that is at minimum what the representatives  
15 particularly from Brooklyn need.

16 But I'll tell you, you know, on  
17 Manhattan we're concerned about Brooklyn  
18 hospitals closing because it turns out, in  
19 the new recent Department of Health report,  
20 in various categories almost 50 percent of  
21 the people who live in Brooklyn come to  
22 Manhattan for hospital care.

23 So if we've got Mount Sinai  
24 Beth Israel closing as the largest, most

1 southern hospital in Manhattan -- which is  
2 right on the L line and so is a direct path  
3 for Brooklyn patients -- so if that's  
4 closing -- and we're trying to stop that from  
5 happening, but I don't know that we'll be  
6 successful -- then that's got an impact. So  
7 all cross-over impact.

8 So I just feel like everybody needs to  
9 see exactly what the deals are going to be  
10 and what's the impact going to be, and be  
11 able to evaluate that in the context of the  
12 larger questions of hospital care, access to  
13 hospital care, who, what, where, why. So I  
14 would really like this. And, you know, I  
15 know again from just Manhattan,  
16 Bellevue Hospital knows it's going to have an  
17 enormous impact if we close Mount Sinai  
18 Beth Israel. And I think they really  
19 recently said that the NYU, Langone and  
20 Bellevue hospitals are already overwhelmed in  
21 their ICUs and their EDs. And so, you know,  
22 it's like chess pieces on the chessboard.  
23 They all interconnect. So we're concerned  
24 about that.

1                   So every time there's a Governor and  
2                   they cut the Opportunity Programs when the  
3                   Legislature puts the money back, both  
4                   chancellors say we love those programs. But  
5                   do you? I mean, would you ever put your own  
6                   money in? Are these working? Or are we all  
7                   just under the illusion that they're working  
8                   and then we put the money back?

9                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Let me tackle  
10                  that Downstate point. So yes, we look  
11                  forward to having memorandums of agreement  
12                  with Health + Hospitals specifying the exact  
13                  inpatient service plan and likely something  
14                  similar with other partner hospitals. But  
15                  that's all work ahead of us, based on  
16                  community input.

17                  The goal that we had and the Governor  
18                  had was to set out a set of principles around  
19                  the \$300 million capital investment and --

20                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, let's skip  
21                  the SUNY Downstate because I only have three  
22                  minutes left.

23                  SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Okay. And then  
24                  on the -- on EOP, yes, the programs are

1 working. Senator Jackson is an example. The  
2 programs are working and have been for a long  
3 time.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Jackson  
5 would be working no matter what the --

6 (Overtalk; laughter.)

7 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Fair enough.  
8 Fair enough. But he's an example of what we  
9 hope for from the EOP programs.

10 You know, since I've arrived we've  
11 been trying to grow the EOP program across  
12 SUNY, and we saw a significant increase this  
13 year; hope to see another in the coming year.  
14 We are very supportive and are very eager to  
15 see additional resources there.

16 And we have, over time, tried to move  
17 resources to support EOP programs and are  
18 eager to see them continue to grow.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: CUNY?

20 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:  
21 Well, they're equally an important part of  
22 our campus life. We are actually undergoing  
23 a review of those programs, looking at their  
24 outcomes and how they perform over time and

1           how they compare with some of the other  
2           programs that we have. Again, to be able to  
3           maximize learning from all our programs and  
4           stretch every dollar to support more students  
5           in a systemic way.

6                       And kudos to our University Provost  
7           Wendy Hensel, who's leading that process  
8           moving forward.

9                       And we also try to do specific  
10          investments. We started, for example --  
11          we're going to have a Summer STEM Academy.  
12          We talk about not having enough women, poor,  
13          minority students taking advantage of STEM  
14          fields. These programs are exactly where  
15          those students are. And we are now being  
16          intentional about creating programs early on  
17          that are targeted for some of the areas where  
18          we want to see that larger level of  
19          representation. So that's one of the things  
20          that we're doing with those dollars.

21                      So the short answer to your question  
22          is -- and I know the commitment from  
23          Chancellor King. I think that we embrace  
24          them. They're a key part of our ecosystem.

1           And we keep finding different ways to  
2           leverage that funding to even get better  
3           results.

4                       CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5                       Obviously you won't have them today;  
6           we haven't seen financial reports on the  
7           SUNY Foundation or the CUNY Foundation in  
8           quite a while, according to staff. I would  
9           like to get them on both of those, see where  
10          the money is and what it's being spent on.

11                      CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Yup.

12                      CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And for some  
13          reason SUNY and CUNY are almost the only  
14          state-funded entities where the salaries of  
15          all your staff aren't posted somewhere. Or  
16          is it just posted somewhere where I'm not  
17          finding it?

18                      CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:  
19          Well, people have a way of finding what my  
20          salary is. Right? So --

21                      CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: No, not you  
22          personally, but everyone.

23                      CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I'll  
24          double-check with my team about that and

1 we'll get back to you. And clearly there's a  
2 way that -- I guess your point is about  
3 transparencies, right? So we'll take a look  
4 at that and if it's not --

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Yeah. I mean,  
6 there's a state website where you can look at  
7 any state agency, any village or county,  
8 school district, BOCES -- everything except  
9 SUNY and CUNY. I couldn't find them on it.  
10 So I think -- frankly, I think you should be  
11 on it, but I'll take it in any form, I guess.

12 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So  
13 the phenomenal people that know more about  
14 these things than I do tell me that in our  
15 case it's there. So we'll make sure that you  
16 get the link.

17 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, we'll  
18 follow up with you.

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
20 Perfect timing. Thank you very much.  
21 Assembly.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
23 Assemblywoman Simon.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

1 Thank you both for your testimony.

2 So first directed to CUNY. You know,  
3 microcredentials are increasingly attractive  
4 to students and address workforce shortages.  
5 And you have like the world's most creative  
6 programming guy in President Hotzler at  
7 City Tech. And so I just want to encourage  
8 CUNY to expand what it is they're doing and  
9 work closely with that.

10 The CUNY Reading Corps, which helps to  
11 lay the foundation for kids' reading and  
12 provides field experience to our education  
13 students, I would really love to see that  
14 expanded. Love to see that marketed more.  
15 It really is part of the wave of the future.  
16 And I thank you both for your engagement with  
17 the science of reading and moving New York  
18 forward on that regard.

19 SUNY, I have -- obviously Downstate is  
20 the issue of the day. So there are two major  
21 concerns that I've sort of heard from folks.

22 One is that in your effort to preserve  
23 the Health Sciences Center, we really hear  
24 that operating a largely ambulatory care

1 facility without an inpatient hospital is a  
2 recipe for disaster. I think you really need  
3 to look carefully at that and address that  
4 issue.

5 You know, there's a real emphasis on  
6 maternal and infant mortality, and Downstate  
7 has the only Level IV NICU in the entire  
8 borough. And as you know, there's  
9 2.6 million people in Brooklyn. This is  
10 critical for the moms throughout Brooklyn,  
11 particularly moms of color. And then  
12 obviously the community engagement and  
13 impacts on the community's health, which I  
14 think really needs to be assessed through a  
15 really robust public engagement process. And  
16 I think we all stand ready to help facilitate  
17 that, to figure out what is that path  
18 forward. You have a real problem, you need  
19 to do something. What we do and how we do it  
20 I think is critical to its success.

21 And then just to both of you, if I  
22 could just encourage everybody to support  
23 more money in the budget for disability  
24 accommodations for your students.

1 Thank you.

2 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So

3 let me --

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Yeah, please.

5 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So,

6 A, we make it easy for all the elected

7 officials to know what our key asks are.

8 It's called the Gold Sheet. If you don't

9 have one, make sure you get one by the end of

10 the session. And you will see,

11 Assemblywoman Simon, that one of our top

12 priorities is increased resources for

13 students with disabilities in terms of the

14 training, staffing, the technology, other

15 support and adaptive services that are

16 needed.

17 We'll be making a very comprehensive

18 attempt at addressing this in ways that were

19 not done before. New faculty are getting

20 orientation about this. We train all the

21 staff in our centers. So we're making a big,

22 big push to get state-of-the-art support in

23 that arena.

24 We need additional support, and we're

1 asking for 4.7 in addition to do that.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

3 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Quickly I'll  
4 just say all inpatient services will  
5 continue. And outpatient services will be  
6 expanded.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

10 Chair Toby Stavisky.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: There we go.

12 First, Chancellor Matos Rodríguez --  
13 (holding up document) Senator Chu has hers --  
14 we study these.

15 And Chancellor King, I thank you for  
16 your comments about the non-degree-granting  
17 programs. I think that's extremely  
18 important.

19 And thank you for mentioning my  
20 legislation for the simulation. Hopefully  
21 the State Education Department has issued the  
22 rules and regulations and are reviewing the  
23 programs at the various nursing schools in  
24 the state.

1                   Let me just ask a couple of questions  
2                   I did not have a chance to ask.

3                   We allowed both SUNY and CUNY last  
4                   year to increase tuition for out-of-state  
5                   students. Has that affected enrollment at  
6                   either of your institutions? First,  
7                   Chancellor King, I guess, has the larger  
8                   campuses -- more campuses.

9                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah,  
10                  enrollment is up across the board and in  
11                  every sector. I'll check on the -- and get  
12                  back to you on the number of out-of-state  
13                  students and how that compares to last year.

14                  SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, thank you.  
15                  And the same with --

16                  CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: We  
17                  did not raise tuition for out-of-state  
18                  students, so I can get you that data. We're  
19                  looking at that issue year to year. But I  
20                  can get you the information.

21                  SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. No, it  
22                  was an option, a local option, so to speak.

23                  Second question, on the community  
24                  colleges. Can you tell us the effect of

1 changing the base year for calculating the  
2 floor? Will that have any kind of effect on  
3 the amount you receive? Chancellor Matos  
4 Rodríguez or Chancellor King or both.

5 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:  
6 We're here trying to go -- I mean, I guess,  
7 A, it depends on what year you select, right,  
8 in terms of the formula.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: The Governor  
10 selected one. Would you suggest changing it  
11 to make it more --

12 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'll get back  
13 to you on what the implications would be of  
14 changing the year. I do know that the floor  
15 for this year preserves \$85 million that  
16 would otherwise be lost.

17 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Yes,  
18 it provides incredible stability at a time  
19 when we're still -- I mean, enrollment is  
20 beginning to pick up, but I think we want to  
21 make sure that if we're going to pivot in  
22 terms of the way that we're funding things,  
23 that we do it at a time when we feel that  
24 there's the largest level of stability

1 possible.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah. And real  
3 quick, I know you don't have the answer, but  
4 I had legislation signed last year by the  
5 Governor requiring campuses to report hate  
6 crimes. And if you would check your  
7 websites, I would appreciate it. The CUNY  
8 one was a little confusing.

9 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: You  
10 mean the central office one, or one of the  
11 campuses one?

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: It should be by  
13 campus. I found it was really CUNY-wide.

14 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:  
15 Okay, we'll look into that. But we issued  
16 guidance right after the law came --

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: I know the  
18 guidance. I'm talking about the actual  
19 attacks.

20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

22 Thank you, Toby.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
24 Assemblywoman Hyndman.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Good morning.  
2 It's still morning. Thank you both for being  
3 here. A lot of my questions have been asked  
4 by colleagues, and I do support the  
5 assistance of SUNY Downstate.

6 So my question is regarding vacancies  
7 in the presidential positions at all of the  
8 CUNY and SUNY campuses, and how do you  
9 attract great presidents with declining  
10 enrollment, major capital needs? And we're  
11 also dealing with a heavily politicized  
12 environment when it comes to college  
13 presidents.

14 So for both of you, how do you attract  
15 great talent to the State of New York?

16 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So I  
17 guess the subtext of your question is that  
18 this is a time when being a campus president  
19 doesn't seem to be an extremely rewarding  
20 proposition. And it's clearly a challenging  
21 position. But this is clearly a privilege.  
22 What we get to do, to serve in this capacity  
23 is a privilege. We go to bed at night  
24 knowing that we transform people's lives all

1 across the state, and that's not a gift or a  
2 privilege that everybody has.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Chancellor  
4 Matos Rodríguez, I will say that even, you  
5 know, meeting with your staff yesterday and  
6 hearing that your college and Queens College  
7 are, you know, financially challenged, add  
8 that on to what I asked.

9 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And  
10 we have a bright new great leader at your  
11 college even with some of the fiscal  
12 challenges, President Schrader, right? Well,  
13 she's interim; we have to do a search and do  
14 things by the book. But even she was excited  
15 about the mission and what can be done at  
16 York.

17 We have -- with your support and some  
18 of the measures that we're taking, we have a  
19 path forward to stabilizing the financial  
20 side of what we have to do at the university  
21 to provide the great experience that the  
22 students should have. And the presidents are  
23 a key part of that leadership. And I tell  
24 you that the mission of CUNY attracts

1 individuals that want to be part of working  
2 on behalf of those goals.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: If you could  
4 get me how many vacancies. Thank you,  
5 Chancellor.

6 Chancellor King?

7 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: You know, we  
8 have a handful of searches that are underway  
9 now. I will say I think the willingness of  
10 the Governor and the Legislature to invest  
11 stands out, compared to other states. Last  
12 year's \$163 million operating increase got  
13 the attention of the country, because other  
14 states are going backwards on public  
15 higher ed.

16 New York's commitment to diversity,  
17 equity and inclusion, the fact that we aren't  
18 sliding backwards the way Florida or Texas  
19 is, that has people's attention. So we've  
20 had very strong pools. I'll give you an  
21 example. Our new SUNY Poly president was the  
22 provost at Worcester Polytechnic, one of the  
23 country's leading polytechnic institutions,  
24 and before that ran a center at Princeton.

1           It was great to have him come. We're excited  
2           about his leadership there.

3                     And so we're seeing good response to  
4           our searches. We'll get you a list of the  
5           current searches.

6                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

7                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

8                     There are no more Senator questions,  
9           so we're going to go through the  
10          Assemblymembers with questions.

11                    Let me just alert that we'll start  
12          with Assemblywoman Wallace, then  
13          Assemblywoman Forrest and Assemblywoman  
14          McMahon and then myself, and then  
15          Assemblywoman Fahy for seconds. So somehow  
16          the women are at the end of the list today.

17                    (Laughter.)

18                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALLACE: Well, good  
19          morning. Thank you so much for your  
20          testimony today.

21                    First I just want to thank you for  
22          your comments about community colleges being  
23          vital workforce development tools. We  
24          recognize that and agree with the comments

1           that have already been made that we need to  
2           do more to invest and stabilize our community  
3           colleges.

4                        I know, Chancellor King, you and I had  
5           a private conversation about streamlining the  
6           certification process, being able to get  
7           those certifications more quickly and kind of  
8           cut through the red tape so that we can  
9           attract students, make them more nimble and  
10          then create scaffolding programs, scaffolding  
11          the non-degree with the degree.

12                      And, you know, as we're thinking about  
13          how to do that, I would encourage you to  
14          think about creative ways to give credit for  
15          life experiences. For example, you know, I  
16          have a bill about veterans' service, a bill  
17          about EMS and firefighter service. You know,  
18          there are great experiences that they bring,  
19          and then kind of draw those people in to  
20          getting certifications that will get them  
21          farther along in life.

22                      Likewise, when you talk about, you  
23          know, whether somebody is a plumber, they  
24          want to run a business, things like that,

1           they need business skills, they might need  
2           marketing skills.

3                       And so that, you know, I would  
4           encourage you to think creatively about that,  
5           and I would love to work with you on that.

6                       With regard -- the other thing I  
7           wanted to touch on is the Distressed Campus  
8           Fund and sort of where we are with those  
9           campuses. As you know, every state dollar  
10          that's invested in SUNY leverages at least \$5  
11          in a return on investment. In Western  
12          New York alone, SUNY campuses pump about  
13          \$3.7 billion into our regional economy -- and  
14          that's the entire Western New York region,  
15          not just the Buffalo area. They're a magnet  
16          for attracting people to move to a region --  
17          I'm a good example, I grew up on Long Island,  
18          I now live and represent Buffalo and raise my  
19          family there, right? So they're a magnet for  
20          attracting people to different areas of the  
21          state. And we know that SUNY students stay  
22          in the state and they work in the state. And  
23          that's why it's so critically important to  
24          invest in our SUNY system.

1                   And so that's why this Legislature  
2                   allocated money for the Distressed Campus  
3                   Fund. And I was disappointed to see that not  
4                   all of the money went to the schools that  
5                   were most -- it didn't seem to be allocated  
6                   to the schools that were most in dire  
7                   financial need. Some of the money went to  
8                   schools that maybe didn't need it as much.

9                   So I guess my question is, how much of  
10                  that remains? And, you know, I was -- we did  
11                  have a provision in last year's budget saying  
12                  that the schools, to your point earlier, need  
13                  to sort of think about how to rightsize  
14                  themselves and to increase enrollment. But  
15                  we didn't give them the chance to do that  
16                  before we did some of these cuts. So I urge  
17                  you think about refraining from any further  
18                  cuts to these campuses until we give those  
19                  schools an opportunity to come up with those  
20                  plans.

21                  And I guess I spoke too long.

22                  (Laughter.)

23                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So I think, you  
24                  know, you'll be sending us some information

1           that we'll be able to share with all of our  
2           colleagues here.

3                       Next, Assemblywoman Forrest.

4                       ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you  
5           both, Chancellors, for being here.

6                       My first question is to  
7           Chancellor King. In March 2020 the previous  
8           governor declared Downstate a COVID-only  
9           hospital, forcing them to suspend all  
10          revenue-raising services, leading to a  
11          deficit of \$160 million. Has the state done  
12          anything to address that debt?

13                      And as chancellor, have you sought  
14          federal funding or other funding streams to  
15          support Downstate?

16                      SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: So, look,  
17          I'm --

18                      ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Has the state  
19          given you assistance with that \$160 million?

20                      SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: As I mentioned  
21          earlier -- two things. One is I want to  
22          express my personal gratitude and the  
23          system's gratitude for what folks at  
24          Downstate did during the COVID era. I will

1 say last year --

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Did the state  
3 give you money?

4 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: -- we asked for  
5 -- I don't know what money was given in 2020.  
6 I can get back to you on that.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Okay, you can  
8 get back to me, no problem.

9 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I started last  
10 January, and one of the first things you'll  
11 recall that I did was to talk with many of  
12 the Brooklyn delegation members about the --

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: And we heard,  
14 and we spoke.

15 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: -- about the  
16 needs at Downstate and the impending  
17 deficit --

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Have you  
19 sought out federal funding and other funding  
20 streams to support SUNY? Have you put in  
21 applications to the feds for helping?

22 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: SUNY Downstate  
23 gets now significant federal dollars --

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: How much?

1                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING:  -- focused on  
2                   research.  I can get you the precise number.

3                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST:  No problem.  
4                   Please send it to the chairs.

5                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING:  But the  
6                   challenges, the needs are for operating  
7                   support and for long-term capital support.

8                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST:  Right.  Right.

9                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING:  And we need the  
10                  state's help to address both of those in  
11                  order to save the hospital, which is our  
12                  goal.

13                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST:  And I agree  
14                  with you.

15                  So this is the first that I'm hearing  
16                  that you're actually saying save the  
17                  hospital.  What I heard before was a  
18                  reimagining plan, reimagining meaning an  
19                  emphasis on the health -- on the health  
20                  education portion and not the hospital.

21                  So I have to be very frank.  I have  
22                  heard my colleagues' questions, and I have  
23                  been disappointed by the answers to the  
24                  situation at downstate.  I will tell you as a

1 nurse, as a patient at Downstate, as a  
2 Black mama who knows Downstate has the one  
3 Level IV NICU in the whole of Brooklyn.

4 So to me, when we're talking about  
5 maternal health, when I think about my next  
6 child, I am cringing at my options in my own  
7 district and in Brooklyn that I live at.

8 And so you keep on bringing up the  
9 hospitals surrounding. You keep on -- have  
10 you followed your residents to Kings County?  
11 Have you followed your residents to Maimo?  
12 Do you know what it looks like? Because I'll  
13 tell you as a patient, as someone who's  
14 worked there, I don't know what inch or  
15 square feet you're talking about.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assembly --

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: I'm sorry, I  
18 get very impassioned. I'm so sorry.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman,  
20 thank you. We're going to move on.

21 There may be some answers you'll be  
22 sending in regard to Assemblywoman Phara's  
23 questions, Phara Fawcett's {sic} questions.

24 Assemblywoman McMahon.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN McMAHON: Thank you,  
2 Chair Weinstein.

3 Good morning, Chancellors. Thank you  
4 so much for your testimony. It's been a  
5 really interesting discussion so far.

6 Chancellor King, I'd like to thank you  
7 for your commitment to the University  
8 Centers. I'm particularly thrilled that UB  
9 has been chosen as the host of the Empire AI  
10 Consortium. We're really excited about that.

11 My concern is -- today is with the  
12 SUNY colleges. And my colleague  
13 Assemblymember Wallace went into a lot the  
14 reasons why they're so important as economic  
15 drivers in these smaller rural communities.  
16 And I know, even representing a district  
17 outside of Buffalo, I have constituents who  
18 work at Fredonia, who commute down there to  
19 teach.

20 And you went into a lot of detail  
21 about Potsdam, but I'm kind of wondering  
22 about Fredonia and some of these other  
23 colleges. Thank you to your commitment to  
24 keeping them all open and viable. But what

1 is the situation with Fredonia, for instance?  
2 Is it similar to Potsdam, the enrollment  
3 drop, the vacant buildings? Or my question  
4 really is if we're going to be cutting  
5 programs, can we really expect these places  
6 to rebound in enrollment when we're limiting  
7 student options?

8 So I'm wondering kind of particularly  
9 about Fredonia, but the colleges in general.

10 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, I mean  
11 Fredonia is a good example of where -- really  
12 at all of our campuses we have to constantly  
13 continuously look at the mix of program  
14 offerings and make sure we're responding to  
15 student demand. That means sometimes there  
16 are programs that don't have students  
17 enrolled in them that we need to reevaluate,  
18 and there are places where we could grow.

19 So it's true, Fredonia is making  
20 adjustments to programs that have very little  
21 enrollment. But they are also growing  
22 programs where there's demand. And so they  
23 got last year I believe a 25 percent increase  
24 in state support. So a lot of additional

1 state dollars, but it doesn't change that  
2 they need to continue to adjust their  
3 programs to match where there is student  
4 interest. They've lost, over a 10-year  
5 period, more than 40 percent of their  
6 enrollment. We think they can be sustainable  
7 at the size they are now, and there are some  
8 opportunities to grow. And that's why  
9 they're adding some programs in some areas  
10 where there's real student demand and need in  
11 the region.

12 So I'm very hopeful about the future  
13 of Fredonia based on the plan that the  
14 president and leadership team have put in  
15 place.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN McMAHON: Do you know  
17 what the enrollment is there, approximately?

18 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'll get you  
19 the exact -- it's gone from I think over  
20 5,000 to around 3400, something like that.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN McMAHON: So it's not  
22 quite as small as Potsdam.

23 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah. Yeah.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN McMAHON: Thank you. I

1 appreciate it.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So I guess it's  
3 time for me to ask a few questions.

4 You know, so -- Chancellor King, we  
5 spoke -- we spoke previously about Downstate.  
6 I know you grew up in Flatlands. You know  
7 the neighborhood, you know that so many  
8 people from Flatlands, these  
9 Flatbush-surrounding areas, work at the  
10 hospital and also at Downstate. I'm so glad  
11 it's back to being called Downstate. There  
12 was that brief Brooklyn Science, none of us  
13 knew what that really was.

14 So there really seems to be a  
15 disconnect between the talking about  
16 community involvement and community plan and  
17 then just listening, both here and other  
18 places, to my colleagues' concerns, the  
19 employees' concerns about not being involved,  
20 not knowing what the direction is. I echo  
21 some of the concerns Senator Krueger raised,  
22 and not knowing what Health + Hospitals'  
23 agreement would be with Downstate, whether  
24 this new Downstate hospital would be a wing

1 at County, would be sharing an emergency  
2 room, have its own access -- there's just a  
3 lot of detail that we don't know. Maybe it's  
4 okay. But right now, all we have are  
5 questions and concerns.

6 And as my colleague Assemblywoman  
7 Forrest mentioned, all of us are concerned  
8 not only just in Brooklyn, but throughout the  
9 state with maternal health and particularly  
10 maternal health of Black women. And Central  
11 Brooklyn seems to be having a lot of issues,  
12 and Downstate is a place that people look to.  
13 So the more detail we can get about the  
14 relationship, the planned relationship  
15 between Downstate and Kings County, I think  
16 will go a long way to coming up with  
17 hopefully a joint plan --

18 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Exactly.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: -- by SUNY and  
20 the community. You know, I think the --  
21 certainly from your part, I get the sense  
22 that you want Downstate to continue as a  
23 hospital, you want -- and you want the school  
24 to continue to produce students who stay in

1 New York State, stay in Brooklyn, serve  
2 communities that are underserved.

3 So the more that we can continue this  
4 conversation and work together -- the  
5 community, the legislators -- I think that we  
6 can hopefully get to a position. It is  
7 disturbing that during COVID, Downstate was  
8 the COVID hospital. It saved many lives in  
9 Brooklyn. And we did not get the  
10 reimbursement back that we should have. Our  
11 employees, the employees there didn't  
12 initially get those kind of extra payments  
13 that medical facilities at other hospitals  
14 had, and we lost some good people because  
15 they were poached away by other states and  
16 other systems.

17 So to the extent we continue those  
18 conversations, that would be very positive.  
19 So there's no question there, but just, you  
20 know, emphasis.

21 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'm very  
22 committed, very committed to that. And, you  
23 know, I think the Governor and we wanted to  
24 lay out a set of principles, including the

1 Governor's willingness to make an investment  
2 that hasn't been made in decades as a  
3 starting place for a conversation with the  
4 community to develop these details, and with  
5 staff and faculty.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And we look, you  
7 know, forward to having a more drilled-down  
8 discussion of where the funding is and how  
9 it's going to be spent.

10 And then both the question to  
11 Chancellor Rodríguez and yourself, as part of  
12 the Executive Budget there's a proposal to  
13 allow student data to be shared from SUNY and  
14 CUNY for educational purposes. And what kind  
15 of data do the systems want, and how would  
16 this data be used and why is it needed?

17 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:  
18 Well, we know from experience how important  
19 in the work that we have done, for example,  
20 with the department, the New York City Public  
21 Schools, to have data-sharing agreements that  
22 facilitate a whole range of transactions,  
23 policy work and activities. And that being  
24 done with all the safety, privacy and

1 guardrails, right, that are appropriate.

2 In higher ed, folks are very mobile.  
3 They might be gone at a SUNY campus, being  
4 from the city, they then come back. So all  
5 that movement. If we had better ways to be  
6 able to share that data, we will be more  
7 nimble and better equipped at making  
8 large-scale policy decisions. So I think  
9 that that is something that, you know, with  
10 all the appropriate guardrails, is incredibly  
11 desirable.

12 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: The only thing  
13 I would add is, you know, even between our  
14 systems, as those students move, we want to  
15 make sure that they're able to transfer their  
16 credits, for example, that they're able to  
17 get good advising around course selection.  
18 And so things that make it easier for us,  
19 with all the privacy protections, to be able  
20 to share data will allow us to serve students  
21 better.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Great. Thank  
23 you.

24 So now we'll go to our Higher Ed chair

1 for a second round of three minutes.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you, Chair.

3 And I'll try to be very brief.

4 Just a couple of things that we did  
5 not get to. Thank you, both chancellors.

6 Just a couple of quick comments on the  
7 EOP. I want to echo the comments I think of  
8 Senator Krueger, as well as the interest on  
9 the CUNY and SUNY Foundation information  
10 would be terrific. Also want to echo the  
11 comments of our ranking member on early  
12 college high schools and the tremendous  
13 importance. And I'm also just thrilled today  
14 to hear all the comments about community  
15 colleges. They are so much a part of our  
16 future. And as you yourself said,  
17 Chancellor, Micron alone is a perfect example  
18 of that.

19 So -- and really appreciate as well  
20 the comments on TAP. Because TAP, TAP, TAP,  
21 as I keep saying. It will be essential to  
22 turning around the enrollment numbers,  
23 especially on some of the microcredentials  
24 that we also heard a lot about today.

1                   So two questions. The SUNY Downstate,  
2                   I think what you are hearing -- and I  
3                   mentioned it in my previous 10 minutes, but  
4                   what you are hearing is a fear and a real  
5                   commitment of members, particularly on the  
6                   ambulatory services. I know you're having  
7                   conversations. We need to accelerate those  
8                   conversations. I know that this is more in  
9                   the Health Committee bucket, if you will.  
10                  And we will continue to talk with our  
11                  colleague Chairwoman Paulin on that, and have  
12                  already started those conversations.

13                  So I'm not sure if you have anything  
14                  more to add there, and I want to save a  
15                  minute there for AI. So if there's anything  
16                  more in terms of what we need to do. I mean,  
17                  the good news here is there are eyes on it.  
18                  Because I have heard from all that this has  
19                  been decades of neglect at the SUNY Downstate  
20                  Hospital. So I guess that's the good news.

21                  The bad news is we want to make sure,  
22                  as Chair Weinstein just mentioned, we have  
23                  that attention given on what happened during  
24                  COVID.

1                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, look. I  
2                   would just underscore our commitment to  
3                   preserving the inpatient services, expanding  
4                   outpatient services, and trying to improve  
5                   healthcare in the community. That is where  
6                   our focus is, and we want to do that in  
7                   partnership.

8                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Terrific.  
9                   Terrific. And again, both of you  
10                  mentioned -- I'm switching to AI, the  
11                  artificial intelligence.

12                 Just as early investments 10, 15 years  
13                 ago led to us becoming the epicenter of the  
14                 country, if not the world, on the  
15                 semiconductor industry -- and if we hadn't  
16                 had the original SUNY Poly or CSNE, we  
17                 wouldn't have had Global Foundries, and I  
18                 don't think we would have Micron. So it will  
19                 transform at least the upstate economy if not  
20                 more. We want to do the same on AI. And I'm  
21                 thrilled that both SUNY and CUNY are involved  
22                 in that.

23                 Chancellor, could you talk about how  
24                 more of SUNY will be involved? We understand

1 the supercomputer is going to U Buffalo.  
2 I've got my purple on for UAlbany. Can you,  
3 in eight seconds -- sorry. Go ahead.

4 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: UAlbany has  
5 been doing a great job of adding faculty and  
6 AI, and I expect UAlbany, Binghamton,  
7 Stony Brook and Buffalo all to play a major  
8 role. They're all founding members of the  
9 consortium for Empire AI.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Thank  
11 you, Chancellor. And Donna Lupardo has  
12 mentioned it as well.

13 Thank you, Chair.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

15 So as Senator Krueger has said  
16 previously, we haven't finished all our  
17 questions, but we've run out of time for  
18 members to ask them.

19 So we thank you for being here, both  
20 of you for being here, and look forward to  
21 hearing -- getting some feedback on some of  
22 the issues that were raised, or perhaps you  
23 didn't have -- either of you did not have the  
24 opportunity to fully respond to.

1                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you very  
2 much.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And we appreciate  
4 you, but we also appreciate getting the  
5 responses in writing to both Ways and Means  
6 and Finance, and then we can share it with  
7 all the members.

8                   SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you.

9                   CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: We  
10 will. Thank you.

11                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
12 Thank you.

13                  So I would just request that people --  
14 people who are leaving leave quietly. If  
15 members need to have further conversations,  
16 you take those outside the hearing room.

17                  And our next witness, a former  
18 colleague, Dr. Guillermo Linares, the  
19 president of the New York State Higher  
20 Education Services Corporation.

21                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Please take your  
22 conversations out to the hall so that we can  
23 start the next panel.

24                  (Pause.)

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Chancellor King  
2 and -- both chancellors, in the hall.  
3 Assemblymembers can follow you if they want.  
4 And Senators. They can all follow you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Just a minute,  
6 as some people continue to exit the room.

7 Okay, so now you can begin. Thank  
8 you.

9 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Good  
10 afternoon, Chairs Krueger, Weinstein,  
11 Stavisky and Fahy, and my former colleagues  
12 in the Senate and Assembly, thank you for the  
13 opportunity to speak with you today about the  
14 2024-'25 Executive Budget recommendations for  
15 HESC. I am Dr. Guillermo Linares, president  
16 of the Higher Education Services Corporation,  
17 and I'm pleased to be joined by HESC  
18 Executive Vice President Doris Gonzalez.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Guillermo, can  
20 you just pull the mic a little closer to you?

21 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Sure.

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: New York  
24 continues to be at the forefront of creating

1 opportunities for students to pursue higher  
2 education and invest in programs that ensure  
3 every student has access to a quality  
4 education. From financial aid to student  
5 support services and diversity programs,  
6 Governor Hochul is committed to helping  
7 students succeed in college and beyond.

8 HESC, New York State's student  
9 financial aid agency, administers more than  
10 two dozen state-funded grant, scholarship,  
11 and loan forgiveness programs. During the  
12 2022-'23 academic year, these programs  
13 disbursed financial assistance to  
14 approximately 300,000 students.

15 New York's generous investment in  
16 student financial aid, including TAP and  
17 Excelsior Scholarships, helped over 176,000  
18 New York State residents attend SUNY and CUNY  
19 tuition-free in academic year '22-'23, with  
20 52 percent at SUNY state-operated campuses  
21 and 67 percent at CUNY senior colleges. In  
22 the same academic year, more than  
23 65,000 students at private universities,  
24 colleges and business schools received TAP.

1                   Governor Hochul's 2024-'25  
2           Executive Budget demonstrates a firm  
3           commitment to providing access to  
4           post-secondary education for all students  
5           throughout New York. The Governor's budget  
6           proposal includes strategic investments in  
7           higher education programs aimed at increasing  
8           access to high-quality and affordable higher  
9           education options across the state.

10                   In the two budgets enacted under  
11           Governor Hochul, state operating funding for  
12           higher education has increased by a total of  
13           \$1.07 billion -- that is, 17 percent --  
14           growing from \$6.15 billion to \$7.22 billion.  
15           The 2024-'25 Executive Budget provides  
16           \$967.9 million for HESC financial aid  
17           programs, including \$764 million for TAP.

18                   Last year we proudly celebrated TAP's  
19           50th anniversary. Since inception, TAP has  
20           provided nearly \$30 billion to help more than  
21           6 million New Yorkers who have pursued a  
22           college education. During the 2022-'23  
23           school year alone, TAP provided over  
24           \$663 million in tuition assistance to more

1 than 230,000 students in New York.

2 The Executive Budget continues full  
3 support of the historic expansion of TAP,  
4 expanding the program guidelines to include  
5 students who were previously ineligible. Let  
6 me explain.

7 In the 2022-'23 budget,  
8 Governor Hochul expanded TAP for more  
9 students who were unable to attend college  
10 full-time. The legislation removed the  
11 previous requirement that students had to be  
12 enrolled full-time for two years before  
13 switching to part-time to be eligible for  
14 TAP. Now any student attending SUNY, CUNY,  
15 and not-for-profit independent  
16 degree-granting colleges on a part-time  
17 basis, taking a minimum of six credits, can  
18 benefit from TAP.

19 Additionally, in order to help  
20 New Yorkers develop or gain new skills in  
21 advancing industries, TAP was expanded to  
22 part-time students enrolled at eligible  
23 non-degree workforce credential programs at  
24 participating SUNY and CUNY schools.

1 Students attending non-degree programs at  
2 SUNY or CUNY community colleges in the  
3 Spring 2024 semester can access TAP.

4 By welcoming thousands of additional  
5 students, colleges can tap into demographics  
6 and bridge gaps within their student  
7 population. This influx can help bolster  
8 enrollment figures, a critical metric for the  
9 stability and prosperity of any educational  
10 institution.

11 In the 2022-'23 academic term, TAP  
12 funding eligibility for incarcerated  
13 individuals was restored. This benefit,  
14 denied to this community of students since  
15 1995, now offers them an opportunity to  
16 access TAP for their post-secondary education  
17 and enables them to expand their employment  
18 prospects and future success upon release.

19 The Free Application for Federal  
20 Student Aid -- FAFSA -- is the gateway for  
21 students to determine their eligibility for  
22 federal financial assistance, which  
23 encompasses grants, educational loans, and  
24 work-study programs. It is also a

1 prerequisite for many of New York State's  
2 financial aid programs.

3 For New York State, encouraging high  
4 school seniors to complete their FAFSA forms  
5 is not only an educational priority, but also  
6 a significant financial one. In 2022, almost  
7 50 percent of high school seniors in New York  
8 did not complete their FAFSA, missing their  
9 chance to attain crucial funding. This lack  
10 of FAFSA completion has resulted in a  
11 staggering \$200 million in Pell Grant funds  
12 left on the table.

13 Pell Grants, designed to assist  
14 low-income college students, can play a  
15 pivotal role in a family's ability to afford  
16 post-secondary education. Without completing  
17 the FAFSA, students forfeit valuable  
18 opportunities to receive a Pell Grant or  
19 other federal and New York State financial  
20 aid -- a loss for the students and a missed  
21 opportunity for communities that could  
22 benefit from a more educated workforce.

23 The 2024-'25 Executive Budget requires  
24 school districts ensure that every

1 high school senior or the parent certifies to  
2 having completed the FAFSA or the New York  
3 State DREAM Act or, in the alternative, signs  
4 a waiver form indicating that they are aware  
5 of but choose not to fill out the FAFSA.

6 It is important to note -- and I want  
7 to highlight this -- that completing the  
8 FAFSA is not a graduation requirement, and  
9 all individual students will still be able to  
10 graduate regardless of whether they complete  
11 the FAFSA.

12 Financial support can only reach those  
13 who apply for it. To that end, HESC has  
14 embarked on a comprehensive outreach  
15 campaign, NY FAFSA READY, to educate students  
16 on, and to assist students with completing,  
17 their FAFSA and TAP applications. This  
18 initiative includes events to assist students  
19 with completing their FAFSA or TAP  
20 applications, social media campaigns to  
21 ensure students and their families are aware  
22 of the benefits of completing the FAFSA, and  
23 the creation of a one-stop hub where  
24 students, parents, and counselors can access

1           valuable information.

2                   Already, this academic year, HESC has  
3           conducted 54 events and we have another  
4           28 virtual events scheduled through March and  
5           plan to continue to add more in the coming  
6           months. We encourage students and parents to  
7           visit the [hesc.ny.gov](https://hesc.ny.gov) website and go to sign  
8           up and get text messages so they can be  
9           notified about upcoming informational  
10          sessions.

11                   HESC has also undergone changes in our  
12          mission, which we are very proud about. In  
13          December 2021 HESC terminated its role with  
14          the U.S. Department of Education as the  
15          guaranty agency administering the Federal  
16          Family Education Loan Program, FFELP, on  
17          behalf of New York State. The Trellis  
18          Company was designated as the successor, and  
19          in May 2023, the portfolio was transferred to  
20          Trellis without adverse impact on borrowers.

21                   With this transition, we can now focus  
22          our resources fully on supporting New Yorkers  
23          in their pursuit of state financial aid  
24          awards to fund their college education. We

1 are in the process of updating our website  
2 and have embarked on fully modernizing our  
3 financial aid system so students can easily  
4 find the information they need and seamlessly  
5 apply for grants and scholarships.

6 In closing, under Governor Hochul's  
7 leadership New York State has shown its  
8 resolute commitment to expanding access to  
9 high-quality, affordable higher education for  
10 every student in New York who desires it.  
11 This critical investment in higher education  
12 programs will go a long way in making  
13 post-secondary education achievable for every  
14 student who dreams of obtaining a college  
15 degree in New York State.

16 I thank Governor Hochul for ensuring  
17 students receive the support they deserve,  
18 and State Operations Director Kathryn Garcia,  
19 Deputy Secretary of Education Maria  
20 Fernandez, and New York State Budget  
21 Director Blake Washington, for their  
22 continued support and collaboration.

23 Thank you, and I will be happy to  
24 answer any questions you may have.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very  
2 much.

3 Our first questioner will be Pat Fahy,  
4 10 minutes, Assembly Education chair.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Thank  
6 you, Chair.

7 And wonderful to see you. Thank you  
8 for the testimony today.

9 I have a few questions. And I want to  
10 start by -- President Linares, I want to  
11 start by saying thank you for the help from  
12 you and your team with pulling together a  
13 number of estimates and information as we  
14 have launched a TAP campaign, as you know,  
15 "Turn on the TAP," to really begin to turn  
16 around the numbers, a number of which you  
17 just referenced.

18 And I'm going to start with a question  
19 on that. I have a number of questions. But  
20 I think it is important that TAP in  
21 two thousand -- well, before 2011, in its  
22 first 40 -- almost 40 years, TAP followed  
23 tuition. So the cost of SUNY or CUNY tuition  
24 was essentially covered by TAP for those who

1 qualified. And in its first 25 years or  
2 more, it did serve not only low-income  
3 families but essentially was serving  
4 middle-income families. But as you know, for  
5 25 years now the income threshold in which  
6 families qualify has not increased from  
7 beyond the \$80,000 where people tap out or  
8 families tap out, if you will.

9 So we definitely want to work to see  
10 how we can recouple that. And as you know,  
11 we have circulated an entire package. Many  
12 members sitting here have proposals on that.

13 So if I can start with the question  
14 this year, my understanding, if we had just  
15 tied where TAP would be from about 2011 or  
16 so, we would be spending about almost \$1.3  
17 billion on it. Instead, I understand the  
18 Executive Budget is requesting yet another  
19 decrease in that of 132 million, which brings  
20 the program fund request at 764 million.

21 Can you explain the decrease to us?  
22 Is that all tied to enrollment? Which -- you  
23 also just mentioned FAFSA. We are just  
24 thrilled to see the Governor include the

1 near-mandate, if you will, to really  
2 accelerate the use of FAFSA. So I know we're  
3 all working together to do that.

4 But what is this cut tied to,  
5 President Guillermo?

6 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, I want  
7 to start by saying that we look very closely  
8 at the projection in terms of enrollment that  
9 we anticipate for the next fiscal year. And  
10 the revenues that have been designated we're  
11 confident will allow us to cover the  
12 enrollment that we will be having. So we  
13 believe that we are maintaining ourselves  
14 whole with that at this point, given the  
15 projections that we have for the coming year.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: So if I can  
17 further ask a little bit more on that, the  
18 projections -- we just heard both chancellors  
19 before us, we plan to hear from CICU later  
20 today. At least both SUNY and CUNY  
21 chancellors talked about the enrollment  
22 increases. While slight, we did see that  
23 bump up, and we're very proud of that because  
24 we had record investments in operating

1 dollars last year due to the work of many  
2 folks here, including myself.

3 So I understand it was the first  
4 significant increase since 2007. Are you  
5 still saying, even with those enrollment  
6 increases, we're still going to see a  
7 decrease in TAP take-up rates?

8 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: In the early  
9 conversations we've had with the Division of  
10 Budget, we feel confident that we're going to  
11 be able to fulfill the commitment of  
12 providing the tuition to all of the students  
13 that will be enrolling for next year.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Okay. All right.  
15 As you know, many of us are really working to  
16 turn that around. And you heard a lot of  
17 questions on that -- microcredentials,  
18 raising the income floor. There's a whole  
19 host -- one bill alone, Assemblywoman Clark,  
20 and I think there's another, and  
21 Senator Stavisky have legislation just to  
22 raise that income threshold.

23 Your estimates, which again were very  
24 helpful, would say as many as 25,000

1 additional students might benefit by that.  
2 So we are quite determined to try to address  
3 the needs of students and families. Eighty  
4 thousand was a big number in 2011 or earlier.  
5 It's certainly not -- not serving the number  
6 of families we need to. So we do want to  
7 work with you on that.

8 Can I switch to another issue -- again  
9 where we have lots of legislation, including  
10 my own -- is to better serve independent  
11 students. Right now TAP has been really  
12 known for serving dependent students. We  
13 have legislation to increase the threshold  
14 for independent students, because primarily  
15 if they make more than \$10,000 per year,  
16 which is an extraordinarily low threshold,  
17 they are out of luck. And as it is, I know  
18 there was a three-year error on the TAP  
19 independent students where they were treated  
20 like dependent students.

21 Have we addressed that error at this  
22 time? And are you confident that we won't  
23 see that again? And can you talk about the  
24 impact on the students themselves?

1 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes.

2 First of all, the issue of overpayment  
3 that -- once we discovered it as an issue, we  
4 addressed it and looked at it very seriously.  
5 We immediately followed up with ITS to really  
6 look into what happened and realized that  
7 there were limitations in terms of the  
8 outdated system that we use, which is  
9 antiquated, decades in existence.

10 We proceeded to establish more  
11 rigorous oversight or more rigorous steps to  
12 make sure that we address the issue and it  
13 would not happen again. We proceeded  
14 immediately to examine internally how this  
15 had happened and was undetected for quite  
16 some time. And it goes back to 2021, when  
17 there was a budgetary change done to TAP  
18 where it really looked at how TAP was  
19 disbursed to independent -- to the low amount  
20 and highest amount given to -- on TAP.

21 And that change triggered changes from  
22 11 schedules to five. And when that was  
23 done, it was not captured. And that's where  
24 the mistake was, from independent to

1 dependent students.

2 And that was -- that has been  
3 addressed. We've informed all the colleges  
4 and universities impacted, both public and  
5 private. We have taken steps to really  
6 address the quality control. And we are  
7 modernizing now the entire system.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Yes,  
9 I appreciate that you're modernizing that.  
10 And again, I want to echo -- and we've had  
11 many conversations on this -- make sure the  
12 students are held harmless as well as the  
13 individual universities and colleges, so that  
14 they are not penalized for something the  
15 students were not aware of until this year.

16 But we appreciate your frankness in  
17 bringing this to our attention, and glad we  
18 are modernizing the system.

19 Last question on this. And that is  
20 with regard to TAP, I know students have been  
21 inundated, we know FAFSA itself, the feds are  
22 updating that. And I heard that that's going  
23 to need a lot of work. Lots of confusion out  
24 there. And as somebody who struggles with



1           you so much. And let us know how we can help  
2           to accelerate that, because the students --  
3           it's causing a lot of anxiety among the  
4           students.

5                       And again, the bottom line is I  
6           appreciate your help on a whole host of TAP  
7           bills that are out there. Our goal is to  
8           turn these numbers around.

9                       Thank you, Chair.

10                      HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

11                      CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12                      And our next chair, Toby Stavisky,  
13           from the Senate.

14                      SENATOR STAVISKY: I always push hard  
15           on everything, including microphones, I  
16           guess.

17                      Dr. Linares, thank you. Great to see  
18           you again.

19                      HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Same here.

20                      SENATOR STAVISKY: And I appreciate  
21           the work that you're doing at HESC. And I'm  
22           glad that the subject of the independent  
23           student has come up. Because can you  
24           imagine, in 2024, living on \$10,000 a year?

1 That's not below the poverty line, it's way  
2 under every other concept of society.

3 At any rate, the issue of the  
4 independent student and the overpayments to  
5 the students -- I understand that HESC is  
6 sending out notices of repayment to these  
7 students, to students to repay the  
8 overpayment that they received. Is that  
9 correct?

10 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: No, let me  
11 clarify.

12 Statutorily, HESC is required to  
13 submit invoices to the institutions, to the  
14 colleges. This is part of the regular  
15 operating function of HESC, you know, with  
16 all the programs it has, in this particular  
17 case TAP.

18 So the colleges will be receiving  
19 notification on a regular basis, as they do  
20 every year, not the students.

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: And it's my  
22 understanding that both SUNY and CUNY are  
23 going to absorb the cost of the overpayment  
24 to the students?

1                   HESC PRESIDENT LINARES:  They have --  
2                   there have been appropriations done within  
3                   their operations to help address this with  
4                   the colleges.

5                   SENATOR STAVISKY:  What about the  
6                   students who do not attend a public  
7                   institution?  For example -- and I don't mean  
8                   to spring this on you.  However, I was  
9                   looking at the list, and there are  
10                  14 students at the College of Saint Rose, and  
11                  the college is being billed the  
12                  23,000-and-change cost of the overpayment of  
13                  the independent TAP.

14                  HESC PRESIDENT LINARES:  We're very  
15                  sensitive to all students, students in public  
16                  and private universities.  And it is  
17                  certainly our hope that students will be held  
18                  harmless.

19                  As I said, the invoices will be sent  
20                  to all colleges.  It is a requirement that  
21                  we, by law, have to proceed with.  We've been  
22                  having conversations, discussions to see how  
23                  this can be addressed.  It is hopeful -- at  
24                  our end we hope that this can be addressed

1 with the institutions in addressing this  
2 matter.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: I certainly hope  
4 so. Because many of these students, the --  
5 some of their Opportunity Program money has  
6 been cut, there are other economic and social  
7 challenges that many students have. Many of  
8 the colleges are financially stressed. And  
9 particularly an institution like the College  
10 of Saint Rose, they must have a long list of  
11 people to whom they owe money. I think it's  
12 almost unfair.

13 And to bill them back to 2021 -- when  
14 the fiscal year is over, the fiscal year 2023  
15 is finished. And yet we're going to bill  
16 them for previous years. I think we've got  
17 to find a better way, and perhaps the statute  
18 should be changed.

19 A couple of other questions. Because  
20 I must tell you I appreciate those  
21 Zoom meetings that we've had concerning the  
22 independent TAP. And I don't think we can  
23 close our legislative books on this issue.

24 The Pell Grants and the TAP for the



1 ask you a question about your agency, HESC.

2 I took a look at some of your  
3 meetings. You have an unusually large board.  
4 You did have a meeting in December of 2023  
5 and it lasted a little over an hour, but  
6 prior to that, the meeting -- the last  
7 meeting that was held was held in 2019.  
8 That's a four-year gap. And that meeting  
9 lasted 17 minutes.

10 Do you think that the -- we ought to  
11 take a look at the structure of HESC to make  
12 it -- to update it?

13 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We are, as we  
14 speak, looking into the functions of the  
15 Board of Trustees, mindful that it was  
16 established when HESC was founded in the  
17 mid-'70s. So taking a harder look at it now  
18 makes sense.

19 But we had the pandemic. The last  
20 time we met was to address the DREAM Act,  
21 which was an important meeting. In fact, it  
22 had to be virtual because we were already  
23 approaching the pandemic.

24 But we were pleased to see that the

1 Senate approved two new members to the Board  
2 of Trustees, giving us a quorum that allowed  
3 for the meeting that you referred to. And we  
4 were able -- we met then on December 7th to  
5 approve the regs for the non-degree students.  
6 And we have our next meeting scheduled for  
7 May 15th of this year.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yes.

9 But I think that changes, the same way  
10 as we think there -- the TAP, the entire TAP  
11 structure ought to be modernized. And I want  
12 to echo very briefly what was said a few  
13 minutes ago, that we've got to take another  
14 look at TAP. Because my bill which increased  
15 the income eligibility from the 80,000 to  
16 110,000 -- I think maybe we ought to raise it  
17 even higher to include other programs as  
18 well. And that hasn't changed in 25 years or  
19 so.

20 And while we're celebrating the  
21 50th anniversary, it seems to me that we  
22 ought to review what's happened and build on  
23 the better parts and get rid of the  
24 anachronistic parts.

1                   So again, thank you, Dr. Linares, for  
2                   what you're doing.

3                   HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

4                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5                   Next is Assemblymember Ra, ranker.

6                   ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

7                   Good afternoon.

8                   HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Good  
9                   afternoon.

10                  ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Always good to see a  
11                  former colleague come back before us.

12                  One of the programs I know I've asked  
13                  you about in previous years, and you've been  
14                  able to follow up with some information, so  
15                  I'm going to ask if you could do that again.  
16                  It's the Child Welfare Worker Incentive  
17                  Scholarship and the Child Welfare Worker Loan  
18                  Forgiveness Program. This budget funds them  
19                  at \$50,000 each, which is the same as in  
20                  years past. And I'm wondering if you have  
21                  any data with you regarding how many people  
22                  are applying for these programs, and how many  
23                  have been awarded.

24                  I think the last one I had was from

1 two years ago in terms of that information.

2 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I'm going to  
3 ask my executive vice president to add. And  
4 thank you for the question.

5 HESC EXEC. VP GONZALEZ: Yes, I will  
6 get back to you. I'd rather get back to you  
7 with more specific information. So if I may,  
8 I would be happy to follow up with this.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay.

10 HESC EXEC. VP GONZALEZ: Thank you.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: That would be great.

12 Just the small amounts really -- you  
13 know, it enables only, you know, five  
14 students to be awarded them each year. And I  
15 think, given the workforce recruitment and  
16 retention issues we've had within that  
17 sector, you know, expanding that opportunity  
18 might be very helpful to --

19 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: And I may  
20 just add. One thing that we are doing as we  
21 are shifting the mission of our agency to be  
22 more focused on making aware all New Yorkers  
23 of the offerings that we have, all 28  
24 scholarship grants and loan forgiveness

1 programs, that we engage aggressively in an  
2 awareness for them to be able to apply for  
3 every single program that we have.

4 And that's -- we're excited about  
5 that.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: With regard to the  
7 Excelsior Scholarship and the Enhanced  
8 tuition awards, obviously many years now into  
9 this -- I know the Excelsior Scholarship is  
10 supposed to be funded at 136 million, which  
11 is almost 26 million less than last year.

12 So is that a function of enrollment?  
13 Do we expect the same number of scholarships  
14 to be awarded to students this year?

15 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, for the  
16 2022-'23 academic year we have close to  
17 29,000 students receiving Excelsior  
18 Scholarships. Needless to say, this has been  
19 a very successful program. It emphasizes  
20 completing college in four years, which, you  
21 know, reduces the risk of having to graduate  
22 with a debt. But more importantly, it gets  
23 you into the job market quicker. So it's  
24 been very successful.

1                   With regards to the Enhanced Tuition,  
2                   we have 1,808, if I'm correct, students that  
3                   are receiving the -- benefiting from the  
4                   program. I must say that it has reduced the  
5                   number from the time we started the program,  
6                   which was in concert with Excelsior, from  
7                   38 participating colleges to today now 24, I  
8                   believe we have.

9                   We believe the program has now  
10                  generated \$2.5 million, which are matched by  
11                  colleges by 2.5, so it's \$5 million.

12                  We believe that it has reduced  
13                  because -- mainly because the funds need to  
14                  be matched by the participating institutions,  
15                  so -- however, it is still going. We feel  
16                  that it's successful for those students that  
17                  are in private universities.

18                  HESC EXEC. VP GONZALEZ: If I may add  
19                  also, it's that they need not just to match  
20                  up to 3,000, but they also have to freeze the  
21                  tuition rates, right, based on the first year  
22                  that they are eligible to receive that award  
23                  for as long as they're eligible to receive  
24                  that award. So that's also a consideration

1 for the colleges.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4 Senator Robert Jackson.

5 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

6 So, Dr. Linares, thank you for your  
7 service, and your team.

8 I was just listening to you give your  
9 presentation and questions and responses, and  
10 it seems like things are going well in your  
11 shop, compared to the previous panel, with  
12 respect to all of the money and Downstate on  
13 a cliff, people ready to fall off the cliff  
14 as a result of, you know, years of  
15 dysfunction and not enough support for  
16 capital and so forth and so on.

17 So I'm happy to hear that. I'm going  
18 to go to your website and look at all of the  
19 things that are needed for our children to  
20 get more of the scholarships and all of the  
21 things that you have to offer. That's needed  
22 to get out the information to everyone.

23 But I'm curious -- and I said to  
24 myself, when you determine how many people

1 are not filling out the FAFSA form -- and I  
2 guess I asked you, do you do a survey of why  
3 they're not filling it out at every level?  
4 And I know you can't do it at your shop. But  
5 at every school, we should be encouraging  
6 that. And if not, finding out why, so then  
7 we can then deal with the critical issue of  
8 why they're not filling it out. Because  
9 what's at stake, how much money?

10 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Two hundred  
11 million.

12 SENATOR JACKSON: Two hundred million.

13 So that's what I recommend if that has  
14 not been done. But it's important that we  
15 give all of the students the opportunity to  
16 get involved in all the programs that you  
17 have to offer.

18 So we put out a weekly update every  
19 week, and I'm going to go to your website and  
20 have my staff look at all the programs so we  
21 can at least get it out there to the people  
22 in my district, so hopefully more people will  
23 take advantage.

24 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: On the

1 website, we're excited to say that by the end  
2 of this month we will have a brand-new  
3 state-of-the-art website. In fact, we invite  
4 you to a quick preview before we launch.

5 And so we're excited about that  
6 because it is highly interactive,  
7 communicative, and I think it's tailored for  
8 students and families.

9 On the FAFSA, as you spoke it reminded  
10 me of 1995 when you and I were on the school  
11 board and in three months we registered  
12 10,000 parents, half of the parents in the  
13 entire City of New York in  
14 Washington Heights.

15 There's no different approach with  
16 this when it comes to students accessing and  
17 families accessing these funds from the  
18 federal government.

19 So I plan to work very aggressively  
20 with all our partners -- SED, the  
21 commissioner, and all of the other partners  
22 that we have.

23 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1 Assembly.

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman  
3 Clark.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Excellent.  
5 Thank you so much.

6 I'm going to stay on the same track I  
7 did with our SUNY chancellor to talk about  
8 TAP and FAFSA as well and let you know some  
9 of my thoughts and concerns and questions.

10 I agree, getting to the point where  
11 everyone is filling out the FAFSA form is a  
12 wonderful idea. And I know HESC has started  
13 to do some informational events around the  
14 state, and I think that's great as well.

15 But what I'm really concerned about is  
16 the people who aren't applying are often the  
17 ones that are really struggling to find the  
18 information and fill out the form and don't  
19 necessarily have someone, you know, sort of  
20 boots on the ground helping them get through  
21 it.

22 And as much as HESC can do  
23 informational, I think it's wonderful. I'm  
24 hoping that there's also a pot and a real

1 resource -- some resources given to those who  
2 are already actually doing that real boots on  
3 the ground: Helping families, holding their  
4 hands through it. Because these are again  
5 the ones that really struggle to track down  
6 the forms that are needed and the information  
7 that is needed.

8 And we can't just let this be an  
9 unfunded sort of mandate. I know it's not  
10 mandated to have it for graduation. But we  
11 are really trying to encourage it. It only  
12 works if we actually pair up people who are  
13 in the communities doing this work and giving  
14 them the resources to help those families.

15 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I agree that  
16 this is so huge, that it requires all hands  
17 on deck. And what it would take to really  
18 bring it down beyond what we are excited  
19 about doing as a small agency and the efforts  
20 that we have in collaboration with higher ed  
21 partners -- but also with the Department of  
22 Education, the commissioner and the school  
23 districts to be engaged, so we bring it down  
24 to where it makes a difference for students

1 and families.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: I just hope that  
3 that comes with some resources for those  
4 groups, that we're not just letting them --  
5 trying to do more with less or more with what  
6 they already have and expecting them to be  
7 able to meet this demand and this need.

8 My second piece on that, and it is  
9 really an issue of the -- you know, the  
10 Governor's proposed budget moving out  
11 \$132 million from TAP as a decrease due to  
12 adjusted long-term enrollment trends instead  
13 of reinvesting that back into expanding  
14 income eligibility.

15 Which we've already seen -- you know,  
16 the number I continue to harp on is when  
17 we -- over a four-year period we had a  
18 9 percent decline in school enrollment in our  
19 SUNY schools, our public schools, but a  
20 26 percent decline in TAP. Which means more  
21 and more families either aren't eligible or  
22 aren't filling it out because the \$500 isn't  
23 worth it.

24 So I guess I was really frustrated

1           that we're moving dollars out of that program  
2           instead of figuring out ways to help more  
3           families.

4                       HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes. As you  
5           are aware, we are all for greater access to  
6           students attending colleges. And so we hope,  
7           based on your discussions, that we're able to  
8           continue to provide access to TAP for  
9           students.

10                      CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

11                      So no more Senators, so we'll go --

12                      CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh, excuse me. I  
13           didn't see your hand, Lea. We do have one  
14           more Senator, excuse me. Senator Lea Webb.

15                      SENATOR WEBB: Thank you.

16                      Thank you so much, Dr. Linares, for  
17           being here.

18                      I just have two quick questions. You  
19           know, one, I would be remiss in this moment  
20           if I didn't lift up the importance of TAP.  
21           You know, as a first-generation student  
22           myself, this was a program that was  
23           instrumental to me in my academic journey and  
24           continues to be for a number of students. So

1 definitely support our continued efforts to  
2 expand TAP.

3 My question is I know State Ed has an  
4 MOU with both the Department of Health and  
5 OTDA that they can have information about  
6 families that receive SNAP and Medicaid  
7 benefits. This information is then used to  
8 directly certify students for free meals in  
9 schools.

10 Similarly, would your department be  
11 open to developing MOUs with DOH and OTDA, or  
12 possibly with SED, to collect that same  
13 information from incoming high school seniors  
14 to determine their TAP eligibility? That's  
15 one.

16 And then the other is with regards to  
17 funding support for the New York State  
18 Nursing Faculty Loan Forgiveness Incentive  
19 Program. We know that we continue to have  
20 issues around healthcare provider shortages,  
21 nurses being no exception to that. And it  
22 was brought to my attention that this program  
23 has been significantly underfunded.

24 So I was hoping you could address

1           those two. Thank you so much.

2                   HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes. On the  
3 first one, I believe that there are  
4 intersections with the State Department of  
5 Education having a role when it comes to  
6 initiatives and memoranda of understanding  
7 that they have.

8                   And what I bring to bear with any  
9 initiative that engages students as they  
10 enter college -- that's the mission of my  
11 agency, is I work very closely in the work  
12 that we do with students and families to help  
13 complement what the Department of Education  
14 is doing. So we have collaborative  
15 approaches on that.

16                   But we run programs that have been  
17 established by statute, by law, by you along  
18 with the Governor --

19                   SENATOR WEBB: So are you saying that  
20 we would have to establish a law to make that  
21 happen with regards to SED working with you  
22 to get information from incoming high school  
23 seniors to determine their TAP eligibility?

24                   HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We have

1 collaborated -- we collaborate as partners as  
2 long as it helps access -- greater access to  
3 students, and also access to whatever  
4 resources they have.

5 But it is the mission of the State  
6 Education Department to do so. We  
7 collaborate with them along with that.

8 But by statute, we run 28 different  
9 programs. Those are what we oversee. But  
10 there is collaboration that we have.

11 SENATOR WEBB: Okay. We can follow up  
12 offline about that, and also the nursing loan  
13 forgiveness question.

14 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: And we'll  
15 follow up on the second question.

16 SENATOR WEBB: Thank you so much.

17 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Sure.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

19 We go to Assemblyman Epstein.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: President  
21 Linares, always good to see you.

22 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Same here.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So 300,000  
24 people in 2023 got financial assistance

1 through TAP. How many people applied for TAP  
2 and were denied any TAP award?

3 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: The number of  
4 students that applied for TAP --

5 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: In 2023 you said  
6 300,000 students got TAP. How many were  
7 denied TAP, denied any award at all?

8 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We don't have  
9 that number. We'll get back to you --

10 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Yeah, if you  
11 could get back to me, I'd appreciate it.

12 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: -- on that,  
13 yes.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: You know, part  
15 of our concern is like not -- TAP not being  
16 available to enough people. And that's the  
17 theme that we've been hearing today.

18 So I want to know how you feel about  
19 increasing the number of semesters that  
20 people could get a TAP award for. Would you  
21 support increasing it beyond eight semesters?

22 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, we know  
23 that 12 credits per semester falls short in  
24 terms of graduating, so that's --

1 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: President, I  
2 don't have a lot of time, so do you think you  
3 would support more semesters?

4 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Any effort  
5 that you can come up with in the budgetary  
6 process, along with the Governor, to help  
7 enhance students getting that degree, will be  
8 welcome.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Great. And so  
10 that would include grad school, if we can get  
11 TAP for grad school, additional semesters,  
12 increasing the TAP awards, either on the high  
13 end or the low end, you'd support anything to  
14 get more people TAP?

15 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah, when we  
16 look at, you know, post-graduate education, I  
17 think it becomes so important and critical,  
18 especially given areas of needs within the  
19 workforce -- all that is welcome, if we can  
20 get additional support to enhance both  
21 undergraduate and graduate education.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And then how  
23 often do you hear from students about not  
24 being able to continue on with their

1 education because they don't get enough TAP  
2 award or they've run out of semesters? Is  
3 that something your office hears regularly  
4 about?

5 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, I must  
6 say that as we are shifting our mission  
7 within HESC to really make it strictly  
8 informational and awareness for students and  
9 families, we get a very powerful feedback and  
10 excitement about students having an  
11 opportunity to enter college. Especially now  
12 that when we're expanding TAP to part-time,  
13 we're getting strong feedback on that.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And just I want  
15 to turn to Excelsior for a moment. Could we  
16 find out how many people applied for  
17 Excelsior but were turned down for Excelsior,  
18 and kind of why the reasons they were turned  
19 down?

20 Because we want to know if there are  
21 gaps in the program that we can close up and  
22 fix.

23 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes. I  
24 mentioned the 29,000, but we'll get back to

1           you. Thank you.

2                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

3                   We go to Assemblywoman Hyndman.

4                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Dr. Linares,  
5 always good to see you.

6                   HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Same here.

7                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I was reading  
8 your testimony, and I know this, but I just  
9 wanted to highlight it, so maybe this is more  
10 of a comment than a question.

11                   But students attending non-degree  
12 programs at SUNY or CUNY colleges will now be  
13 able to access TAP. So I'm curious that it  
14 wasn't expanded to proprietary colleges or  
15 proprietary schools, who have to do a lot  
16 more reporting than CUNY and SUNY. Like  
17 every year, proprietary schools have to  
18 report how many graduates, where those  
19 graduates have been placed for workforce  
20 development. And the proprietary colleges do  
21 this constantly because of gainful employment  
22 and the rules that are stringent around  
23 gainful employment.

24                   So I'm curious as to why TAP wasn't

1 expanded to part-time students at proprietary  
2 colleges and why it's not been expanded to  
3 proprietary schools.

4 I don't know -- I mean, as far as the  
5 administration of that, I know it's -- you're  
6 more carrying out the rules and regulations  
7 as opposed to the expansion of it per se.

8 But I just think that because of the  
9 reporting structures that State Education  
10 Department puts on those two areas, as well  
11 as federal requirements, they should have  
12 been included for the non-degree part of TAP  
13 as well as the expansion of part-time TAP to  
14 proprietary colleges.

15 And I just want that on the record  
16 as -- that education obviously is not just  
17 SUNY and CUNY, it's obviously a whole sector  
18 of education. When it comes to workforce  
19 development, those institutions have to be on  
20 record as far as where those students -- when  
21 they graduate and where they end up, because  
22 of federal reporting requirements. So I  
23 think it's a disservice for New York State  
24 not to expand it.

1                   We will be meeting with, you know, the  
2                   Governor and working with our Higher  
3                   Education Chair Pat Fahy, of course, to  
4                   expand TAP to those sectors. So not really  
5                   your opinion, because, you know, I know you  
6                   do more of the oversight. But just curious  
7                   what --

8                   HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Regs and  
9                   regulation are an extension of the statute  
10                  that was passed by law, by the Legislature  
11                  and signed by the Governor.

12                  So in that context, this initiative  
13                  which -- for non-degree students to be able  
14                  to access TAP is -- for the first time it's  
15                  being done and we're rolling it out now.  
16                  So --

17                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Yeah, I just  
18                  wondered what kind of oversight is that with  
19                  your office and, you know, making sure that  
20                  students are in programs that are credible  
21                  and, you know, results-oriented --

22                  HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We've been  
23                  working all of last year, since this was  
24                  approved with SUNY and CUNY, to make sure

1           that we roll it out now, this semester.

2                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

4                   We go to Assemblyman Eachus.

5                   ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you,

6           Madam Chair.

7                   Let me start by saying this is the

8           middle of the school year. It is not too

9           late for this year.

10                   With that being said, we don't know

11           each other personally, but I am a member or

12           the Higher Ed Committee and I'm also 40 years

13           a high school teacher teaching mostly

14           seniors, almost exclusively seniors.

15                   And with that being said, I think you

16           also know -- I heard that you've been on this

17           side of the table before. I think you also

18           know that we, most of us if not all of us,

19           have a very special relationship with our

20           superintendents and our school boards. And

21           I've met with all of mine. And yet I'm

22           sitting here right now looking at NY FAFSA

23           READY, a program I've never heard of.

24                   And so when we talk about boots on the

1 ground, I would think we would be a wonderful  
2 resource. And this kind of goes along with  
3 what Assemblymember Clark was talking  
4 about -- not just having to pay people to go  
5 out, but you have paid people who can go out  
6 and help in this process.

7 I am assuming in your experience, like  
8 mine -- I'm brand-new here --  
9 superintendents, school boards respond to us  
10 very well. And knowing -- having been in a  
11 very, very urban school district, I know the  
12 reticence of students and some parents not to  
13 want to fill out these forms. And I think we  
14 would have a much greater effect working for  
15 you to get this information out.

16 And so what I ask is if you have  
17 specific information, either E --  
18 electronically or hard copy, I personally  
19 would love to get it. I can't answer for any  
20 other Assemblyperson or certainly Senator.  
21 But perhaps you could send it to them and we  
22 would be willing to be part of the boots on  
23 the ground for you.

24 And that's goes with all your 28

1 scholarship programs and your website launch  
2 and so on like that.

3 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I couldn't  
4 agree with you more in terms of where we  
5 could make the greatest impact. Having been  
6 a teacher and a school board member and  
7 working closely with superintendents, the  
8 importance of having superintendents and  
9 principals on the frontline and working with  
10 them -- so I couldn't agree more.

11 HESC EXEC. VP GONZALEZ: And I would  
12 just like to add that we do a lot of outreach  
13 already to the schools directly, to the  
14 guidance counselors. But there's always room  
15 for us to continue to expand that.

16 And one of the things we've been  
17 working on directly with the chamber has been  
18 to post a tile, one of the tiles on ny.gov  
19 that would lead them directly to completing  
20 FAFSA. So that anytime anybody goes to that  
21 website, it will take them directly there.

22 So we will be notifying everyone here  
23 about that.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Please do.

1                   HESC EXEC. VP GONZALEZ: Yes,  
2                   absolutely.

3                   HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I also plan  
4                   to work with the Commissioner of Education  
5                   moving forward to help address this also.

6                   ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you.

7                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

8                   Our last questioner is Assemblywoman  
9                   Simon.

10                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

11                  So A, first I want to just say that I  
12                  agree with my colleagues with regard to the  
13                  whole FAFSA support and increases in TAP  
14                  eligibility.

15                  I have a very specific question with  
16                  regard to the District Attorney and Indigent  
17                  Legal Services Attorney Loan Forgiveness  
18                  Program, which is administered through HESC.  
19                  And, you know, law school tuition has grown  
20                  dramatically. Most of our lawyers get out  
21                  with an average of \$130,000 worth of debt.  
22                  And currently this program that exists for  
23                  loan forgiveness really only provides them  
24                  with a maximum of \$20,000 that they're

1 eligible for only for a period of six years.

2 There's a similar program for nurses  
3 who graduate with an average debt of \$55,000,  
4 but they can get \$40,000 worth of loan  
5 reimbursement. And social workers, who  
6 graduate with a debt of \$76,000, can get up  
7 to \$26,000 worth of loan reimbursement.

8 Would you support an increase to this  
9 program so that our lawyers, who are the  
10 folks we rely on to represent indigent people  
11 and prosecutors -- it's keeping people from  
12 joining the field. We can't fill those jobs  
13 and keep people in those jobs because of the  
14 financial constraints. Would you support  
15 increasing --

16 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Any effort to  
17 help us reach -- especially in key areas of  
18 needs and services that are provided across  
19 New York State, would be welcome.

20 Of course, you know, any funding or  
21 increase to those programs will come through  
22 the budget process and the negotiations that  
23 take place. But that will be welcome,  
24 because the need is there. And I think it

1 will make a huge difference in terms of  
2 attracting people to prepare for those  
3 special-need areas.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

5 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So thank you.  
6 Thank you for being here. And to the extent  
7 that there are some questions that there  
8 wasn't time for you to get your answers in --

9 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We'll follow  
10 up on them.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: -- please  
12 forward those to Senator Krueger and myself,  
13 and we'll make sure all our colleagues are  
14 able to receive them.

15 Thank you for being here today.

16 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

17 HESC EXEC. VP GONZALEZ: Thank you so  
18 much.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Now we are  
20 going to move to the nongovernmental portion  
21 of our hearing. And the first, Panel B:  
22 Professional Staff Congress, CUNY,  
23 James Davis, president; United University  
24 Professions, Frederick Kowal, president;

1 New York Community College Trustees,  
2 Allen Williams, president; and Faculty  
3 Federation of Erie Community College,  
4 Andrew Sako, president.

5 So if -- when you come down, if you  
6 can go in that order, that would be helpful.

7 (Pause.)

8 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Just a reminder  
9 that presenters each have three minutes to  
10 make their presentation. And when the four  
11 of you finish, then there will be some  
12 ability of members to ask questions again,  
13 three minutes for both the question and the  
14 answer.

15 And we've received all of your  
16 testimony in writing in advance, so it would  
17 be helpful to highlight, when you speak, the  
18 portions so that we get to hear the meat of  
19 your presentation.

20 With that, if we could start with the  
21 Professional Staff Congress.

22 DR. DAVIS: Good afternoon,  
23 Senate Chairpersons Krueger and Stavisky,  
24 Assembly Chairpersons Weinstein and Fahy, and

1 all members of the committees.

2 Thank you for giving us the  
3 opportunity to testify today and for your  
4 critical support for public higher education.  
5 I'm James Davis, president of the  
6 Professional Staff Congress at CUNY.

7 The Legislature worked very hard in  
8 the last two budget cycles on the process of  
9 setting the City University back on course  
10 after decades of disinvestment. More than  
11 400 million in new annual operating aid has  
12 entered CUNY. Without those resources, CUNY  
13 would be in a far more precarious position.

14 We have seen 575 new full-time faculty  
15 hired in the past two years, laudable efforts  
16 to boost enrollment aided by enhancements to  
17 the TAP program. PSC members are faculty and  
18 professional staff who care deeply about  
19 their students and about their disciplines.  
20 They believe in CUNY's historic mission to  
21 educate the children of the whole people of  
22 New York, and they continue to make it  
23 possible for CUNY to help propel more  
24 students into the middle class than all the

1 Ivy League schools combined. And we love  
2 what we do.

3 CUNY now faces financial pressures  
4 that are frankly more intense than any that  
5 I've seen in my 20 years as a faculty member  
6 at Brooklyn College, and we need your  
7 commitment and the Governor's for more  
8 resources. Student enrollment is still not  
9 quite back to where it was before the  
10 pandemic, but it has rebounded. The crisis  
11 that we're facing now is not a crisis of  
12 enrollment, it's one of student attrition and  
13 understaffing.

14 In the four years from 2018 to 2022,  
15 CUNY experienced a net loss of 1313 full-time  
16 employees. And that's even with the infusion  
17 that I mentioned of over 500 new full-time  
18 faculty members. Sharper cuts still have  
19 fallen on the budgets for adjunct faculty and  
20 other part-time staff. Enrollment, as I  
21 said, is increasing at almost all CUNY  
22 campuses, and applications for next fall, as  
23 you may have seen, have hit an all-time high.

24 And the question is what awaits these

1 students. PSC members support our students'  
2 academic and personal development, but they  
3 cannot be effective in a chaotic environment  
4 in which hundreds of classes are being  
5 canceled up to a week before the semester  
6 begins. Instructors come and go like through  
7 a subway turnstile, and vacant staff  
8 positions go unfilled by design.

9 You have my written testimony, so you  
10 will be familiar with the nine, quote,  
11 unquote, colleges of concern. These are  
12 campuses where the university is clawing back  
13 the budget --

14 (Timer sounds.)

15 DR. DAVIS: And since my time is up, I  
16 will just close out by calling attention to  
17 the fact that even at these nine colleges you  
18 have classes, as I mentioned, being canceled  
19 within a week of the semester. Places like  
20 York College, Queens College, which was  
21 established during the Great Depression --

22 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23 DR. DAVIS: -- find that they need to  
24 lay off even full-time faculty members on

1 short-term contracts before the semester  
2 begins.

3 So we look forward --

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

5 DR. DAVIS: -- to working with you.

6 Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Sure. And as I  
8 said, we have your written testimony, so try  
9 and hit the highlights.

10 And UUP.

11 DR. KOWAL: Good afternoon. Thank you  
12 all for giving me the opportunity to testify  
13 today. My name is Dr. Frederick Kowal,  
14 president of the United University  
15 Professions.

16 You have my written testimony, so I  
17 will only make two major points concerning  
18 our priorities in this year's budget.

19 First, deepest thanks for the  
20 Legislature's steadfast support for our  
21 members' work. Last year's budget for SUNY  
22 was historic. Your inclusion of \$163 million  
23 in operating aid was vital.

24 However, Chancellor King and

1           SUNY leadership failed to utilize these funds  
2           to address the structural deficits at  
3           19 campuses. It is why this year we are  
4           asking that the final budget include  
5           \$139 million directly allocated to the  
6           18 campuses now facing structural deficits.

7                         This is urgently needed to stop SUNY's  
8           irresponsible steps which have eliminated  
9           programs at Potsdam and Fredonia and brought  
10          about retrenchments at Potsdam. We fear  
11          additional campuses will face such cuts,  
12          further harming the SUNY system and  
13          eliminating access and opportunity for  
14          thousands of New Yorkers.

15                        Second, regarding the announced plan  
16          to close the hospital at SUNY Downstate HSC.  
17          This poorly designed plan included no input  
18          from the community of Central Brooklyn or  
19          from any of the stakeholders. It was drafted  
20          in secrecy. The announcement yesterday that  
21          SUNY will hold, quote, five themed focus  
22          groups and stakeholder sessions, quote, is  
23          further evidence that the leadership of SUNY  
24          is approaching the legitimate concerns,

1 fears, and anger elicited by their  
2 announcement to close the hospital with  
3 arrogance and disrespect.

4 With the plan to close the hospital  
5 already announced, any discussion with the  
6 community only serves as a smokescreen for  
7 this disastrous plan. The result of the  
8 closure of Downstate will bring incalculable  
9 harm to the health of Central Brooklyn. This  
10 community needs more and better healthcare,  
11 not less.

12 For SUNY to abandon the hospital and  
13 claim that it is necessary due to the  
14 previous underinvestment by the state is a  
15 failure of vision and a willful disregard of  
16 the impacts of this decision not only on the  
17 health of the community but also on the  
18 education taking place at Downstate's medical  
19 school.

20 In conclusion, as President John F.  
21 Kennedy once stated concerning civil rights:  
22 "We are confronted primarily with a moral  
23 issue." The people of Central Brooklyn and  
24 the students at the medical college there

1           deserve the best the state can do, and that  
2           means an end to plans to close Downstate  
3           Hospital and instead for all stakeholders to  
4           come together and create a path with  
5           investment by the state to improve and  
6           modernize the facility and to address the  
7           long-term health crisis in the  
8           African-American community there.

9                     The task is before us. Let us embrace  
10           it with vision, alacrity, and determination.  
11           Thank you.

12                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

13                     New York Community College Trustees.

14                     MR. WILLIAMS: Good afternoon. My  
15           name is Allen Williams. I am the board chair  
16           of Monroe Community College in Rochester,  
17           New York, and also the chair of the New York  
18           Community College Trustees.

19                     I'm speaking here today on behalf of  
20           NYCCT, the statewide organization that  
21           represents 300 trustees of the 30 community  
22           colleges in the SUNY system.

23                     I'm here today asking for an increase  
24           of 97 million in the base operating aid for

1 the 30 community colleges in the SUNY system.  
2 And that ask is predicated on the fact that  
3 over the past 20 years, community colleges  
4 saw a disinvestment of 2.5 billion versus the  
5 SUNY four-year institutions.

6 The SUNY community colleges educate  
7 more than 174,000 students, representing  
8 45 percent of the total SUNY undergraduate  
9 population. Yet our students are not  
10 supported equitably. A four-year SUNY  
11 college receives about \$19,000 in student  
12 aid, while a community college student or  
13 community college receives about \$2600 in  
14 direct student aid from the state, coupled  
15 with another \$2900 in aid from our local  
16 sponsors, the counties.

17 And while we support the level of  
18 investment and commitment that SUNY has given  
19 to the four-year institutions, we ask that  
20 the same level of commitment in support be  
21 extended to the community colleges.

22 And in return for that 97 million of  
23 increase in our basic operating need, here is  
24 what we can deliver. Our presidents have

1           pioneered what is called the Empire State  
2           Community Workforce Guarantee.  It's an  
3           initiative designed to enable community  
4           colleges to train and educate about  
5           20,000 students per year across the state in  
6           various workforce development fields  
7           including nursing, cybersecurity, advanced  
8           manufacturing, and automotive technology.

9                         According to New York State law -- and  
10           it's something that I've heard you talk about  
11           or reference here today -- New York City  
12           Education Law 6304 governs the financing of  
13           community colleges.  The funding model should  
14           be equally distributed:  A third from the  
15           state, a third from the local sponsor, the  
16           county, and a third from student tuition.

17                         But based on the latest available  
18           data, community college students bear the  
19           highest share, 38 percent, followed by local  
20           counties, 34 percent, and the state's share  
21           paying the lowest of 28 percent.

22                         Okay.

23                         CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN:  Thank you.

24                         And last.

1                   MR. SAKO: Good afternoon,  
2                   Chairpersons Krueger, Weinstein, honorable  
3                   members of the Legislature, and distinguished  
4                   staff. I'm Andrew Sako. I'm the president  
5                   of the Faculty Federation of Erie Community  
6                   College, and I'm also a NYSUT board member  
7                   that represents community colleges.

8                   I want to thank you all for what you  
9                   did last year on crafting the enacted budget,  
10                  but specifically for standing firm on the  
11                  funding for which -- have the hold harmless  
12                  language for community colleges which was  
13                  critical to all of our institutions. So  
14                  thank you for that.

15                  What we do as community colleges. As  
16                  stated by others, community colleges educate  
17                  and prepare students for both the workforce  
18                  and provide a foundation for those seeking to  
19                  move to four-year institutions. Community  
20                  colleges are also -- have been economic  
21                  engines for our communities.

22                  Our enrollment post-COVID -- community  
23                  colleges bore the brunt of the enrollment  
24                  declines. However, we are now seeing signs

1 of enrollment increases. As stated earlier  
2 and as stated by my colleague next to me, the  
3 statutory support for the state -- the state  
4 is not matching, and for open enrollment  
5 institutions it should be 40 percent. And  
6 the state has not met that operating need, or  
7 come nowhere close to that, and students are  
8 bearing more of the brunt of this operating  
9 cost.

10 I also want to -- I'm encouraged to  
11 hear the announcement that we have the  
12 ASAP program, and that really helps with our  
13 students being able to finish and with  
14 retention. However, we really need to  
15 encourage you to provide more money in that  
16 area, 100 million to expand the model that  
17 CUNY successfully had the ASAP at their  
18 community colleges.

19 We're disappointed that only 13 of the  
20 30 community colleges were included in this  
21 particular funding model. We would also  
22 welcome the opportunity in any process to  
23 design and create a funding model that works  
24 for the institutions to give us a realistic

1           realignment of monies that we need in order  
2           to maintain and progress for the students  
3           that are going to be serving in the future.

4                       We must work to insulate community  
5           colleges from the short-term enrollment  
6           fluctuations and prepare them for the  
7           long-term growth and sustainability that we  
8           all want for our communities.

9                       Thank you.

10                      CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

11                      So we go to questions from members,  
12           and start first with our chair of Higher  
13           Education, Pat Fahy.

14                      ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Thank  
15           you, Chair, and thank you to the entire  
16           panel. I know we're now on the much shorter  
17           time limit.

18                      Let me start with both presidents  
19           of -- President Kowal and President Davis  
20           regarding the comments and obviously the  
21           concerns. And we've talked a lot this  
22           morning about the years of disinvestment in  
23           SUNY and CUNY. Can you briefly recommend or  
24           talk about the investments that are needed?

1           And I know President Davis in particular,  
2           given that the contract agreement is not  
3           finished yet, how that may or may not affect  
4           our budget timeline.

5                     But if you can talk about the overall  
6           needs and what your specific recommendations  
7           are on the operating dollars, as well as some  
8           of the capital dollars -- we haven't talked  
9           about that -- and I will watch the time.

10                    Thank you.

11                    DR. DAVIS: Thank you for the  
12           question.

13                    As you observed, we are in the middle  
14           of contract negotiations, and I'm hopeful for  
15           a good outcome. I was glad to see the  
16           university make the request for funding for  
17           the contract.

18                    We have five areas of priority in  
19           terms of operating aid. The practice under  
20           the prior Executive of not funding collective  
21           bargaining agreements ate into and undermined  
22           the budgets severely over time. So a return  
23           to funding -- contractual increases,  
24           mandatory costs -- is welcome.

1                   We are seeking operating aid to  
2                   improve our students' ability to have contact  
3                   with full-time faculty members. That  
4                   would -- I'm going to put out big numbers,  
5                   because this would require transformative  
6                   investments, \$385 million across the system  
7                   in recurring aid.

8                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Can I let Fred  
9                   have a chance to --

10                  DR. DAVIS: You want to jump in on  
11                  Fred? Okay, I'll let you go there.

12                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Thank  
13                  you so much. I'm watching the time.

14                  DR. KOWAL: Yeah, I would reiterate  
15                  the \$139 million needed to remove the  
16                  long-term debts faced by the campuses that I  
17                  mentioned earlier.

18                  But in addition, transformative  
19                  funding. The 100 million, expanding the  
20                  amount that the Governor has proposed and  
21                  that was in last year's budget.

22                  Thirdly, I was glad to hear that the  
23                  chancellor supports opportunity programs. We  
24                  should fund those programs to a larger

1 extent, 20 million more for those programs,  
2 not just undo the Governor's cuts.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: And I want to  
4 continue the conversation on  
5 Downstate Hospital. Thank you for your  
6 comments. You know, we definitely need the  
7 alternatives.

8 We have 24 seconds left for community  
9 colleges, which -- so pleased to hear so much  
10 about today. Can we talk about the  
11 97 million and what that's composed of,  
12 please? President Williams.

13 MR. WILLIAMS: I'm sorry. The  
14 97 million would go towards the base  
15 operating aid. And what it would do, it  
16 would basically bring the state's  
17 contribution up to the same level as the  
18 counties, and getting to the point of --  
19 well, pretty much in line with the State  
20 Education Law at 33 percent.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thirty-three  
22 percent. Thank you.

23 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you, Chair.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2 To the Senate?

3 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Senator Toby  
4 Stavisky.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you,  
6 gentlemen. Real quick.

7 First, President Davis, obviously we  
8 discussed the collective bargaining  
9 requirements and the need to provide funding  
10 for it. Let me go to the conversation we had  
11 on the nine distressed schools at CUNY, and  
12 particularly the loss of faculty members at a  
13 school -- where I went for graduate school,  
14 Queens College. And that December -- the  
15 nonrenewal of the contracts.

16 DR. DAVIS: I think it's important to  
17 understand that this took place midyear, in  
18 the context of cuts that universities sought  
19 from the entire system, on the scale of  
20 \$128 million in savings in fiscal '24.

21 And then, in addition to that, midyear  
22 the university pursued additional cuts at  
23 these nine campuses.

24 As you pointed out, I mean, it's

1 really unfortunately normal for there to be a  
2 lot of churn among contingent faculty and  
3 staff. What was striking about what happened  
4 at Queens College is that we lost  
5 26 full-time faculty members who were on  
6 short-term contracts. They teach four  
7 classes a semester. Never mind the impact on  
8 them and their families, you're talking about  
9 104 sections of classes that students are  
10 going to then have to scramble to find  
11 substitutes.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

13 DR. DAVIS: Thank you.

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: And  
15 President Kowal, I don't know if you heard  
16 Chancellor King's responses to our questions  
17 about Downstate. But in the remaining  
18 1 minute 18 seconds, will you comment on the  
19 proposal for -- add to what you would have  
20 normally said on Downstate.

21 DR. KOWAL: Thank you very much.

22 Yes, I did hear what the chancellor  
23 said. It's very disconcerting to hear the  
24 various ways that this transformation is

1           supposed to be taking place. I heard, for  
2           instance, that there would be weeks during  
3           which time our highly trained professionals  
4           who care for that community would be finding  
5           jobs elsewhere. I heard that these hearings  
6           or these meetings would be over the next two  
7           months. What is the rush?

8                     The plan was developed in secret, and  
9           there was no consultation. I will state  
10          categorically I have met with the chancellor  
11          every month since he arrived. At no point  
12          was there any specific discussion about a  
13          plan going forward. It was simply stated:  
14          We have to talk about Downstate, because it's  
15          a problem.

16                    We in UUP have proposed plans and  
17          changes at Downstate. For the 10 years that  
18          I've been president, we have been seeking a  
19          partner. We've never had one. To have it  
20          dropped on us -- just like you, Senator, I  
21          got the phone call on the M.L. King holiday  
22          at 9:30 p.m. informing me that the plan was  
23          being announced. That's not the way we  
24          should do business on a hospital that serves

1           this community.

2                   SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

4                   We go to Assemblywoman Clark.

5                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Hello.

6                   All right, I'm going to start with a  
7 quick yes-or-no question. We've had a lot of  
8 conversations; we know enrollment is key in  
9 getting enrollment not just up to the levels  
10 it was before COVID, but even past it.

11                   I think a robust, strong public system  
12 is -- higher education system is critically  
13 important for our -- our -- and for us as a  
14 State Legislature to invest in those who are  
15 part of it.

16                   So my first question is, if we were to  
17 increase the income threshold for TAP, if we  
18 were to increase the minimum award, if we  
19 were to remove the independent/dependent  
20 issue, if we were to allow fees to be  
21 covered, if we were to allow graduate  
22 students to use it and expanded semesters,  
23 would it increase enrollment across your  
24 state universities or -- you know, or through

1           SUNY?

2                   DR. KOWAL:  Yes.

3                   DR. DAVIS:  Yes.

4                   MR. SAKO:  I would say yes as well.

5                   MR. WILLIAMS:  I would say yes also,  
6           with some caveats.

7                   (Laughter.)

8                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK:  Always,  
9           President Williams.  Which I'm going to get  
10          to you now.  Thank you for that.

11                   I think we all agree, too, and I think  
12          it's our obligation to really do that and  
13          ensure more families take advantage of it and  
14          can use it, and more students.

15                   To the community colleges, I  
16          wholeheartedly agree on increasing the  
17          operating to match what the counties give and  
18          really making it more in line with those who  
19          go to SUNY in terms of what we give as a body  
20          to support those students.

21                   But I really also want to get on the  
22          capital side, particularly around the  
23          workforce training certificate programs.  All  
24          those things that we are seeing huge

1 increases in. And we know there's no Micron  
2 without it, we know there's no future in AI  
3 without it. These are -- our community  
4 colleges are really the puzzle piece to  
5 connect all of that.

6 So, you know, we know MCC is really  
7 trying to move their applied technologies and  
8 that whole thing onto their campus at MCC,  
9 but it's a capital cost. And they just don't  
10 seem to have access to the same kind of  
11 capital dollars that maybe a SUNY campus  
12 does. Yet we know that kind of place is  
13 critical to fill this workforce need that we  
14 know we're going to have.

15 So can you talk a little bit about  
16 that?

17 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes. And to your  
18 point, too, the way that the capital is  
19 allocated, or capital -- more so down at the  
20 community colleges, are different than the  
21 four-year institutions.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Exactly.

23 MR. WILLIAMS: Because the capital  
24 works at community colleges -- in large part,

1           it's based on what the counties can do. And  
2           in a case like Monroe, we have been fortunate  
3           that the county is in good financial shape.  
4           So when we go to the county with our capital  
5           proposals, more often than not they say yes.

6                     But there are some colleges, for  
7           example, where I know they can't -- you know,  
8           they can't pave their parking lot because  
9           their counties can't afford to do it. So,  
10          you know, that's another issue that we at  
11          some point in time have to address.

12                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: We do need to  
13          look at that capital piece for community  
14          colleges.

15                    MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

16                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Thank you.

17                    CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

18                    Senate?

19                    CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Senator Robert  
20          Jackson.

21                    SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you. So I'm  
22          just considering the bucket that you're in  
23          right now. This is a bucket. And basically  
24          the water has been poured out, and you're

1 drying up and you may perish.

2 I mean, I know what the state budget  
3 is. The Executive put it out,  
4 \$232.7 billion. The reserve is 20 billion.

5 And I heard the chancellor talk about  
6 a transition, but there's really no details  
7 in the transition, just general things like  
8 that. And I know that UUP has  
9 approximately -- how many members there,  
10 3,000? PEF has 400. But thousands and  
11 thousands of patients.

12 And so they're going to move one  
13 section over to Kings -- King, what is it?  
14 Kings County Hospital. And someone testified  
15 that the space is -- where are they going to  
16 put it at? I mean, this is not the way to do  
17 business. Let me just say that.

18 So I ask you to reach out to all of  
19 your members and ask them to reach out to  
20 every -- no matter where they live at, to  
21 reach out to every State Senator, to every  
22 State Assemblymember, in order to try to keep  
23 the pressure on us and the Executive, meaning  
24 our Governor, Kathy Hochul.

1           I mean, because everyone, I would  
2           think, wanted to work out in a transition in  
3           order to rehab, rebuild. And it's going to  
4           cost, yes, but it's going to cost more when  
5           people are dying, and people are going to  
6           lose their jobs. And people may say, no, no  
7           one's going to die. I hope not. But the way  
8           we're going, we're just saying anything in  
9           order to just try to get over. And I'm not  
10          about that.

11           So I'm here listening to what you have  
12          to say so that I can go back in the  
13          Democratic Conference and speak up on behalf  
14          of the patients that are going to be thrown  
15          around at different locations and, not really  
16          in my opinion, dealt with like they're  
17          supposed to. And all of the staff, and the  
18          people that you represent. And they're like  
19          up in arms, I'm sure, because I would be.

20           But I say this to you, this is not the  
21          way to do business. And I look forward to  
22          working with you and all of your members in  
23          order to communicate to the Executive and her  
24          staff and to the leaders of the Senate and

1 the Assembly that we have to fix this and  
2 we've got to do it right.

3 DR. KOWAL: Certainly, Senator. I  
4 appreciate your support and all of the  
5 support that we have heard from legislators,  
6 from the community.

7 The community is up in arms.  
8 Certainly our members are very concerned.  
9 First and foremost, our concern is about the  
10 community that we serve and the healing, the  
11 work that goes on there at Downstate. To  
12 have it abandoned is just totally  
13 unacceptable.

14 SENATOR JACKSON: And I don't live in  
15 Brooklyn.

16 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
17 We go to Assemblyman Gray.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY: Thank you very  
19 much, everyone, for being here today.

20 So first, President Kowal, you've been  
21 critical of the allocation of last year's  
22 aid, and particularly with the Potsdam issue,  
23 which I represent Potsdam. So do you want to  
24 elaborate a little bit on that?

1                   And then I'm going to go right to  
2                   Dr. Williams, because -- or excuse me,  
3                   President Williams -- because I want you to  
4                   talk about FTEs and the aid is based on FTEs.  
5                   Right? So an FTE can be three people. So it  
6                   requires, right, a significant amount of  
7                   staffing to deal with three people, but the  
8                   aid is based on just one particular FTE.

9                   So thank you.

10                  DR. KOWAL: Yes, thank you very much,  
11                  Assemblyman.

12                  With regard to Potsdam and the  
13                  distribution of funds, what we were calling  
14                  for -- and what we saw, in fact, very  
15                  strongly supported in the Legislature -- was  
16                  that there be created this \$161 million fund  
17                  to get the campuses that were suffering from  
18                  deficits out of those deficits, and then plan  
19                  moving forward for a sustainable future.

20                  When SUNY did not do that, then to  
21                  press a campus like Potsdam to immediately  
22                  come up with a plan to deal with the  
23                  shortfall is going to lead to the mistakes  
24                  which were made, and now to retrenchments,

1           which means tenured faculty and professional  
2           staff losing their jobs and the community  
3           impacted.

4                     You I'm sure know that you don't do  
5           strategic planning under the gun of a  
6           financial crisis. You take care of the  
7           crisis first, and then you plan on going  
8           forward. The plan will be much better and  
9           much more sustainable. That's what we  
10          continue to call for.

11                    ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY: Thank you.  
12          Appreciate it.

13                    Mr. Williams?

14                    MR. WILLIAMS: Right. In terms of  
15          FTEs, correct, you're correct. So there are  
16          three FTEs, basically -- three part-time FTEs  
17          equals one full-time FTE, if you would.

18                    However, if you get a part-time  
19          student, they still have access to the same  
20          sorts of services, the same facilities, as  
21          does a full-time student. So if a student  
22          comes in, like, half-time or taking one  
23          credit course, they still go to the library,  
24          they still have access to all of the other

1 facilities that the institution provides.

2 So we can't --

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRAY: You don't give  
4 them a third of the time --

5 MR. WILLIAMS: Right. You don't give  
6 them a third of the time --

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRAY: -- of a counselor,  
8 right?

9 MR. WILLIAMS: Correct. Exactly.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRAY: So you really  
11 have to -- you really have to look at  
12 head count versus FTEs --

13 MR. WILLIAMS: Right.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRAY: -- in a lot of  
15 cases, especially in the community colleges.

16 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

17 And the other thing, too, when you  
18 start to look at the non-credit programs,  
19 like a dental hygienist or a nurse or nursing  
20 programs, those programs are not counted in  
21 our head count. But we still have to provide  
22 those services.

23 And in order for those students to  
24 take those courses, it depends -- it will

1 depend on whether or not we get outside  
2 grants, or the student has to pay the higher  
3 tuition rate, which causes -- and that is  
4 really sort of the limiting factor for  
5 expansion of a lot of those programs.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRAY: Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

8 We go to the Senate now.

9 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

10 Senator Lea Webb.

11 SENATOR WEBB: Thank you all for being  
12 here.

13 You know, again, I'm going to extend  
14 my full support to everyone. You know, I'm a  
15 former -- well, I'll say current UUP member  
16 as, Fred, you also remarked.

17 I just have two questions, one with  
18 regards to the \$139 million. And I tried to  
19 ask this of the chancellor and ran out of  
20 time.

21 But what is the recommendation moving  
22 forward in regards to, again -- we do a lot  
23 of advocacy in the Legislature. We were  
24 successful last year, as an example, to push

1           for more operational capital funding. And  
2           then we're here, and so we don't quite find  
3           out what happened with those funds. And  
4           so -- and then we hear news of closures.

5                     And so I wanted to know if you could  
6           elaborate on that. That's my question for  
7           you.

8                     And I have a question for Mr. Williams  
9           with regards to the community college  
10          funding. You know, again, I'm a community  
11          college graduate myself. I know firsthand  
12          that our community colleges have been  
13          significantly underfunded. And yet they are  
14          paramount in a lot of the workforce  
15          development initiatives that we're looking to  
16          continue to do in the state.

17                    I know that you mentioned the  
18          community colleges -- the community college  
19          workforce guarantee. So I wanted to know if  
20          you could elaborate on that as well.

21                    Thank you.

22                    DR. KOWAL: Well, first, on the  
23          distribution of the 163 million, I can tell  
24          you what the chancellor has shared with me

1 and what we have seen in the documents that  
2 came out of SUNY.

3 The first step they did was they took  
4 a portion of that funding and treated it as  
5 if it was tuition increase for a tuition  
6 increase that you all correctly opposed and  
7 did not pass. So in other words, they  
8 allocated those funds to the largest  
9 campuses, the University Centers -- which,  
10 fine, they need support too. But it also  
11 meant that the financial distribution was  
12 skewed in the direction of the biggest  
13 campuses and those that are doing very well  
14 in terms of enrollment.

15 The second point is -- and I think  
16 it's just as important -- is as we discussed  
17 the rolling out of these resources, when we  
18 do so, it can and does exacerbate a situation  
19 of underfunding over the years. And that's  
20 what we're facing, and that's why we're back  
21 demanding another allocation of funds for  
22 those struggling campuses.

23 SENATOR WEBB: And then with the  
24 remaining time --

1                   MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, what the guarantee  
2                   does, or says, is that in return for the  
3                   97 million, we, the community colleges, can  
4                   produce 20,000 students, career-ready  
5                   students per year to fill those jobs that are  
6                   in high demand.

7                   And it parallels to a large extent  
8                   what the Governor has in her proposal, which  
9                   she calls the On Ramp program. Which I think  
10                  she was -- the commitment is, or we're  
11                  thinking about committing \$200 million to  
12                  that.

13                  Well, we can do it. The community  
14                  colleges have the experience, we have the  
15                  expertise. We also have the infrastructure  
16                  in place to do it.

17                  CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry, I have  
18                  to cut you off. Thank you.

19                  MR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

20                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

21                  We go to Assemblyman Smullen.

22                  ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Great, thanks a  
23                  lot.

24                  I just want to very quickly go back to

1 community college and the relationship  
2 through programs like P-TECH, with Early  
3 College High Schools.

4 You know, in rural areas -- I  
5 sponsored a rural equity initiative this past  
6 year to go out and listen all around the  
7 state to what the needs are. And one of the  
8 things I heard was that this idea of blending  
9 high school and colleges is a decent idea,  
10 especially in rural areas where the expertise  
11 to teach in a particular area might be in the  
12 community college or might be in the SUNY  
13 campus nearby.

14 So I wanted to get some of your  
15 thoughts about breaking the silos down  
16 between K-12 and community colleges and  
17 particularly rural SUNYs, but it also may  
18 apply to CUNYs as well. Because if we've got  
19 someone that can teach a class and we've got  
20 students that need that class, then I think  
21 we ought to -- we may need to figure out a  
22 way to get the two together, whether it's  
23 bringing the professor to the high school or  
24 the student to the college, so they can get

1           that expertise to keep them on a level  
2           playing field with all of the other, you  
3           know, educational programs we have in the  
4           state.

5                        I'd like to get your thoughts. I want  
6           to first start with Fred, thanks.

7                        DR. KOWAL: Yeah, I think that the  
8           absolute necessity for the -- for us all to  
9           understand the economic impact of the  
10          campuses upstate, SUNY -- both community  
11          college and the state ops -- in upstate rural  
12          communities is just immense. I live in  
13          Cobleskill. It's a very small rural town.  
14          The reality is the campus is the economy, for  
15          all intents and purposes.

16                       In order for us to be able to expand  
17          educational opportunities, you are absolutely  
18          correct. There needs to be a reimagining of  
19          how we can deliver that so more can take  
20          advantage of it. Absolutely.

21                       ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: President  
22          Williams, can I get your thoughts here?

23                       MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, and I -- to pick  
24          up first on your -- you were talking about

1 the equity initiative.

2 I can say that at community colleges  
3 we enroll and service more Black students,  
4 more Latino students, more Asian students and  
5 more white students from the rural areas than  
6 do our four-year counterparts. In this, the  
7 97 million really would go a long way to  
8 helping us expand those opportunities and  
9 those reach-outs for those students,  
10 especially in the rural areas.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Yeah. I really  
12 want to talk a little bit more, too, about  
13 the actual percentage model. You know, from  
14 my point of view the state ought to be  
15 picking up 50 percent of the share, the  
16 student -- or the -- then the community  
17 should be picking up a smaller share,  
18 25 percent. And the student should be  
19 picking up the least amount of the share.

20 That seems to me the way that's more  
21 equitable, particularly for these students  
22 that I have in mind that I think they exist  
23 all over the state. And, you know, then we  
24 wouldn't have to be digging so hard for TAP

1 and for Excelsior and all these other things  
2 if we guaranteed that the community college  
3 students would have the lion's share, just  
4 like K-12 education picked up by, writ large,  
5 the state.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes. Because in the  
7 absence, in this case, of the 97 million, we  
8 would be forced to increase tuition.

9 And if you look at the overall  
10 economic or income demographic of our  
11 community college students, we service and  
12 enroll -- a higher percentage of our students  
13 are Pell-eligible --

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Senator O'Mara,  
16 three minutes.

17 SENATOR O'MARA: Yes, thank you.

18 Thank you all for your testimony.  
19 Thank you for the work that you do, and  
20 particularly the work of your membership,  
21 that they do across the state in this great  
22 work.

23 I want to direct my question regarding  
24 community colleges to President Williams, if

1 I may. You mentioned a -- I understand your  
2 request to get back to a third, a third, a  
3 third, and that's \$97 million to do that, to  
4 make that equitable.

5 But you also discussed some numbers  
6 about the disparity in state aid to a  
7 community college student per year versus a  
8 four-year student at SUNY, and that seemed to  
9 be quite a bit off. I think your numbers  
10 were \$19,000 on average for a four-year  
11 student, so just under \$5,000 a year?

12 MR. WILLIAMS: Correct.

13 SENATOR O'MARA: And what were your  
14 numbers for a community college student?

15 MR. WILLIAMS: The community college  
16 student -- the total support is about 5500.  
17 Twenty-six of that is from the state; 2900 or  
18 so, based on the 2021-'22 year, came from the  
19 local sponsors, the county.

20 SENATOR O'MARA: So more from the  
21 county than from the state.

22 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

23 SENATOR O'MARA: And just a little bit  
24 more than half per year from the state

1           towards that -- towards the student in a  
2           four-year school versus the two-year school?

3                   MR. WILLIAMS: Well, the student is  
4           38 percent. Right, the students pick up --

5                   SENATOR O'MARA: I want to get at the  
6           dollar amount you said.

7                   MR. WILLIAMS: The dollar amount?  
8           Well, the dollar amount overall is -- well,  
9           580 million for the -- for the student,  
10          525 --

11                  SENATOR O'MARA: I'm talking the state  
12          aid. The state aid --

13                  MR. WILLIAMS: State aid.

14                  SENATOR O'MARA: -- for a community  
15          college student per year.

16                  MR. WILLIAMS: 248. 248 million  
17          overall.

18                  SENATOR O'MARA: No, individual  
19          student.

20                  MR. WILLIAMS: Individual student?  
21          About 26 -- \$2600 per year in state aid.

22                  SENATOR O'MARA: Okay. So just over  
23          5000 for two years.

24                  MR. WILLIAMS: Yes. Correct.

1                   SENATOR O'MARA: For the two-year  
2 term.

3                   MR. WILLIAMS: Correct.

4                   SENATOR O'MARA: When it's \$19,000 for  
5 the four-year. And so roughly 4,750 for that  
6 state student.

7                   MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

8                   SENATOR O'MARA: It just seems to me  
9 that our community colleges are targeted  
10 towards those less able to afford to go to a  
11 four-year school, those less likely to go to  
12 a four-year school. And we want to give  
13 them, I would think, a greater benefit to get  
14 them at least in the door to try to get that  
15 first two years in, and then maybe go further  
16 after that.

17                   MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

18                   SENATOR O'MARA: So it seems to me  
19 it's clear that that state assistance portion  
20 should be increased. And I agree with you.

21                   MR. WILLIAMS: Yes. Yes.

22                   And what I was saying before, we have  
23 a larger percentage of our students who are  
24 Pell-eligible or Pell recipients, and we use

1 Pell as a proxy or an indicator of household  
2 income. And for a student who receives Pell,  
3 they are at the lowest end of the household  
4 income scale. Yet without this increase, if  
5 you would, we are forced to raise our tuition  
6 again.

7 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
10 Epstein.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: I just want to  
12 thank you all for being here.

13 It sounds like we all want more  
14 students in the system. We want to increase  
15 TAP awards. We want to raise the floor,  
16 access more TAP. And the EOP program, it  
17 sounds like there's consensus on that.

18 Is that what I'm hearing so far today?

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Mm-hmm.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: On the CUNY  
21 side, we have an issue. We've been raising  
22 additional funds for CUNY, but we've seen in  
23 the city not -- a cut in the program.

24 James, like what do we -- you know,

1           how do we get a maintenance of effort if  
2           we're raising more money and they're cutting  
3           services? What can we do?

4                     DR. DAVIS: Thanks for that question,  
5           Assemblymember.

6                     Yeah, I've scratched my head a number  
7           of times about how a graduate, a two-time  
8           graduate of CUNY continues to make cuts to  
9           the City University.

10                    But look, I think in fact that there's  
11           a lot that all of us can do, city and the  
12           state, to help to address issues around  
13           retaining the students that come. And you  
14           will have noticed, if you saw the  
15           university's "Stabilizing the University's  
16           Finances," I think was the title of their  
17           report, staggering numbers around student  
18           retention which I'm sure are not unique to  
19           CUNY.

20                    But they lose -- the CUNY system, we  
21           have seven community colleges -- lose  
22           40 percent of students between Year 1 and  
23           Year 2. That shouldn't be that way. The  
24           four-year colleges lose 20 percent of their

1 students between Year 1 and Year 2. I mean,  
2 research is very clear about what it takes to  
3 retain those students.

4 So it's wonderful, and we should work  
5 harder to figure out how to bring new  
6 students in. But what are we going to do  
7 when they get there, I feel like is an  
8 underexamined part of the equation.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So there isn't  
10 enough resources to support the students  
11 while they're there. You're saying that  
12 those student-to-faculty ratios or the  
13 student support, mentoring programs --

14 DR. DAVIS: Absolutely. All of the  
15 above. I think research shows access to  
16 full-time faculty, access to mental health  
17 counselors. If there's issues of food  
18 insecurity, whether those are addressed. And  
19 academic advising.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And do you see  
21 the same thing as at CUNY? Is it  
22 like there's some issues -- not the cuts  
23 issue, but kind of the maintaining students  
24 at the campuses?

1 DR. KOWAL: Absolutely. And that is  
2 the most direct way of understanding why we  
3 constantly ask for more operating aid. It is  
4 to get the resources in place in terms of  
5 professionals who can provide the support  
6 network to keep students enrolled. Retention  
7 is the overriding concern at most of the  
8 campuses.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So the last  
10 thing is -- we heard a lot about capital  
11 needs from both the SUNY and the CUNY system.  
12 Do you support increasing capital, whether it  
13 is infrastructure for the buildings, moving  
14 to a greener, cleaner environment -- you  
15 know, we've heard a lot about that today.

16 DR. KOWAL: Certainly. Especially if  
17 it's key to the sustainable clean structures  
18 and so forth, absolutely.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you all.

20 DR. DAVIS: We do as well. Yeah, we  
21 support the university's capital request.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate?

24 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Senator Murray.

1                   SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you,  
2                   Chairwoman.

3                   Thank you, and I'll apologize ahead of  
4                   time; I slipped in a little late. But I had  
5                   read over, Mr. Williams, your testimony  
6                   already.

7                   I have a quick question. And I know a  
8                   lot of the focus is on obviously the finances  
9                   and tuition and all of this. But I want to  
10                  talk more about the type of students that are  
11                  coming.

12                  There's a misconception that BOCES and  
13                  CTE students don't go on to a further higher  
14                  education. Do you see that there is a good  
15                  number? I know the enrollment now is down,  
16                  but do you see -- and this is for anyone.  
17                  Are you seeing that there is a good number of  
18                  BOCES and CTE kids that go on to community  
19                  college?

20                  MR. WILLIAMS: Yes. Yes, there is.

21                  And one of the things that I talked  
22                  about before is there are a lot of students  
23                  who are coming out of BOCES or the CTE  
24                  programs that are going into our workforce

1           development programs. And unfortunately, a  
2           lot of the programs -- or students in the  
3           workforce development curriculum are not  
4           counted into our standard enrollment. And  
5           that's a big problem.

6                        It's something I call, like, our ghost  
7           enrollment. And it's a growing piece. As  
8           more and more students go into, again, in  
9           healthcare fields -- nursing, dental  
10          hygienist -- HVAC, automotive technology. A  
11          lot of these programs are maybe from eight  
12          to -- or six to 18 months, and these students  
13          are outside of what you would think of as the  
14          normal enrollment program.

15                      But students come out -- even before  
16          they graduate, they come out maybe sixty,  
17          \$70,000 a year. And it makes a big  
18          difference. And it's a growing share of our  
19          overall population or enrollment. But  
20          unfortunately, they get very little -- they  
21          get no state support. So it's really -- the  
22          support really comes down to either grants  
23          they receive either locally or nationally, or  
24          a greater share of the cost for those

1 programs are borne by the students  
2 themselves.

3 SENATOR MURRAY: I have about a minute  
4 left. And quickly, a question that I asked  
5 earlier to Chancellor King was in regards to  
6 public-private partnerships.

7 Now, in Suffolk Community College the  
8 trade unions and Orsted all put together a  
9 training program regarding wind turbines.  
10 And, I mean, that's forward thinking. That's  
11 great stuff. Are we seeing more of that,  
12 more partnerships with -- whether it's labor  
13 unions or the private sector?

14 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, we are.

15 And I can think about colleges like  
16 Mohawk Valley Community College,  
17 Hudson Valley Community College. Monroe  
18 Community College, for example, as well as  
19 Erie Community College. All of the colleges  
20 in the SUNY system are beginning to develop  
21 more and more public-private partnerships to  
22 train and educate their potential workforce.

23 SENATOR MURRAY: That's great.

24 Thank you very much. Keep up the

1 great work.

2 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

4 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: We go to  
5 Assemblywoman Forrest.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you.

7 So I have -- thank you to the whole  
8 panel, but I have specific questions for  
9 President Davis and President Kowal. Okay,  
10 let me start with President Kowal.

11 From what we heard from  
12 Chancellor King this morning, the building's  
13 falling apart -- Downstate, meaning SUNY  
14 Downstate, the building's falling apart, we  
15 might as well throw the whole kit and  
16 kaboodle away.

17 Can you report back from your  
18 membership what is the actual condition of  
19 the building? And if you have a dollar  
20 amount, give us some numbers.

21 DR. KOWAL: Thank you very much.

22 I would recommend that all members of  
23 the State Legislature who are concerned about  
24 this issue tour the hospital.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Yeah.

2 DR. KOWAL: I was there last week. It  
3 is not about to collapse. It is not falling  
4 to pieces. It certainly was more than enough  
5 to serve as a COVID-only facility that saved  
6 our lives. And there are sections of the  
7 hospital that are basically brand-new. The  
8 transplant center. There's a wing of the  
9 transplant center -- there's two sections,  
10 and the transplant center is brand new.

11 They in fact have a new boiler system.  
12 I wasn't sure what he was talking about in  
13 terms of the cold, damp temperature.

14 And also the number that is being used  
15 in terms of the number of patients. The  
16 administration as well as our members are  
17 reporting there's over 200 patients in that  
18 hospital, and they have been there in terms  
19 of rolling numbers, but obviously over  
20 200 for the past two months. And so it is  
21 not as, you know, calamitous a situation as  
22 previously stated.

23 And furthermore, yes, there has been a  
24 lack of investment in the hospital. We know

1           this. But you don't abandon the hospital  
2           because of errors that were made by a  
3           previous administration. You invest in it  
4           because of its central role in both education  
5           and healthcare.

6                     But with that, I do want to yield to  
7           my colleagues.

8                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you so  
9           much, President Kowal.

10                    President Davis, yesterday I heard  
11           from the CUNY crew that said that one of  
12           their initiatives to improve efficiency is to  
13           downsize classes -- increase class size,  
14           sorry. Can you tell me what impact would  
15           that have on especially nontraditional  
16           students who need those sections to be open  
17           to even go to school?

18                    DR. DAVIS: Thanks for the question.

19                    I mean, I think it raises two  
20           concerns. One is pedagogical: What's the  
21           proper size of a class, and who determines  
22           that? Traditionally, and for good reason,  
23           that has been established by professionals  
24           with pedagogical and curricular expertise.

1           That's always under stress in budgetary  
2           times.

3                        But there's also a question of degree  
4           progress. When you look at graduation rates  
5           across CUNY, we want to bring -- I think  
6           everyone in this room wants to bring up those  
7           graduation rates. And unfortunately, one of  
8           the things that happens when you cut the  
9           number of classes that's being offered and  
10          move students around, pack lecture halls, is  
11          students don't get the classes they need to  
12          graduate. It creates a burden on them and  
13          their families and the advisers trying to  
14          resituate them.

15                        ASSEMBLYWOMAN FORREST: Thank you.

16                        CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

17                        We go to the Senate.

18                        CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Hi. I think  
19          there's just me left.

20                        I guess for both of the Professional  
21          Staff Congresses -- although yours has a  
22          different name, so sorry. I don't know if  
23          you've heard me earlier ask both chancellors  
24          to please get us information on the breakdown

1 of their budgets for salaries and for  
2 staffing. And I feel like we haven't looked  
3 at that in a really long time.

4 But I think the last time we looked at  
5 it there were concerns that both universities  
6 are using quite a bit of their money for top  
7 administrative positions with very high  
8 salaries, and that those monies in theory  
9 could be used to make sure we were paying for  
10 the teaching staff that we need at these  
11 schools.

12 Has either of your unions looked at  
13 that at all recently, or agree or disagree?  
14 Or maybe I just need to give you the data  
15 when I get it, and you can then look at it  
16 and tell me what you think.

17 DR. DAVIS: Compensation for executive  
18 employees at CUNY -- reining that in is not  
19 going to solve the fundamental problem of  
20 funding the university.

21 The issue that we have is that when  
22 austerity is administered to our campuses  
23 because they're trying to manage to  
24 structural deficits, the sacrifice is not

1 shared equally.

2 So I did not see a sacrifice when the  
3 board of trustees approved 30 percent raises  
4 for two top executives in the CUNY office in  
5 2022 and then turned around and told all of  
6 my colleagues that they needed to cut the  
7 number of classes, lay off adjunct faculty,  
8 and we shouldn't expect very much in the next  
9 contract. I understand sacrifice, but it  
10 needs to be evenly shared.

11 DR. KOWAL: Yes, I would be very -- as  
12 would my members -- be very interested to see  
13 those numbers were you to get them.

14 I think it is -- as James has  
15 indicated, it will not solve all of our  
16 problems in terms of funding if there could  
17 be a corralling of the salaries and a limit  
18 to those salaries.

19 But I think that the even greater  
20 point is at a number of our campuses,  
21 administrators have been coming and going at  
22 very high salaries. And yet now that there  
23 is suddenly a financial crisis, be it at  
24 Downstate or at Potsdam or at Fredonia or

1 Buffalo State or wherever, the burden is  
2 falling on students, on patients, our  
3 members, and the community.

4 This is a central question of justice.  
5 You know, if it is clearly a case where  
6 administrators have the responsibility to  
7 manage a campus effectively, it is  
8 appropriate, I guess, that they get paid for  
9 it. But at the same time I sure wish there  
10 was a way of holding those administrators  
11 responsible for their errors or malfeasance  
12 that has led to the crises that we're facing.

13 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you. My time  
14 is up. Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblyman  
16 Eachus.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you, Chair.

18 It amazes me that I'm sitting here  
19 right now and that I'm breaking state  
20 education law by not supporting the community  
21 college after I sat for 12 years on a county  
22 legislature and had nothing to say,  
23 sometimes, about the state legislators.

24 I'm going to concentrate on community

1 colleges. I'm a double graduate of a  
2 four-year college, but if you don't mind --  
3 and by the way, I come from the Hudson Valley  
4 and I completely support keeping Downstate  
5 open. You have our support the whole way.  
6 But what I'd like to do is just be sure that  
7 I understand the situation.

8 The first is, President Davis -- or  
9 President Williams, TAP. I'm a cosponsor of  
10 that, I want that to happen. But TAP follows  
11 the student.

12 MR. WILLIAMS: Correct.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: So that really  
14 isn't a solution to the problems that you've  
15 been describing for us.

16 MR. WILLIAMS: Correct.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay.

18 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: So the 96 million  
20 that you're asking for, and when you talk  
21 about that, is for 20,000 new students, am I  
22 correct, to support 20,000 new students in  
23 the community college system?

24 MR. WILLIAMS: No, not 20,000 new

1 students. It would enable us to produce  
2 20,000 students annually that would go into  
3 the workforce -- the growing workforce  
4 development field.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay?

7 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: So it would enable us  
9 to create, to expand and maintain the various  
10 programs that would enable us to turn out  
11 these students.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay. And you --  
13 the few that you mentioned were exactly that.  
14 When you take a look across all 30 community  
15 colleges, we're talking about a number of  
16 workforce development programs overall.

17 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Because in my  
19 particular community college, I mean, we've  
20 done cannabis. They've added food tech and  
21 so on like that also.

22 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Okay. So, that's  
24 it.

1                   And the final thing I'd like to say is  
2                   throughout all of our lives, the great  
3                   equalizer was a high school education. Can  
4                   we agree that that's no longer true? They  
5                   need some sort of college degree to really  
6                   compete and be equal.

7                   MR. WILLIAMS: Well, yes. Either  
8                   degree, but not so much the degree that we've  
9                   known in the past, or a certificate or a  
10                  certification that says, I am qualified to do  
11                  X. To become an auto technician for Toyota  
12                  or Ford.

13                 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: You're right. I  
14                 stand corrected.

15                 MR. WILLIAMS: Yeah.

16                 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: But it's beyond  
17                 high school.

18                 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes. Beyond high  
19                 school, correct.

20                 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you very  
21                 much.

22                 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

23                 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you.

24                 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Okay, we go to

1 Assemblywoman Wallace.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALLACE: Good  
3 afternoon. And thank you so much for all of  
4 your testimony, for coming here today.

5 Really quickly, I want to say that I  
6 support the 97 million for the community  
7 colleges. We know the unique role that they  
8 play in workforce development.

9 I would like to have a conversation --  
10 because I think the answer would take too  
11 long -- to understand a little bit better  
12 ways to streamline that certification and  
13 understand what the barriers are, where you  
14 were saying that the students don't get  
15 support for those programs, that they're  
16 considered sort of nontraditional enrollment.  
17 So I'd like to understand that and see if we  
18 can kind of, you know, streamline that  
19 process to help with the funding in that  
20 regard.

21 But my question specifically with the  
22 time that I have left is for Dr. Kowal. If  
23 the Legislature were to direct the  
24 139 million toward the specific distressed

1           campuses like we tried to do last year, how  
2           would that help stabilize those specific  
3           campuses and allow them to come up with their  
4           own plans to address the enrollment issues  
5           and potentially rightsize, as we directed  
6           them to do in the last budget? In other  
7           words, would this buy them the time that they  
8           need to create those strategic plans going  
9           forward so it's not a continuing deficit?

10           DR. KOWAL: Yeah, thank you very much,  
11           Assemblymember.

12           I think that it is crucial for that  
13           funding to be directed at these campuses with  
14           the deficits, remembering that the deficits  
15           have not been caused directly by a fall-off  
16           in enrollment. The deficits were created by  
17           the underfunding during the Cuomo years. And  
18           there is this reverberating effect on  
19           enrollment with regard to recruitment, but  
20           especially retention, that we've been talking  
21           about.

22           And so you get rid of that deficit,  
23           you get to a situation where -- we know from  
24           our members that when they hear from the

1 administration, that is always the  
2 centerpiece of the conversation: We have  
3 this deficit, we've got to deal with this  
4 deficit. And that constrains their choices  
5 as to how they can move forward.

6 I do want to make one point that I  
7 know -- and I heard the chancellor over and  
8 over point out that there were  
9 double-digit-percentage increases in direct  
10 aid to campuses. Well, if the base that is  
11 being increased is very small, it doesn't  
12 matter if it's a double-digit increase, it's  
13 still a small amount of money.

14 And so it is imperative that the  
15 actual amount of these deficits be addressed  
16 so that then there can be a more broader  
17 discussion about the future of institutions  
18 and their role in the SUNY system.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALLACE: Thank you.

20 I'd love to follow up with you later  
21 on that.

22 DR. KOWAL: Okay.

23 MR. WILLIAMS: In a few minutes, I  
24 just want to pick up on something that

1 Mr. Kowal said.

2 You know, last year, we received the  
3 floor. We asked for the floor plus  
4 4 percent. We received the floor, which  
5 we're appreciative of, but the CPI last year  
6 was 3.2 percent. The core CPI was 4.7. So  
7 although we got the floor, we in essence  
8 still received a cut.

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN WALLACE: Thank you.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

11 And to close with the questions for  
12 this panel, Assemblywoman Simon.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: So thank you all  
14 for your testimony. And, you know, with  
15 regard to community colleges, thank you for  
16 your testimony.

17 It's -- it's -- community colleges  
18 really are also the entry point for so many  
19 students with disabilities, and that is a  
20 critical element that we forget about. But  
21 also those other training programs that are  
22 not necessarily degree programs are a great  
23 service that community colleges provide. So,  
24 you know, I think that you've addressed a lot

1 of the ways we could help with that. But I  
2 think that we're all in agreement with that  
3 approach.

4 With regard to SUNY -- and I know  
5 we're sort of a little fixated on Downstate  
6 these days -- clearly one of the big  
7 challenges is the long-term disinvestment,  
8 which is both -- it's an issue throughout  
9 higher education, the long-term disinvestment  
10 particularly with the prior administration.

11 If you had your druthers, what would  
12 we do? Like in other words, we should have  
13 been investing all along. You can't just  
14 make up that difference. How could we  
15 rightsize this, this whole -- and level this  
16 playing field differently?

17 DR. KOWAL: Well, I'll start with --  
18 again, I know we're fixated on Downstate for  
19 now because they are talking about it, a  
20 closure that would impact, you know, the  
21 community and certainly the healthcare in the  
22 community.

23 What we are calling for is for first  
24 this present plan to be abandoned

1 immediately, but that the Legislature take up  
2 legislation that has been proposed, passed  
3 the Senate last year, introduced on the  
4 Senate side by Senator Myrie. And the goal  
5 of that legislation was to keep the hospital  
6 open, to maintain its public nature, it's  
7 teaching nature. At the same time, to call  
8 on the Department of Health to bring together  
9 all stakeholders to come up with a plan that  
10 springs from the community and serves their  
11 interests. We start with the community.  
12 That is imperative.

13 And as that develops, then the state  
14 must put the investment into the institution.  
15 As you well know, this is an institution that  
16 is number one among 143 hospitals in terms of  
17 the percentage of Medicaid patients. It will  
18 never be a massively profitable institution.  
19 Those patients need healthcare. Eliminating  
20 the hospital does not solve the problem that  
21 you have thousands and thousands of Medicaid  
22 patients. They're going to have to go  
23 somewhere. So the investment is needed  
24 following an inclusive plan that springs from

1 the community.

2 On the campus side, invest to  
3 eliminate the deficits created in the  
4 Cuomo years, and let's plan for a sustainable  
5 future for all the campuses.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

7 And CUNY, you would have a similar  
8 comment? Because I know you guys have a  
9 similar issue with the lack of investment.

10 DR. DAVIS: We ran out of time, but  
11 I'll be glad to speak with you offline.  
12 Thanks for the question.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Actually, if  
15 you can send the response in writing to the  
16 committee so we can share with all of our  
17 colleagues here.

18 DR. DAVIS: Thank you.

19 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So I want to  
20 thank this panel for being here today.

21 And we are going to move on to  
22 Panel C: New York State University Police  
23 Lieutenants Benevolent Association; Graduate  
24 Student Employees Union of Communications

1 Workers 1104; Association of Private  
2 Colleges; New York State Academic Dental  
3 Centers; and Commission on Independent  
4 Colleges and Universities.

5 And I would just ask that the people  
6 who are testifying -- listed as testifying in  
7 the final panel make their way down to the  
8 front of the hearing room so that we'll be  
9 able to start that panel expeditiously when  
10 we conclude here.

11 So if we can go in the order listed,  
12 starting with New York State University  
13 Police.

14 MR. McCARTNEY: Good afternoon. My  
15 name is James McCartney. I'm the president  
16 of the PBA of New York State, which  
17 represents New York State University Police,  
18 Environmental Conservation Officers, Forest  
19 Rangers, and Park Police Officers.

20 We're grateful that the State  
21 Legislature has stood with us for the past  
22 four years, overwhelmingly passing  
23 legislation that provides PBA of New York  
24 State members with the same 20-year pension

1           that 96 percent of police officers and  
2           firefighters in the state already receive.

3                        Sadly, your 20-year pension  
4           legislation has now been vetoed three times  
5           by Governor Hochul. Our members have spent  
6           the last several years living in a  
7           demoralizing version of the movie "Groundhog  
8           Day," in which the same cycle repeats over  
9           and over. The Legislature passes our 20-year  
10          retirement bill, the Governor receives your  
11          bill at the end of the year, the Governor  
12          vetoes the legislation, stating it needs to  
13          be part of the State Budget. By the time the  
14          veto is issued, the following year's budget  
15          has already been drafted without the 20-year  
16          retirement. Rinse and repeat year after  
17          year.

18                       We ask that the Legislature please add  
19          our 20-year into your one-house legislative  
20          budget proposals and force the issue during  
21          budget negotiations. We see no other way to  
22          meet the Governor's procedural demands and  
23          deliver the retirement parity you strongly  
24          and consistently support for our members and

1           their families.

2                       Over the past three years we have lost  
3           200 New York State University Police  
4           Officers. Only 20 percent were due to  
5           retirements; the rest were officers who  
6           resigned to take jobs elsewhere. In the same  
7           period of time, we have seen 372 officers  
8           across all four of our units leave service.  
9           Less than one-third were due to retirement.

10                      These numbers are staggering,  
11           alarming, and unsustainable. The University  
12           Police Officers enforce extreme risk  
13           protection orders, deal with violent  
14           assaults, drug trafficking, sexual assault,  
15           domestic violence, dangerous and illegal  
16           weapons, as well as responding to thousands  
17           of mental health crisis calls each year.

18                      State University Police Officers saved  
19           the lives of 1,011 individuals in 2023 who  
20           were taken into custody pursuant to Mental  
21           Health Law Provision 941. University Police  
22           Officers safely transported these individuals  
23           to hospitals to undergo mental health  
24           evaluations to prevent them from causing harm

1 to themselves or another.

2 To provide the highest level of  
3 services and safety, we must adapt  
4 structurally. State University policing is  
5 fragmented, with 28 individual police  
6 departments in our four-year campuses and a  
7 patchwork of security personnel at our  
8 community college campuses.

9 Policies vary across campuses, and  
10 there is no standardization of equipment or  
11 uniforms. Hiring and transfers between  
12 campuses are hampered. And there is no  
13 central point of reporting within the SUNY  
14 administrative system, which makes  
15 data-driven-based policing difficult at best  
16 and unattainable at worst.

17 In closing, I would like to say that  
18 our members and their families need not live  
19 through a cycle of uncertainty and  
20 disappointment. The State Senate and  
21 Assembly have the ability to bring an end to  
22 our 20-year retirement "Groundhog Day" by  
23 working with Governor Hochul to include  
24 pension parity in the final budget. Your

1           decisive leadership and perseverance can see  
2           this into fruition.

3                     I thank you for the opportunity to  
4           present this testimony, and I thank you for  
5           your ongoing support of higher education.

6                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

7                     Next.

8                     MR. HERSHENSON: Good afternoon,  
9           Assemblymembers, Senators, and Committee  
10          Chairs. Thank you very much for taking the  
11          time to host a hearing on higher education.

12                    My name is Brad Hershenson. I'm a  
13          graduate student at the University at Albany  
14          and a business agent for the Graduate Student  
15          Employees' Union CWA Local 1104. We  
16          represent nearly 5,000 graduate students  
17          across SUNY and other campuses in our state  
18          that are graduate assistants, teaching  
19          assistants, instructors of record, and the  
20          folks who really are the backbone of SUNY.

21                    We teach almost 40 percent of the  
22          classes at SUNY, and our members conduct  
23          amazing research in a variety of fields such  
24          as humanities, science, and technology -- all

1           that helps New York pave the way for a better  
2           future for all.

3                       We must address the important issues  
4           surrounding our system, addressing the needs  
5           of our students and campuses by enhancing  
6           support for our programs, including mental  
7           health services, which is key this year.

8                       As we continue to celebrate the  
9           50th anniversary of the Tuition Assistance  
10          Program, which has helped countless students  
11          and families across our state for decades, it  
12          is imperative to highlight its successes and  
13          further enact enhancements to the program.  
14          Expansions were finally made regarding  
15          eligibility for incarcerated students,  
16          part-time TAP -- thank you very much for  
17          doing that. Now is the time to make  
18          expansions and enhancements to the program so  
19          even more students and more families can join  
20          the SUNY family and thrive together.

21                      For example, expansions can be made to  
22          lift the income caps to make more students  
23          eligible. The forms and documentation  
24          necessary to apply to the program can be made

1 further user-friendly. We were excited to  
2 hear Dr. Linares announce a revamp of the  
3 website, and we look forward to that.

4 Additionally, expansions can be made  
5 to allow for other costs to be covered -- for  
6 example, textbooks, laptops, and other  
7 equipment, items that are not tuition and  
8 fees. These are the real costs associated  
9 with pursuing a degree at any level.

10 Lastly, our graduate students need  
11 support. We very much appreciate your hard  
12 work and the funding made available to  
13 alleviate the plight that we face with  
14 respect to our fees as workers, and we hope  
15 that you'll continue to address college  
16 affordability this session through  
17 Graduate TAP and other expansions.

18 As we know, many of our SUNY campuses  
19 are engines of economic opportunity. So  
20 these kinds of enhancements to the TAP  
21 program and aid to support our campuses will  
22 help to skyrocket enrollment and act as an  
23 investment in our students and an investment  
24 in our state.

1                   For example, on my campus,  
2                   President Havidan Rodriguez at the  
3                   University at Albany has recently announced  
4                   the new strategic plan for our university,  
5                   which has goals to leverage our research  
6                   success to drive economic workforce  
7                   development with more funded graduate  
8                   students. Needless to say, it's time to turn  
9                   on the TAP. Let's increase our funding to  
10                  public universities and expand and enhance  
11                  the programs that directly impact academic  
12                  excellence and student success.

13                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you,  
14                  Bradley.

15                  The Association of Private Colleges.

16                  MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Good afternoon,  
17                  Chairwomen Fahy, Stavisky, Weinstein, and  
18                  Krueger, and members of the Legislature.  
19                  Thank you for this opportunity to share this  
20                  testimony on behalf of the Association of  
21                  Private Colleges.

22                  My name is Donna Stelling-Gurnett, and  
23                  I am the president of APC.

24                  I would like to begin by thanking the

1 Senate and the Assembly Higher Ed committees  
2 for their commitment to making much-needed  
3 changes to the Tuition Assistance Program.  
4 APC fully supports your Turn on the TAP  
5 campaign and the proposed package of bills  
6 that would expand access to this program.

7 We are grateful that the TAP program  
8 has supported our students since its  
9 inception nearly 50 years ago. However, the  
10 most recent HESC annual report shows there  
11 has been a 15 percent decrease in utilization  
12 since 2017, as the program has become more  
13 and more outdated. APC would strongly  
14 encourage the Legislature to evaluate the  
15 program with a focus on changes that would  
16 increase access to TAP -- for instance,  
17 allowing students attending proprietary  
18 colleges access to part-time TAP.

19 For APC, this is an equity issue. Our  
20 students are facing the same challenges as  
21 students in other sectors of higher ed. They  
22 are also balancing work and family priorities  
23 along with their class schedules and deserve  
24 the same flexibility to attend part-time if

1           they need to.

2                       Without the support of a prorated TAP  
3           award, these students may need to take out  
4           student loans or may decide not to enroll at  
5           all. So we would ask the Legislature to  
6           ensure that all students have equal access to  
7           part-time TAP and support Assembly Bill 5833,  
8           sponsored by Assemblywoman Hyndman, and  
9           Senate Bill 6466, sponsored by  
10          Senator Fernandez.

11                      APC also supports proposals that would  
12          increase the cap on earnings for single  
13          individuals with no dependents. A modest  
14          step forward would be increasing the earnings  
15          cap from 10,000 to 30,000 and for married  
16          applicants from 40,000 to 60,000 for TAP  
17          eligibility.

18                      The current income thresholds are  
19          significantly outdated and easily surpassed,  
20          even for those working at or below the  
21          poverty level. A bolder step would be to  
22          eliminate the distinction between dependent  
23          and independent students entirely for the  
24          purposes of determining TAP eligibility.

1                   In closing, I will say the original  
2                   goals of TAP continue to hold true today. We  
3                   know that investments in higher education  
4                   will yield a stronger workforce and economic  
5                   growth. We know that students who are  
6                   successful in higher education invest back  
7                   into their local communities.

8                   And we also know that the student  
9                   demographics, institutions of higher  
10                  education, the workforce, and the economy of  
11                  today are very different than they were  
12                  50 years ago. So it's time to build a better  
13                  TAP program, and APC looks forward to working  
14                  with you on that.

15                  And with that, I'll end my remarks.  
16                  Thank you.

17                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
18                  New York State Academic Dental  
19                  Centers.

20                  MS. TASSLER: Good afternoon,  
21                  Chairs Weinstein, Krueger, Fahy, Stavisky,  
22                  and other distinguished members of the  
23                  Legislature. Thank you for this opportunity  
24                  to testify on the Executive Budget proposal

1 for state fiscal year 2025.

2 My name is Jennifer Tassler. I'm the  
3 vice president for government relations and  
4 strategic affairs at the New York State  
5 Academic Dental Centers, also known as  
6 NYSDAC. NYSDAC is a consortium of the six  
7 dental schools in New York State.

8 NYSDAC works in partnership with its  
9 members to advance dental education and to  
10 address disparities in oral healthcare,  
11 particularly for those people with special  
12 needs, including intellectual and  
13 developmental disabilities. Individuals with  
14 I/DD bear a disproportionately high burden of  
15 oral disease and remain at a higher risk of  
16 oral diseases throughout their lives, and  
17 systemic barriers to access have contributed  
18 to chronically poor oral health and overall  
19 health for people with I/DD.

20 There is a persistent shortage of  
21 dental providers in the U.S. who treat  
22 patients with moderate to severe I/DD, with  
23 only 10 percent of general-practice dentists  
24 reporting that they regularly treat

1 individuals with these conditions. There  
2 have been efforts by CODA to include  
3 additional training and exposure during  
4 dental school, but there is a gap in  
5 providers to treat these patients.

6 In recent years, the number of  
7 advanced training options for dentists in  
8 New York State has dwindled, and to address  
9 this, in 2021 NYSDAC launched the Fellowship  
10 to Address Oral Health Disparities. The  
11 program has been supported by the Legislature  
12 since 2022 -- thank you. And we have trained  
13 three dentists who are committing to work in  
14 New York with this population for at least  
15 one year after their fellowship. Our current  
16 fellow is in her final six months of  
17 training, and the first two fellows are  
18 working in the Hudson Valley and in the  
19 Bronx.

20 Our goal is to support six fellows  
21 across the state each year to improve access  
22 to high-quality care for individuals with  
23 I/DD.

24 NYSDAC is also working with

1 specialists at the dental schools to develop  
2 a unified curriculum and to coordinate  
3 teaching and research experience for the  
4 fellows. NYSDAC is working toward additional  
5 ways to incentivize dentists to care for  
6 patients with special needs, including  
7 practice support, loan repayments, additional  
8 training, and increased reimbursement.

9 We support the proposal in the  
10 1115 waiver to provide loan repayment for  
11 dentists who care for a significant number of  
12 patients with Medicaid; the expansion of  
13 doctors across New York to include dentists,  
14 with additional funding to support them; and  
15 programs like Take A Look, which helps  
16 introduce rural practice settings to  
17 early-career dentists and students.

18 New York State's Academic Dental  
19 Centers urge the Legislature to continue  
20 funding for the state fiscal year 2024-'25 to  
21 support these fellowships and other paths to  
22 provide advanced clinical training in the  
23 provision of oral healthcare for people with  
24 intellectual and developmental disabilities.

1                   Thank you for this opportunity, and I  
2                   look forward to your questions.

3                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

4                   And lastly, Commission on Independent  
5                   Colleges and Universities.

6                   MS. BRABHAM: Good afternoon,  
7                   Chairpersons, and all of the members of the  
8                   committee. I appreciate the opportunity to  
9                   testify on behalf of the independent sector  
10                  of higher education on the 2025 Executive  
11                  Budget.

12                  From the banning of affirmative action  
13                  by the United States Supreme Court, to  
14                  federally proposed cuts to student aid, to  
15                  the continued delays in rolling out the new  
16                  FAFSA, higher education stands at a national  
17                  crossroads, and the path we choose today will  
18                  shape the future for generations to come.

19                  New York has always been unwavering in  
20                  its commitment to breaking down institutional  
21                  and systemic barriers to higher education and  
22                  to creating opportunity for all. We  
23                  recognize the significant economic, health,  
24                  and social benefits that completing a college

1 degree provides.

2           Unfortunately, the Executive Budget  
3 includes misguided proposals that threaten  
4 decades of work to ensure that more students  
5 can benefit from higher education.

6           We were disheartened by the proposal  
7 to eliminate Bundy Aid for campuses with  
8 endowments greater than \$750 million.  
9 Bundy Aid is outcome-based and  
10 student-focused. Colleges receive funding  
11 based on the number of degrees they confer,  
12 and the funding is invested back into the  
13 programs to help more students graduate.

14           This proposal perpetuates the  
15 misconception that most independent colleges  
16 and universities have big, unregulated  
17 endowments that can be spent however an  
18 institution decides. In fact, endowments are  
19 restricted in how they can be spent. In  
20 '21-'22, 46 percent of independent-sector  
21 endowment spending went to student aid.

22           This cut will increase costs for  
23 hardworking students and their families who  
24 rely on the financial support provided by

1 Bundy Aid. New York should not be balancing  
2 its budget on the backs of these students,  
3 and we strongly urge you to reject this  
4 proposal.

5 Last year, the Legislature provided an  
6 increase to education opportunity programs in  
7 the enacted budget, but it was cut from this  
8 year's budget proposal. These proven  
9 programs need additional investment to  
10 continue providing high-quality educational  
11 support, and we urge you to stand up for  
12 student aid and increase funding for  
13 educational opportunity programs by  
14 20 percent.

15 This year marks the 50th anniversary  
16 of TAP. TAP has been a major vehicle for  
17 student success in higher education, with  
18 over 6 million New Yorkers benefiting from  
19 it. Unfortunately, the program has  
20 stagnated. We're hopeful that, with your  
21 leadership, the state will finally increase  
22 the income limit and awards levels, provide  
23 independent students with full benefits, and  
24 restore Graduate TAP for students seeking

1 careers in critical fields.

2 We're pleased that Governor Hochul  
3 announced the creation of the Empire AI  
4 Consortium to secure New York's place at the  
5 forefront of artificial intelligence. This  
6 consortium includes several CICU member  
7 campuses, which highlights the critical role  
8 independent colleges play in creating jobs  
9 and strengthening our state's economy. But  
10 notably, the proposal to cut Bundy Aid  
11 targets these same campuses.

12 The independent sector participates in  
13 a national consortium to transform early  
14 literacy instruction. As our sector awards  
15 55 percent of education degrees, we fully  
16 support the Governor's "Back to Basics" plan  
17 to include reading proficiency.

18 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

19 We go to our Higher Education chair,  
20 Pat Fahy.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you, Chair.  
22 And thanks to the entire panel.

23 And I know we've got a lot of issues  
24 covered here, so I'll try to be as brief as

1 possible. Let me just start with a couple of  
2 comments somewhat in order.

3 But to our University Police, all of  
4 our University Police, including our  
5 Director James McCartney, we hear you. We  
6 hear you on the "Groundhog Day." And I know  
7 that there's yet another effort that has a  
8 lot of support this year. So let's hope we  
9 can move on on that.

10 Thank you to our graduate students.  
11 The business agent, Mr. Hershenhorn --  
12 Hershenson, I know that name -- in terms of  
13 your work last year, to get the grad student  
14 fees addressed. I'm incredibly proud of  
15 that, along with our work with the Senate and  
16 Chair Stavisky. So really pleased, thank you  
17 for the Turn on the TAP, getting that plug  
18 in. As you know, that's where we are going.

19 Very briefly on that, a question on  
20 that. If we were to include graduate  
21 students in TAP, do you have an estimate of  
22 what you think that might make a -- how much  
23 a difference that might make with students?  
24 Of restoring the TAP access for grad

1 students.

2 MR. HERSHENSON: Sure. Just briefly,  
3 some of our students in our bargaining unit  
4 make close to \$10,000 or \$11,000 a year. So  
5 to have access to this money to pursue our  
6 education is extremely important.

7 And we're operating and conducting  
8 research in AI and science, technology --  
9 we're at the forefront of what's happening in  
10 New York State. So that would really be a  
11 tremendous help.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

13 And I want to ask the APC as well.  
14 Donna Stelling-Gurnett, the president, any  
15 sense of what the Hyndman bill might include  
16 in terms of TAP students?

17 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: So how many  
18 students would be affected?

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Roughly, yes.

20 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: That's a darned  
21 good question. Thank you for asking that.

22 I'd have to go back and check with our  
23 members, but I do know that we have several  
24 graduate programs among APC schools, so I'm

1           sure that it would be, at the least, several  
2           hundred if not several thousand.

3                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

4                     And with regard to our dental centers,  
5           thank you so much too, Ms. Tassler. We have  
6           a whole program we are trying to address.  
7           Thank you for mentioning a few of those,  
8           including the Doctors Across New York and  
9           Take a Look.

10                    We're also looking at the dental  
11           therapist program as well as the dental  
12           hygienist, and with that I'm going to turn to  
13           the CICU president, Ms. Brabham. Oh, my  
14           gosh, and we've known each other for  
15           20 years.

16                    (Laughter.)

17                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Bundy Aid. That  
18           was a bit of a surprise. How many students  
19           do you estimate that that -- that cuts the  
20           proposed -- the Governor's proposed cut on  
21           that program, how many students might be  
22           affected by that?

23                    MS. BRABHAM: Listen, that cut will  
24           cut across our entire sector. You know, we

1 have 110 campuses --

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Okay.

3 MS. BRABHAM: We're going to --

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: We're going to  
5 continue that conversation.

6 MS. BRABHAM: Yeah, okay.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you for  
8 being here today.

9 Thank you, Chair.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

11 We go to the Senate.

12 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Oh, hello, we're  
13 the Senate.

14 Why don't we try Toby Stavisky, our  
15 chair.

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: There we go. I'm  
17 not even going to ask you about Bundy Aid,  
18 because I haven't -- I still haven't figured  
19 out the rationale. The relationship between  
20 endowments and students was limited in time.

21 MS. BRABHAM: Yeah, we don't think  
22 that there is a relationship.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: So let me ask you  
24 instead, Ms. Brabham, a couple of other

1 questions.

2 Before I do, real quick, thank you to  
3 the SUNY Police for what you do -- we know  
4 about the 20-year retirement and how  
5 important it is -- and to Brad and the  
6 graduate students, and everybody else, APC.

7 Let me ask CICU, real quick, I've been  
8 troubled by the college closures, both  
9 Saint Rose and Cazenovia. Are there steps  
10 that can be taken to avert further closures?

11 MS. BRABHAM: Senator, I think that  
12 the best thing that the Legislature could do  
13 to avoid future college closures is fund  
14 student aid. Right? So that students have  
15 the tuition that they need to pay tuition,  
16 campuses have what they need to operate.

17 And this does take us back to  
18 Bundy Aid because, as you know, Bundy Aid is  
19 the only form of operating aid that our  
20 campuses get. It's only \$35 million spread  
21 across 110 campuses, and that's only  
22 18 percent of the statutory level.

23 So that's the most important thing  
24 that the Legislature can do for us this year.

1                   SENATOR STAVISKY: In terms of the  
2                   questions that I asked Dr. Linares on the  
3                   independent TAP fiasco -- you know the word,  
4                   I think -- how are you dealing with the  
5                   billings of the colleges for their mistakes,  
6                   for government's mistakes?

7                   MS. BRABHAM: Yeah, so the billings to  
8                   the colleges would be on HESC to do. We've  
9                   been talking with HESC and, you know, trying  
10                  to encourage them to hold students harmless.  
11                  We don't think it's fair that this three-year  
12                  lookback should be on the shoulders of  
13                  students.

14                  This was an administrative error that  
15                  happened at HESC. And we think that -- and  
16                  especially since it happened over pandemic  
17                  years. You know, our students are burdened  
18                  enough, and we think there's an  
19                  administrative solution that could be found  
20                  without having to burden the students even  
21                  further to have them come up with this  
22                  repayment of the overpayment.

23                  SENATOR STAVISKY: And lastly, the  
24                  enrollment questions. The declining

1           enrollments have been brought up. How are  
2           the private independent colleges and the  
3           proprietarys doing in terms of enrollment?

4                     Ten seconds each.

5           MS. BRABHAM: So, yeah, I mean,  
6           there's been declines in enrollment over the  
7           past decade, and we're all, you know,  
8           impacted by it. You know, the biggest impact  
9           was after the pandemic, of course, but  
10          campuses are bouncing back. Some more  
11          quickly than others. Obviously the larger  
12          institutions with, you know, international  
13          reputations have, you know, bounced back more  
14          quickly.

15          MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I would just  
16          say I agree. It's the same with our member  
17          institutions.

18          SENATOR STAVISKY: Sorry. Thank you  
19          all for coming.

20          CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
21          Assemblymember Ra.

22          ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

23          Ms. Brabham, if you want to finish  
24          your answer to Chair Fahy, I'd appreciate

1           that, because I wanted to ask about Bundy Aid  
2           as well.

3                         We were talking about the impact  
4           across the colleges, and I am particularly --

5                         MS. BRABHAM: Yes, I was just saying  
6           that the cut -- you know, it cuts across our  
7           entire sector. I don't have an exact number  
8           of students that would be impacted, but I can  
9           certainly get back to you on that. But the  
10          value of the cut is \$18 million.

11                        ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Do you know how many  
12          institutions are under that or above that  
13          number?

14                        MS. BRABHAM: So 17 institutions will  
15          be impacted. Yeah.

16                        ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And I assume  
17          there's -- I'm sure there's some that are in  
18          the ballpark that, you know, would like to  
19          see their endowment continue to grow. And  
20          then that's a kind of weird position to put  
21          somebody in --

22                        MS. BRABHAM: Yeah, but a point to be  
23          made, though, on that \$750 million threshold  
24          is that, you know, we think it's an arbitrary

1 metric because it doesn't take into account  
2 the size of the institution, the number of  
3 students, the number of FTEs and, you know,  
4 how that -- the restrictions around how that  
5 money can be spent.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: So for you, and I  
7 guess APC as well, we've been through  
8 different iterations of different aid  
9 programs and stuff. And we've seen this  
10 before, you know, exclusions that  
11 unfortunately treat different students in  
12 New York State, depending on where they're  
13 going, differently.

14 And, you know, as we talk about TAP  
15 and all of these things, I don't think that  
16 should be the case. I think that's one of  
17 the great things about the TAP program is it  
18 gives that opportunity to the student to  
19 utilize that funding in the way that best  
20 advances their education and their future  
21 career goals.

22 So if you can comment on that.

23 MS. BRABHAM: I agree.

24 And I think we should expand the

1 program. I think it's important that TAP  
2 follow the student and that we support  
3 student choice about where they, you know,  
4 choose to go to school.

5 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I would also  
6 agree.

7 I think, you know, the Tuition  
8 Assistance Program is incredibly important to  
9 all of our students. And I do think that  
10 it's fair that it, you know, follows the  
11 student no matter where they choose to go.  
12 They should be able to choose whatever  
13 institution is the best fit for them, so.

14 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And then, lastly, for  
15 CICU, the topic came up earlier about the  
16 Enhanced Tuition Award, you know, and the  
17 number of colleges participating has come  
18 down. And I'd say that's a sizable number.

19 What should we be looking at to try  
20 to, you know, expand these programs? Is it  
21 just as simple as what we're saying, let's  
22 make TAP more of a choice for the student  
23 rather than having all these different  
24 programs that are meant to maybe mirror but

1 don't really provide the same benefit?

2 MS. BRABHAM: Well, if we're talking  
3 specifically of the ETA, you know, one of the  
4 reasons why utilization of that program is  
5 down is just simply because of the timing of  
6 the awards. It comes too late for students  
7 to be able to factor that into their  
8 financial aid package when they're making a  
9 decision about where to go to college.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Senator Lea Webb.

12 SENATOR WEBB: Thank you all for being  
13 here.

14 I just have two quick questions. One  
15 for you, President Brabham, with regards to  
16 the Bundy Aid.

17 My question is if you can just  
18 elaborate on how this proposal will -- like  
19 what's the plan? How will programs need to  
20 be cut to compensate for this new limitation  
21 that's been proposed by the administration?

22 MS. BRABHAM: So essentially what it  
23 does is takes away Bundy Aid completely,  
24 which, you know, impacts a campus's

1 flexibility to be able to offer scholarships,  
2 other forms of student aid, put additional  
3 funding into research if needed. Those are  
4 the things that Bundy Aid funds.

5 SENATOR WEBB: Okay, thank you.

6 And then my next question is for  
7 Bradley. With respect to the Graduate  
8 Student Employees Union, I know last year we  
9 spent a lot of time talking about addressing  
10 graduate student fees, which was a big  
11 priority -- still is -- with regards to  
12 graduate students. And we're happy to see  
13 that we're able to address that.

14 I just want to go to TAP for a moment.  
15 I know we're spending a lot of time talking  
16 about raising the income eligibility  
17 threshold -- which, you know, again is  
18 important, but I wanted to know if you could  
19 elaborate on, in looking at your testimony,  
20 the actual award amount. I know that also is  
21 very crucial with regards to students.

22 Again, I also was a student that  
23 received TAP and Pell, and I was also an EOP  
24 student. So I was wondering if you could

1 just kind of elaborate on what raising that  
2 award amount, what that means for grad  
3 students and undergrad students. Thank you.

4 MR. HERSHENSON: Sure.

5 And I just want to start by thanking  
6 you for your hard work on the fees  
7 legislation. We were in a pay-to-work system  
8 last year where our graduate workers had to  
9 pay to have the jobs that we have on our  
10 campuses.

11 Just taking a look at the income  
12 threshold and the TAP program itself, the  
13 last increase to the income threshold was in  
14 the year 2000. That's when I started  
15 kindergarten, and now I'm doing my Ph.D.

16 (Laughter.)

17 MR. HERSHENSON: So some of these  
18 programs we need to take a look at and maybe  
19 reevaluate some of the metrics in what we're  
20 offering to our students. Because in my  
21 testimony I use the word "investment," and I  
22 say putting this money into our SUNY campuses  
23 is an investment because we will pay back  
24 that investment to New York State.

1                   Our graduate workers conduct research,  
2                   we work on our SUNY campuses, we teach  
3                   40 percent of the classes at SUNY. And we  
4                   will pay back that investment through our  
5                   income tax, our property taxes, the houses we  
6                   buy, what we do in this economy. So it's  
7                   really strongly important to us as graduate  
8                   workers in New York.

9                   SENATOR WEBB: Thank you so much.

10                  MR. HERSHENSON: Thank you.

11                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12                  Assemblywoman Simon.

13                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

14                  So, Ms. Tassler, I don't know that I  
15                  was aware of your organization, but I have  
16                  been to NYU's facility, which is fabulous.  
17                  So thank you for that work.

18                  And if I could, Ms. Brabham, I have a  
19                  question for you because we've been talking a  
20                  lot about, you know, the state budget.  
21                  Obviously that's what we're here for. But  
22                  there are a lot of issues that are affecting  
23                  higher education. I'm curious if you can  
24                  tell us about some of the challenges that

1           your schools are facing on the federal level.

2                   MS. BRABHAM:   Yes.

3                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON:  Are we getting  
4           funding from the feds, TRIO --

5                   MS. BRABHAM:  You know, I've just  
6           returned -- yes, I've just returned from  
7           Washington, D.C., the day before yesterday,  
8           on Capitol Hill, you know, lobbying quite  
9           forcefully for something to be done about  
10          some of the cuts that are being contemplated  
11          at the federal level.  A couple of them  
12          include, you know, rolling back support for  
13          the supplemental educational opportunity  
14          programs.  Also taking money away from  
15          work-study for campuses that are subject to  
16          the endowment tax.  You know, just taking  
17          money out of Pell, which is -- of course goes  
18          to support education for our neediest  
19          students and families.  So that's what we're  
20          faced with on the federal level.

21                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON:  So all of the  
22          issues with the state budget only exacerbate  
23          that situation.

24                   MS. BRABHAM:  Compound it.

1 Absolutely.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: We have Senator  
4 Murray.

5 SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you,  
6 Chairwoman.

7 And thank you all for being here.

8 Mr. McCartney, I want to focus on you.  
9 The numbers you gave were staggering, by the  
10 way, of the percentages of them leaving.

11 But first let me say the 20-year  
12 retirement, we were talking about this and  
13 fighting for this when I was back in the  
14 Assembly years ago.

15 MR. McCARTNEY: Correct.

16 SENATOR MURRAY: So this is far, far  
17 too long in coming.

18 But first I'll make a statement, then  
19 ask your input on this.

20 Campuses, universities, colleges,  
21 that's where you go, you know, that's where  
22 you express yourself and you have your  
23 protests and your rallies and all of this.  
24 And that's all great. But sometimes it seems

1           lately it's much more heated, it can at times  
2           get violent. That puts a lot of pressure on  
3           the police.

4                        Is that a contributing factor? Like  
5           what is the biggest factor you see, or what  
6           are the factors of why you're losing hundreds  
7           of officers when only 20 percent is  
8           retirement? So it's not that. So what is it  
9           that's driving the workforce down, and is it  
10          hampering your recruitment efforts?

11                      MR. McCARTNEY: Yes. We're like a  
12          specialized police unit. We do illicit-bias  
13          training, a lot of verbal judo, de-escalation  
14          techniques, which makes us valuable to the  
15          municipalities locally.

16                      SENATOR MURRAY: Right.

17                      MR. McCARTNEY: And what they do is --  
18          we go to local police academies. We don't go  
19          to a single police academy. So we get --  
20          they get to see us and recruit us while  
21          they're rookies. And what happens is they  
22          take away our diverse officers within the  
23          first year or two years, because local  
24          agencies hire, pay more money, and then they

1           have the 20-year retirement.

2                       So that's -- it kills us with  
3           recruiting. So those numbers show that the  
4           state is just throwing money out. This would  
5           have paid for itself years ago if they would  
6           have made the initial investment to do the  
7           20-year retirement. Then we'd be able to  
8           keep our officers there.

9                       What also happens is people keep  
10          leaving, so you're not having people to fill  
11          the roles as supervisors going on with the  
12          experience. So it's just a huge turnover  
13          like that.

14                      SENATOR MURRAY: But I mean, I'm sure  
15          that's been going on for years. But I mean,  
16          are you seeing that escalate a bit now? Is  
17          it getting worse?

18                      MR. McCARTNEY: Well, right now when  
19          you have the City of Syracuse offering  
20          \$20,000 hiring bonuses and they'll take our  
21          guys that work locally there, it's very hard.

22                      SENATOR MURRAY: Well, I think the  
23          shortage altogether in law enforcement and  
24          the recruiting problems we're having is

1 almost making it, you know -- internally you  
2 having battles between departments, I would  
3 imagine.

4 MR. McCARTNEY: For recruiting  
5 purposes, yes.

6 SENATOR MURRAY: Right.

7 MR. McCARTNEY: Yes.

8 SENATOR MURRAY: Okay. Well, thank  
9 you for what you do, and we'll continue  
10 fighting for you.

11 MR. McCARTNEY: Thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Assemblywoman  
13 Hyndman.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,  
15 Chair Weinstein.

16 Good afternoon, everyone.

17 Even though we know enrollment is down  
18 across the country, it doesn't diminish the  
19 necessary college degree. It doesn't  
20 discount it, discredit it, or reduce its  
21 value at all.

22 So in New York State education, as we  
23 know, there are many pathways. And so even  
24 though we're still calling it Bundy Aid, the

1 significant lack of recognition from the  
2 Governor in the budget is really  
3 disheartening for those students who would  
4 have attended different institutions of  
5 higher education other than SUNY and CUNY and  
6 still need those pathways.

7 And Donna, I know we've done a lot of  
8 work around the APC colleges and the work  
9 that they do and the restraints of gainful  
10 employment. And the amount of statistics  
11 that you're able to comply immediately is  
12 very different than our public education  
13 higher education system.

14 So if you two could just talk a little  
15 bit more about Bundy Aid or about the lack of  
16 why TAP needs to be expanded to part-time  
17 proprietary college students.

18 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I will start  
19 and then turn it to Lola to talk about the  
20 Bundy Aid issue.

21 But, you know, I do think it's  
22 important to expand the Tuition Assistance  
23 Program. Obviously utilization of the  
24 program has been going down over the last

1 several years as it has become more and more  
2 outdated. And so, you know, especially the  
3 part-time TAP piece.

4 Like I said earlier, for us it is a  
5 matter of equity. You know, our students are  
6 facing the same issues and challenges as the  
7 students in the other sectors of higher  
8 education. It is probably one of the very  
9 few areas where they don't have the same  
10 access. So, you know, we find that very  
11 disheartening and appreciate your support.

12 We estimate it will impact about  
13 2500 students and cost approximately  
14 \$5.5 million to include that in the  
15 part-time TAP. So we ask for everyone's  
16 support, and we hope we can get that done in  
17 this legislative session.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Lola, before  
19 you talk, I just want to say if we  
20 listened -- if -- I don't know if you heard  
21 the chancellor earlier, but, you know, the  
22 amount of state investment that's needed for  
23 SUNY Downstate, or Fredonia, or for  
24 Potsdam -- Saint Rose did not have the state

1 to say, Here's a couple million dollars,  
2 let's help you out. So that's why Bundy Aid  
3 is so important.

4 MS. BRABHAM: Yes, that's a great  
5 point. And I did hear, you know, all of the  
6 testimony and comments earlier today. And I  
7 heard what you just said about higher  
8 education being an ecosystem, right, made up  
9 of all of us and many different pathways to  
10 education.

11 And, you know, I just want -- I think  
12 it's important to remember that when  
13 Bundy Aid was established it was really at a  
14 time when there was significant increase into  
15 SUNY and CUNY and -- you know, and that  
16 continues today, and that's fine. But there  
17 was a recognition on behalf of the  
18 Legislature that the private, independent  
19 colleges and universities also needed support  
20 and that it was important -- that it was an  
21 important part of the ecosystem, and they  
22 wanted to support that. So hopefully we can  
23 get back to that.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

1 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

2 To the Senate.

3 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4 Senator Robert Jackson.

5 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

6 Hi, everyone. Thank you for hanging  
7 in here.

8 So I wanted to -- Director, I wanted  
9 to speak to you about that, the 20-year  
10 retirement. I chair the Civil Service and  
11 Pensions Committee, and I look at some of the  
12 vetoes that the Governor vetoed this past  
13 year and she says, Get it done in the budget.  
14 But when it comes to budget, it's not getting  
15 done. So I don't think that there's truth in  
16 what the veto says.

17 And, you know, we have a supermajority  
18 and you would have to override a veto like  
19 that -- you've got to make sure you have it,  
20 if in fact it's going to be done at all.

21 So what I ask you to do is, regarding  
22 your membership, look at the membership and  
23 families and let's organize a campaign in  
24 order to try to get it done. I don't think

1           that there is a willingness to attempt to  
2           override the Governor's veto at this point in  
3           time. I hope that I'm wrong.

4                     MR. McCARTNEY: Thank you, Senator.

5                     SENATOR JACKSON: And to the other  
6           team members, you talk about Bundy Aid and  
7           talk about TAP. But TAP is a certain amount  
8           of money, isn't that correct? Do you have a  
9           suggestion how much it should be increased,  
10          then?

11                    MS. STELLING-GURNETT: The maximum  
12          income threshold, is that what you're  
13          referring to?

14                    SENATOR JACKSON: I don't really know  
15          all the details.

16                    MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I would suggest  
17          it should be increased for dependent students  
18          up to as much as \$125,000 per year. So that  
19          would absolutely allow more moderate- and  
20          low-income families to participate in the  
21          program.

22                    SENATOR JACKSON: I'm sorry, I don't  
23          know the particular numbers. What is it now?

24                    MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Right now for

1 dependent students it's 80,000. For  
2 independent students, it is just 10,000. If  
3 you are a single independent student, you  
4 cannot make any more than 10,000. If you are  
5 married, the limit is now 40,000.

6 SENATOR JACKSON: Yeah. So in making  
7 presentations I don't know whether or not  
8 you're recommending a certain amount or  
9 whether you should discuss that amongst the  
10 cohort in order to come up with a recommended  
11 amount.

12 MS. BRABHAM: Senator, something  
13 that's been discussed in the past is  
14 increasing the individual -- the maximum  
15 award amount from around \$5,600 up to \$7,040,  
16 I think it was.

17 SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. To be  
18 continued. The struggle continues.

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

21 We go to Assemblyman Smullen.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Thank you,  
23 Chair.

24 I've got a couple of quick questions

1 for the Commission on Independent Colleges  
2 and Universities and the Association of  
3 Private Colleges.

4 You know, we've heard from SUNY about  
5 enrollment. How is enrollment, very quickly,  
6 at your organizations that you represent?

7 MS. BRABHAM: In the independent  
8 sector over the past couple of years  
9 enrollment has been down by about 3 percent.

10 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I would say  
11 there was certainly a decrease in enrollment,  
12 but we are starting to see increases and  
13 stabilization in enrollment in the  
14 proprietary sector.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: So things are  
16 level and relatively steady?

17 MS. BRABHAM: Yes.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Of course, you  
19 could always do better. You know, we'd hope  
20 so.

21 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Yes.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: I note that  
23 because your institutions are often,  
24 especially in the small towns and the rural

1 areas where they are in the areas of upstate,  
2 very important in the communities.

3 Just switching gears, we talked a  
4 little bit about universal FAFSA in the  
5 earlier panels. What is your impression  
6 right now, with the federal government's  
7 somewhat fumbling FAFSA rollout that's going  
8 on right now, how is it affecting your  
9 institutions? Is there anything we at the  
10 state level could do to assist?

11 MS. BRABHAM: Yes, it's having a huge  
12 impact on our institutions. The financial  
13 aid offices can't finalize financial aid  
14 packages, get that information out to  
15 students. And I think the worst part about  
16 it is that there's not enough communication  
17 from the Department of Education on the  
18 federal -- you know, the U.S. Department of  
19 Education, letting people know what to expect  
20 and when to expect it.

21 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I would agree  
22 with that. We've heard that colleges won't  
23 start to receive the student data until  
24 mid-to-late March now. So it really

1 definitely is impacting our institutions,  
2 it's impacting students and their ability to  
3 make choices. So it's been very difficult.

4 And I completely agree with Lola that  
5 there has not been enough clear communication  
6 from the department at all.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: And lastly -- we  
8 have just a little bit of time left -- how is  
9 New York State doing in regards to when it --  
10 or it meters, you know, federal aid to your  
11 institutions? Is it getting there on time to  
12 be able to satisfy the students' accounts for  
13 those who are getting financial aid from  
14 either state or federal sources?

15 MS. BRABHAM: I don't know if I can  
16 speak to that, but I have not heard from our  
17 campuses that that's been a problem.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: So business as  
19 usual, I guess, is the thing. Okay, great.  
20 Because I know it's a complicated picture,  
21 you know, financial aid. And, you know, when  
22 students choose whatever institution they  
23 choose, it's really important that all the  
24 pieces come together. And that's kind of

1           some of my worries about -- you know, with  
2           the troubles we've been having.

3                     But thank you both very much for your  
4           testimony. I appreciate it.

5                     MS. BRABHAM: Thank you.

6                     MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Thank you.

7                     CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

8                     Senator Tom O'Mara.

9                     SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

10                    Director McCartney, thank you for your  
11           testimony and the work of your officers on  
12           the 20-year retirement bill.

13                    You know, we've -- quite a few years  
14           now we've passed it nearly unanimously. You  
15           know, as a follow-up to Senator Jackson's  
16           discussion of override, the apparent  
17           four-letter word in Albany that we can't get  
18           to.

19                    You know, there's -- the rubber needs  
20           to meet the road somewhere. And I understand  
21           there's one-party rule in Albany. You want  
22           to work together. You don't want to step on  
23           each other's toes. But frankly -- you know,  
24           I'm the ranker on the Investigations and

1 Government Operations Committee, and there is  
2 next to no oversight going on from this  
3 Legislature over the Executive.

4 Very simple to override this with the  
5 supermajority that are in place, with the way  
6 the votes have gone for multiple years. And  
7 if you don't want to do it and step on the  
8 Governor's toes, then say "Put it in the  
9 budget or we will override it."

10 And this is the opportunity to do that  
11 right now, and not wait and say the same song  
12 and dance next year. So pretty simple. And  
13 I support that wholeheartedly.

14 Now, to move on to the private  
15 colleges and universities, another issue  
16 that's been bugging me is the seemingly -- in  
17 getting new programs and new curriculums  
18 approved, particularly in the healthcare  
19 area -- we've been having significant  
20 problems with Keuka College trying to get an  
21 accelerated online nursing program going.

22 We have a nursing shortage, I've  
23 heard. I'm not sure if you're aware of that,  
24 but we've had it for a long time. They've

1 applied for this program in 2020. We've gone  
2 through COVID, and virtually all education  
3 went online during that period. This  
4 accelerated online nursing program still is  
5 not approved.

6 And I'm not asking you to comment on  
7 Keuka's program or anything, but it's hung up  
8 in the State Ed Office of the Professions,  
9 where things seemingly get hung up forever.  
10 So it's over three years now.

11 Do you have any recommendations on how  
12 we can put -- how we can have some  
13 accountability on this Office of Professions?  
14 Because I've got to imagine that your members  
15 are seeing this in other contexts.

16 MS. BRABHAM: I think we agree. And  
17 we are also, you know, frustrated with the  
18 time it takes with regard to program  
19 approval.

20 We've come to the Legislature in the  
21 last couple of budget years asking for  
22 assistance with that. We've worked with the  
23 State Education Department to try to nail  
24 down what some potential solutions might be.

1                   Where things stand right now, the  
2                   budget last year appropriated money for the  
3                   State Education Department. They've told us  
4                   that they're working on an IT system solution  
5                   that's going to help provide more insight,  
6                   you know, to program approval --

7                   CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: I'm sorry. I have  
8                   to cut you off.

9                   MS. BRABHAM: And we're hoping that we  
10                  will see that solution come out soon.

11                 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12                 SENATOR O'MARA: If you come up with  
13                 some solutions, please pass them along.

14                 MS. BRABHAM: Yeah.

15                 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thanks.

16                 I guess I'm the last Senator. So  
17                 finish the sentence.

18                 (Laughter.)

19                 MS. BRABHAM: Well, I was just saying  
20                 that there was money in the budget that was  
21                 given to the State Education Department  
22                 specifically for helping with this problem.  
23                 They tell us that they're working on it. I  
24                 believe there's an RFP that's supposed to be

1 coming out soon with regard to getting the  
2 system up and running, and we're looking  
3 forward to seeing it.

4 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5 Mr. McCartney, so last night was a  
6 long hearing, and this was like at 10 o'clock  
7 at night, but we heard from two other  
8 colleagues from other benevolent associations  
9 of I think the Parks Police and the  
10 Environmental Police, with the same concerns  
11 as you have brought to us today.

12 And yes, many of us have been here for  
13 many years saying we should be able to  
14 resolve this. And we don't.

15 I don't know whether this is  
16 sacrilegious, but why don't you all just  
17 organize and become part of the Troopers?

18 MR. McCARTNEY: I can't comment on  
19 that.

20 (Laughter.)

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I mean, there's  
22 power in numbers.

23 MR. McCARTNEY: We all have our own  
24 specialized niches, from the Forest Rangers

1 for their rescues, to the Park Police working  
2 out in Jones Beach, Niagara Falls area,  
3 Environmental Conservation Officers enforcing  
4 the laws that you make, but with less  
5 officers to do it because it's never funded  
6 when you guys make new laws.

7 So we all have specializations. But  
8 that's -- if that's something that you guys  
9 want to present.

10 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Well, you know, I  
11 would actually just love to have a  
12 discussion -- obviously not now, in one  
13 minute and 20 seconds -- with the whole group  
14 of you. Because I'm not sure how many  
15 individualized police forces we have within  
16 state government. I know of three as we're  
17 talking.

18 And it just seems that sometimes you  
19 steal each other's people because they go,  
20 Maybe it's better over there. Or maybe they  
21 say now that they've been trained they would  
22 prefer to be a State Trooper.

23 But I do have an understanding of  
24 power in numbers with unions. And I'm just

1 thinking if you're perhaps all part of one  
2 larger union, even if you have specialty  
3 areas and specialty skills, that maybe we  
4 could accomplish this for the long term.

5 It's just something to think about,  
6 perhaps, rather than your commenting on it.

7 MR. McCARTNEY: Okay, thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

9 I think we're now done.

10 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So thank you  
11 all for being with us here today, and we'll  
12 move on to our last panel.

13 The way it's listed is NYPIRG;  
14 Fostering Youth Success Alliance; District 1  
15 Youth Advisory Board; CUNY Coalition for  
16 Students with Disabilities; Columbia  
17 University; and On Point for College.

18 And in this group we are going to  
19 start with CUNY Coalition for Students with  
20 Disabilities, Arturo Soto.

21 And I know, Arturo, that you may have  
22 a train to catch or your companion may be  
23 tired of sitting and listening to us, so feel  
24 free to leave when you need to.

1 (Off the record.)

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So, Arturo,  
3 just --

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Press the  
5 microphone to green. Somebody press his to  
6 green, thank you. Press hard.

7 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: And just a  
8 reminder to everybody, your remarks have  
9 already been, as I've said before, circulated  
10 to the members, posted on at least right now  
11 the Senate's website -- I think the Assembly  
12 posts after the hearing.

13 So please try and summarize your  
14 remarks. Three minutes goes quicker than you  
15 think.

16 MR. SOTO: Chairs Stavisky, Fahy,  
17 Krueger and Weinstein, distinguished members  
18 of the New York State Legislature, my name is  
19 Arturo Soto. I serve as secretary of the  
20 CUNY Coalition for Students with  
21 Disabilities, an advocacy group representing  
22 more than 10,000 students self-identified  
23 with disabilities at the City University of  
24 New York.

1 I also serve as the Queens College  
2 Committee for Disabled Students president.

3 In the interests of time, I am only  
4 including some words about myself and my  
5 experiences in my written testimony. I have  
6 traveled to Albany today to urge you to  
7 include the following items in the fiscal  
8 year '25 New York State Higher Education  
9 Operating Budget.

10 First and foremost, CCSD supports  
11 CUNY's \$7 million request for students with  
12 disabilities and ADA compliance. This  
13 funding is absolutely essential for our  
14 respective campuses to provide adequate,  
15 basic accommodations for our students in  
16 accordance with the Americans with  
17 Disabilities Act.

18 CCSD supports the proactive approach  
19 that Chancellor Matos and our university  
20 leadership have taken in support of our  
21 students. It is our university's goal not  
22 only to remain ADA-compliant but to be a  
23 beacon for students with disabilities. Our  
24 university has a time-honored tradition of

1 providing innovative programs for our diverse  
2 student population. Many of you, like  
3 Senator Stavisky, have championed CUNY LEADS,  
4 our unique career and academic advisement  
5 program, and we are more than grateful for  
6 your continued support.

7           However, we now ask you to support our  
8 university's request to address our most  
9 basic needs. CCSD urges the State  
10 Legislature to restore the \$2 million that  
11 you included in the fiscal year '24 state  
12 operating budget for the State Education  
13 Department's statewide program for enhancing  
14 post-secondary services for students with  
15 disabilities.

16           In addition, CCSD endorses the SED  
17 budget request to increase support for this  
18 program by \$2 million in fiscal year '25.  
19 However, funding for the SED initiative  
20 should not be confused with our university's  
21 request for providing basic accommodations as  
22 required by law. Both requests are  
23 important, but they are very different.

24           CCSD also supports CUNY's request for

1 a \$4 million investment in mental health  
2 services. And finally, please consider  
3 including students with intellectual  
4 disabilities in any deliberations about TAP  
5 reform. We urge you to pass A2341/S1880  
6 allowing students enrolled in federally  
7 recognized CTP programs to be eligible to  
8 apply for TAP.

9 Thank you, and thank you for your  
10 time.

11 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

12 So now we'll go to Blair Horner,  
13 NYPIRG.

14 MR. HORNER: Good afternoon. My name  
15 is Blair Horner, NYPIRG's director. NYPIRG  
16 has affiliates at the State University, the  
17 City University, and at private institutions,  
18 independent colleges across the state.

19 Thank you for the opportunity to  
20 testify. You have my testimony. I'll be as  
21 brief and succinct as possible.

22 We view higher education as a public  
23 good, for all the obvious reasons. It cranks  
24 out the future workforce and civic leaders of

1 tomorrow, but it also creates and maintains  
2 jobs and stimulates the economy today.  
3 They're economic and cultural anchors for  
4 communities across the state, and they do so  
5 with multiple dollars in return for every  
6 dollar invested.

7 So we think of it not only as an  
8 important cultural and education experience  
9 for young people, but also as a way to boost  
10 the economic development of the state. And  
11 it should be the cornerstone of economic  
12 development in the state.

13 Yet public policy in New York has led  
14 to destabilizing that system. And you've  
15 heard the testimony today. When former  
16 Governor Cuomo and the Legislature agreed to  
17 decouple the maximum TAP award from what had  
18 been the informal agreement to increase it  
19 every time SUNY tuition went up, you created  
20 the TAP gap, which destabilizes the public  
21 colleges, and also hurt independent colleges  
22 as well.

23 For decades the state has cut back on  
24 Bundy Aid. You talked a little bit about it

1 with the previous panel. It was about  
2 \$125 million in the 1980s, and now the  
3 Governor's proposing to cut it even further.

4 So we think that you should be  
5 boosting state aid in public and independent  
6 colleges, reject the Governor's cuts to  
7 Opportunity Programs. We agree -- and urge  
8 you to agree -- with the Governor to freeze  
9 tuition at public colleges and universities  
10 and to restore Bundy Aid, we would argue,  
11 back to where it should be from 30 years ago.

12 And we also agree to "Turn on the  
13 TAP." The TAP program is 50 years old --  
14 hard to believe. Happy birthday to the TAP  
15 program. One way to help modernize that law  
16 would be, again, to sort of follow the old  
17 way of doing it, raise the maximum award to  
18 track SUNY's tuition, expand it back to  
19 graduate students -- which used to be the  
20 case years ago. Graduate student education  
21 is even more important than it ever was.

22 Raise the income level, raise the  
23 minimum TAP award, and cover some non-tuition  
24 costs. We think there should be equity with

1 independent institutions as well.

2 I have a few seconds left, so I will  
3 not keep going, but thank you for the  
4 opportunity to testify. And I'll be willing  
5 to answer any questions.

6 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

7 So next, Fostering Youth Success  
8 Alliance?

9 MS. NESBETH: Good afternoon, and  
10 thank you for the opportunity to testify  
11 today.

12 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Just pull that  
13 closer to you. Thank you.

14 MS. NESBETH: Okay. Thank you for the  
15 opportunity to testify today. My name is  
16 Deidra Nesbeth, and I'm here today on behalf  
17 of the Fostering Youth Success Alliance. In  
18 this testimony I'm going to speak to funding  
19 for the Foster Youth College Success  
20 Initiative, or FYCSI.

21 FYCSI was established in the 2015-'16  
22 budget, really aiming to bridge the gap from  
23 foster care to college success. Throughout  
24 the years we've seen an increase in young

1 people accessing this initiative, with as  
2 many as 1,148 students currently accessing  
3 the initiative this year.

4 We've seen this number continue to  
5 rise as accessibility becomes easier by  
6 working in coalition with several partners,  
7 including HESC, SUNY, CUNY, ACS, OCFS and  
8 SED, to make sure that young people can  
9 immediately access the consent form to access  
10 this program when they fill out the TAP  
11 application.

12 In the current Executive Budget  
13 proposal Governor Hochul includes  
14 \$7.92 million in funding for FYCSI. We are  
15 asking for an additional \$2.08 million in  
16 funding, for a total of \$10 million, to make  
17 sure that all of the young people accessing  
18 this initiative can see its benefits and  
19 receive the amount of support that they do  
20 need.

21 From one of our youth advocates, they  
22 stated that tackling college courses while  
23 aging out of foster care and finding an  
24 apartment at the same time was incredibly

1           difficult to juggle, but having this type of  
2           support is a life-changer.

3                   This funding allows young people to  
4           fulfill basic needs such as housing, books,  
5           transportation, food, personal and medical  
6           care, and emergency expenses. FYCSI allows  
7           students to have that opportunity to thrive  
8           rather than just survive.

9                   In terms of FYCSI's results, we were  
10          able to work with SUNY to ask them to look  
11          through their SUNY data warehouse and get  
12          some of the outcomes for young people. For  
13          young people we found that FYCSI recipients  
14          do have a higher retention rate than their  
15          peers with foster care experience, as well as  
16          underrepresented minority groups. They also  
17          have higher two-year, three-year and  
18          four-year associate degree graduation rates  
19          than their peers. And additionally, they  
20          post higher graduation rates for their  
21          bachelor's degrees when adjusted for a  
22          six-year-degree completion rate.

23                   This is an area for more study and  
24          analysis, as there have been fewer cohorts of

1 young people to follow through with those  
2 programs of bachelor's degrees due to the  
3 length of those programs.

4 This is really an investment in equity  
5 for our young people, as the majority of  
6 youth utilizing the FYCSI initiative do come  
7 from underrepresented backgrounds.  
8 Additionally, this makes sure young people --  
9 as well as older students who may want to  
10 access college -- have that option, as  
11 there's no upper age limit to FYCSI.

12 Thank you for your time, and I'm happy  
13 to take any questions.

14 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
15 Youth Advisory Board?

16 MS. SISTI: Good afternoon, honorable  
17 members of the New York State Legislature.  
18 My name is Alexandria Sisti, and I am honored  
19 to represent the District 1 Youth Advisory  
20 Board as one of its founding members. Our  
21 organization advocates for the youth of  
22 underserved communities of Brentwood,  
23 Central Islip, and North Bay Shore on  
24 Long Island.

1                   Today I stand before you to emphasize  
2                   the critical importance of the  
3                   Tuition Assistance Program and the  
4                   Excelsior Scholarship in shaping the  
5                   educational landscape for our students.

6                   TAP has been a lifeline, ensuring that  
7                   each student has equitable access to higher  
8                   education in our communities where financial  
9                   barriers can be particularly daunting. TAP  
10                  has been instrumental in making college an  
11                  achievable dream. The Excelsior Scholarship  
12                  has provided tuition-free access to SUNY and  
13                  CUNY institutions for families earning less  
14                  than \$125,000 annually, and has been  
15                  transformative. It is not merely a  
16                  scholarship; it is a gateway to empowerment.  
17                  It levels the playing field, enabling  
18                  students from all economic backgrounds to  
19                  pursue higher education without the burden of  
20                  crippling debt.

21                  Expanding TAP and the Excelsior  
22                  Scholarship is not just a financial decision,  
23                  it is an investment in the future of our  
24                  communities. It is a recognition that talent

1 is universal, but opportunities are often  
2 not. By ensuring that our students have  
3 access to affordable education, we are not  
4 only opening doors for individual success,  
5 but also fostering the growth and prosperity  
6 of our communities.

7 In the Brentwood School District we  
8 have around 17,000 students who are  
9 economically disadvantaged. In Central Islip  
10 we have around 5,000 students. But don't let  
11 the word "disadvantaged" throw you off,  
12 because we are far from it. Our communities  
13 share a similar lived experience that people  
14 outside will never understand, and that's  
15 what makes us strong.

16 These lived experiences are exactly  
17 why this organization was formed. Our motto  
18 at the District 1 Youth Advisory Board is  
19 "Build the Future." By investing in youth  
20 towards a higher education, New York State is  
21 doing exactly that.

22 We must continue to expand the  
23 Excelsior Scholarship to its goal income  
24 limit of \$150,000, the number that was laid

1 out during the announcement of the  
2 scholarship and was poised to be reached by  
3 the year 2022. This shows that we had a  
4 realistic goal, but unfortunately the  
5 willpower was just not there. The cost to  
6 implement this, according to the fiscal year  
7 2021 Executive Budget, was \$146 million.

8 We are also urging the Legislature to  
9 ensure the stability of TAP by indexing TAP  
10 minimum awards to inflation. Furthermore,  
11 New York State should lead the way in student  
12 grants by not only matching the federal Pell  
13 grant maximum, but also perhaps surpassing it  
14 for students who need it most.

15 Being a youth leader who is soon to  
16 graduate from SUNY Albany, I have seen  
17 firsthand the difficulties me and my  
18 community face while seeking a higher  
19 education. I am proud to say that I'm an  
20 orphan youth that comes from a family faced  
21 with financial and societal barriers.  
22 Without these higher education lifelines,  
23 college would just be a fever dream only  
24 obtained by the rich and well-off. Without

1           these same grants and funds, I would not be  
2           here in front of you today.

3                     Thank you.

4                     CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.  
5                     Columbia University.

6                     DR. FERDSCHNEIDER: Esteemed members  
7           of the Legislature, imagine a 30-year-old  
8           from Texas who is attending graduate school  
9           in New York City. Their family has never  
10          been supportive of them seeking any mental  
11          health help. They are currently receiving  
12          medication from the psychiatrist at their  
13          Student Health Center. They go home for  
14          their little sister's college graduation and,  
15          when they arrive in Texas, they realize that  
16          they left their medications back in their  
17          apartment in New York City.

18                    They call Student Health to schedule  
19           an appointment with the psychiatrist but are  
20           told that since the psychiatrist is not  
21           licensed in Texas, they are unable to assist.  
22           They are advised to seek assistance locally  
23           from a provider or from an urgent care.  
24           Since the student does not want to disclose

1 to their family that they are seeking mental  
2 health services, they forego refilling their  
3 medications and suffer a relapse of their  
4 symptoms.

5 One of your constituents goes out of  
6 state to college and experiences a disruption  
7 of their care for the same reasons.

8 My name is Dr. Marcy Ferdschneider,  
9 and I am the assistant vice president -- not  
10 principal, assistant vice president -- of  
11 Student Health on Haven, the student health  
12 center on the Medical Center Campus of  
13 Columbia University in the City of New York,  
14 proudly located in Senator Jackson's  
15 district. I am dual-board-certified in  
16 internal medicine and pediatrics.

17 And while these scenarios do not  
18 depict actual student cases, they are  
19 composites of many stories of many students I  
20 have encountered in my almost 25 years of  
21 working in student health.

22 It is these stories, and countless  
23 others, that compel me to support New York  
24 State to join the Interstate Medical License

1 Compact. The scenarios above demonstrate how  
2 fractured care can lead to increased costs  
3 and overburdening of the healthcare system.  
4 These stories, while overly simplistic, are  
5 true-to-life situations that could be easily  
6 resolved with the ability for medical  
7 providers to be more easily licensed in other  
8 states.

9 New York State is home to almost  
10 300 institutions of higher education whose  
11 mission is to educate the over 1 million  
12 students enrolled. We know that physical  
13 health, mental health, and overall well-being  
14 are essential for academic success. College  
15 health professionals are uniquely positioned  
16 to provide high-quality healthcare to  
17 students. This means we take care to  
18 understand the developmental trajectory of  
19 the population, whether they be  
20 undergraduate, graduate or doctoral students.

21 We understand the world of the  
22 learner, the dynamics of the learning  
23 environment, the impacts of the social  
24 experience, and the experience of living away

1 from home -- for many, for the first time.  
2 For many of our student patients it is the  
3 first time they are living on their own,  
4 navigating their own healthcare and, in their  
5 words, "adulthood."

6 All of this is hard enough for our  
7 students, but as things stand currently they  
8 now not only have to learn how to navigate  
9 the outstanding healthcare system available  
10 to them in New York, but because of the  
11 transient nature of their experience they  
12 also need to have a secondary plan for when  
13 they travel away from campus.

14 Having the Interstate Medical License  
15 Compact available to medical providers in  
16 New York State will streamline the process  
17 for our medical providers to obtain the  
18 necessary licenses so they can provide the  
19 care that their patients need when they are  
20 out of state for whatever reason.

21 And I am running out of time, so I  
22 will end it there. Thank you.

23 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

24 And now On Point for College, to

1 conclude this panel.

2 MR. ROWSER: Thank you, esteemed  
3 legislators. Thank you for the opportunity  
4 to talk with you about transforming lives and  
5 communities by investing \$500,000 in  
6 New York's future workforce.

7 Education is an effective pathway out  
8 of poverty. Ninety percent of students who  
9 earn a bachelor's degree are lifted out of  
10 poverty, according to a Pew Charitable Trust  
11 study.

12 Since On Point for College was founded  
13 in 1999, we've helped more than 4500 students  
14 graduate from college. These graduates now  
15 earn more than they would have with only a  
16 high school diploma. Over the course of  
17 their working lifetime, they will earn over  
18 \$11 billion, which will be spent in their  
19 communities.

20 We're rising to the challenge of  
21 preparing low-income, first-generation  
22 students to contribute to the local economies  
23 in Onondaga, Madison, Cayuga, Oswego, Oneida,  
24 and Herkimer counties -- and beyond, through

1           our partnership organizations in Manhattan  
2           and the Bronx.

3                   On Point provides college access,  
4           college success and career services to help  
5           young adults ages 17 to 29 to apply to,  
6           enroll in, and persist at college through  
7           graduation, while building skills and  
8           pre-professional experiences to help launch  
9           their careers. We help to level the playing  
10          field for our students. Lower-income,  
11          first-generation students face many  
12          challenges on their higher education journey.  
13          Without assistance, these challenges can turn  
14          into barriers that lead students to stop out  
15          or never attend college. On Point helps  
16          students develop plans to address challenges  
17          before they become stumbling blocks. We  
18          provide a broad range of services that we can  
19          tailor to meet the needs of each individual.

20                   Continuing to serve students from  
21          vulnerable backgrounds requires innovation in  
22          the years ahead. On Point is well-positioned  
23          to address the new needs that have arisen for  
24          first-generation students as they pursue

1 post-secondary opportunities including  
2 college, certificates, skilled trades and  
3 other credentials to meet workforce needs to  
4 position themselves for well-paying careers.

5 Our students bring their TAP and Pell  
6 awards as well as their student loan dollars,  
7 as well as last-dollar assistance grants from  
8 On Point's generous donors, to these  
9 campuses. If these students had not had  
10 On Point's support, they would not have  
11 attempted to go to college at all. These  
12 funds flow to campuses across New York State  
13 because On Point helps these students go to  
14 and remain in college.

15 We believe that providing \$500,000 in  
16 state funding for On Point's programs will  
17 have an impact on thousands of  
18 first-generation students each year, helping  
19 people consider going to college or into a  
20 skilled trade who might otherwise think that  
21 their goals were beyond reach. On Point will  
22 provide wraparound services to support  
23 students on every step of their journey  
24 toward their educational and career dreams.

1                   Investment in these young people will  
2                   immediately support colleges across the state  
3                   and will bear long-term fruit. Our graduates  
4                   will bring their degrees and our  
5                   skilled-trade professionals will bring their  
6                   skills to build the talented workforce that  
7                   New York needs. We ask you to keep it  
8                   On Point.

9                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10                  We go to our Higher Ed chair,  
11                  Assemblywoman Fahy.

12                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: It takes a few  
13                  tries to get this microphone on.

14                  Thank you. And we've saved an amazing  
15                  panel for last, so thanks to each of you.

16                  I need to just start with a couple of  
17                  comments. Since Mr. Soto, Arturo Soto,  
18                  representing the Coalition for Students with  
19                  Disabilities had to leave, I just think it's  
20                  important to get on the record just how  
21                  profound his testimony was and what a  
22                  remarkable job.

23                  And it is great to see a number of  
24                  young people here, including Alexandria

1           Sisti. Thank you as well for the remarkable  
2           testimony. Just terrific.

3                     Just a couple of quick questions.  
4           I'll start with our foster-care folks,  
5           Ms. Nesbeth. You said there was 7.9 million.  
6           And exactly how much are you asking for this  
7           year?

8                     MS. NESBETH: Ten million in total.

9                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: And how many  
10          students would that serve, or what percentage  
11          of foster-care college-age students would  
12          that serve?

13                    MS. NESBETH: Yes, so any young person  
14          with a foster-care background, it would be  
15          able to serve them. So right now that has  
16          been -- in this current year we anticipate  
17          that will be over 1200 young people.

18                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Twelve hundred.  
19          Okay, thank you so much.

20                    And then the mental health services  
21          from Columbia University, Dr. Ferdschneider,  
22          how many students roughly -- do you have any  
23          estimate of how many students may be impacted  
24          by this in-and-out-of-state matter?

1 DR. FERDSCHNEIDER: I actually don't  
2 have that number offhand. I apologize.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Okay. Okay.  
4 It's an important one that you raise that we  
5 are trying to address in other areas. But  
6 very important given the exponential increase  
7 in the need for mental health services,  
8 including among our college students.

9 And thanks to each of you as well for  
10 mentioning TAP. That's very important.  
11 Mr. Horner, any comments with NYPIRG on what  
12 the most important parts of TAP are for  
13 students? As you know, there's been a whole  
14 package to "Turn on the TAP," and thank you  
15 for using our hashtag.

16 MR. HORNER: You know, it's hard to  
17 say, because undergraduates are different  
18 than graduate students.

19 So, first of all, for graduate  
20 students, having the TAP program helped them  
21 to afford to pay for going to graduate  
22 school, which obviously is most important to  
23 them.

24 In terms of the undergraduate TAP

1           program, I mean, there's two -- again,  
2           there's two ways to look at it. One is from  
3           the institutional perspective, because  
4           enrollment is really where the action is with  
5           regard to a college's financial stability.  
6           So raising the max TAP award to match SUNY  
7           tuition helps across the board, both public  
8           and independent colleges.

9                     ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you.

10                    MR. HORNER: So I would think  
11           expanding the income level would be number --

12                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Okay, thank you.  
13           Appreciate the support on that.

14                    And the last speaker as well as my  
15           last question, for On Point. Assemblymember  
16           Stirpe sent his regards.

17                    MR. ROWSER: Thank you.

18                    ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: And, Mr. Rowser,  
19           thank you for this. We would love to see one  
20           in Albany, I have to say, or in the  
21           Capital Region.

22                    But what is making the difference, and  
23           how was the program created? Sorry, in six  
24           seconds.

1                   MR. ROWSER: It was created -- it will  
2                   be 25 years old this year, and it was because  
3                   of the passion of helping young people  
4                   transition from where they are to where they  
5                   want to be. And we've expanded in the last  
6                   year into six additional city school  
7                   districts in three different counties.

8                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

9                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN FAHY: Thank you. Very  
10                  impressive.

11                  Thank you, Chair.

12                  CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

13                  To the Senate.

14                  CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

15                  Senate Chair Toby Stavisky.

16                  SENATOR STAVISKY: I finally mastered  
17                  the microphone.

18                  (Laughter.)

19                  SENATOR STAVISKY: First, to the  
20                  panel, I thank you all for coming. And I  
21                  thank Blair Horner for his testimony.

22                  And to Arturo, who left -- but that is  
23                  a wonderful organization based out of CUNY,  
24                  but particularly at Queens College, the CUNY

1 Committee for Students with Disabilities.

2 And I always object to the name, because I  
3 think it's really students with abilities,  
4 not disabilities.

5 And they have been led, over the  
6 years -- Steve Kleinberg was here with him,  
7 and Steve and Charmaine Townsell, they have  
8 been the leaders of this group, and they've  
9 done so much for so many of the students.

10 And to really to everybody, we thank  
11 you for your patience.

12 I said I'd be brief.

13 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: So we go to  
14 Assemblyman Smullen.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Yeah, thank you,  
16 Chair. I'll pick up where Chair Fahy left  
17 off with On Point.

18 I had a couple of questions regarding  
19 to the -- how many people have you served,  
20 say, last year? And how did you adjust  
21 during the pandemic? I know it was a very  
22 tumultuous, chaotic period for an  
23 organization such as yours.

24 MR. ROWSER: So during the pandemic,

1           like many, we went virtual. And we did a lot  
2           of our work virtually. We still had to do  
3           some in-person stuff, so we masked up, got  
4           the sanitizer, and we loaded students up and  
5           we drove them around the state to the various  
6           colleges that they go to. Because part of  
7           what we do is provide transportation to any  
8           student within five hours of Central  
9           New York to where they want to go.

10                   Each year we bring in between 300 and  
11           500 new students into the system. We have  
12           anywhere between 1700 and 2500 that are  
13           always in school at any given time.

14                   And then our third pillar, career  
15           services, which we -- is where we do our  
16           workforce, is working with anywhere up  
17           towards 600 students each year, to help them  
18           transition.

19                   ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: And you said  
20           during the pandemic you did some of it  
21           online. Would you be able to do more of that  
22           with, say, rural students? You know, if you  
23           got a kid that's out in a rural area but  
24           really needs your knowledge and your

1           experience and your wisdom, would you be able  
2           to service students like that in a broader  
3           area?

4                       MR. ROWSER:  It would be, if they had  
5           broadband or if they had an internet  
6           connection.

7                       So we actually are in the rural  
8           communities now.  We're in Oswego County and  
9           we're in six school districts in Oswego  
10          County.  So we actually go to them to provide  
11          those services.

12                      One of the things we did last year is  
13          we were the first organization -- probably  
14          the only organization to take a group of  
15          young people to Manassas, Virginia, to the  
16          Micron plant.  And we pulled those students  
17          out of Oswego County or Onondaga County,  
18          Oneida County, and put them on a bus to go  
19          down there.  So we're going to them, because  
20          they don't have internet connections in those  
21          rural communities and so you have to go to  
22          them.

23                      ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN:  Well, we  
24          appreciate you meeting people where they need

1 to be met in order to, you know, to get them  
2 through this transition from the K-12 system  
3 into the college system, for a variety of  
4 different things.

5 The funding that you have, is it  
6 adequate, what you're getting from the state?  
7 I know you have a variety of funding sources.  
8 Could you please quickly explain that?

9 MR. ROWSER: Well, we do have a  
10 smorgasbord of funding. We get it from a  
11 variety of places. Because of our expansion,  
12 someone will help us with our access piece,  
13 we need help with the success piece. So  
14 getting them in is one thing, but now we've  
15 got to pay to keep them in. And that's the  
16 part that we need help from the state. We've  
17 got co-serve agreements to get them in,  
18 between BOCES and the school districts, so  
19 now we need state funding to help them stay  
20 in. And that's where our shortfall is.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: I really want to  
22 commend you for all that you do for these  
23 kids to get through this transition,  
24 especially in a very complicated thing where

1           you're almost standing in loco parentis in  
2           many ways for them.

3                   And it's really special. Glad that  
4           you're in part of my district. And I urge  
5           all my colleagues to fully support it.

6                   Thank you.

7                   MR. ROWSER: Thank you.

8                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Senate.

9                   CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.  
10           Senator Murray.

11                   SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you,  
12           Chairwoman.

13                   Thank you all for being here and for  
14           your patience in sticking it out.

15                   Just want to pose something. We've  
16           heard all afternoon about the importance of  
17           increasing the threshold for TAP, and I agree  
18           a hundred percent. But I'd like to get your  
19           thoughts because, Ms. Sisti, you had  
20           mentioned rate of inflation, indexing it to  
21           the rate.

22                   Would it be fairer if we simply set  
23           the base, took the 10 regional economic  
24           development regions, took the 10 regions and

1 base it, the threshold, on the regional -- a  
2 percentage of the regional median income?  
3 For example, right now the 80,000 threshold  
4 in parts of upstate may not be too bad,  
5 whereas on Long Island it's ridiculous.

6 Wouldn't it be fairer, what would your  
7 thoughts be to basing it on a percentage of  
8 the regional median income?

9 MS. SISTI: I'm going to answer this  
10 question to the best of my ability.

11 But I think that's a very tricky  
12 slope. Because like you were saying,  
13 obviously if you are living on Long Island,  
14 things like taxes are a lot higher, just the  
15 cost of living has skyrocketed, even in  
16 low-income communities like Brentwood. So I  
17 think that to have it be like a margin as --  
18 and a total like an average, I just think  
19 that could be a little tricky and that may be  
20 unfair for people from where they pay higher  
21 property taxes or higher cost of living.

22 I just think it's like a little bit of  
23 a tricky slope.

24 SENATOR MURRAY: I think maybe you're

1 missing the point, in that it would be  
2 10 different regions based on that region's  
3 median income. So Long Island would have a  
4 higher threshold, whereas maybe upstate would  
5 have a lower threshold because their cost of  
6 living is much lower. To make it fair.

7 MS. SISTI: Thank you for rephrasing  
8 the question.

9 I think I agree with you that it would  
10 be fairer. I think, you know, coming from a  
11 background where I am an orphan, I am  
12 actually a part of this foster-youth program  
13 at my college where I pay for college  
14 completely on my own, a zero-income  
15 independent student. So I think that if  
16 people base it off of Long Island's, you  
17 know, income tax and all of those things, it  
18 would be helpful.

19 MR. HORNER: Just to mention one other  
20 thing. It's a little -- it makes it more  
21 complicated. And so if you're a senior at  
22 SUNY Oswego and you live there 12 months out  
23 of the year, how does that count?

24 SENATOR MURRAY: Good point.

1 MR. HORNER: And so, you know -- I  
2 mean the system's already ridiculously  
3 complicated. And so I think -- I applaud the  
4 sort of the notion, because at some point you  
5 have to pay for all of this. But the  
6 inflation adjustment would be helpful too.

7 SENATOR MURRAY: Anyone else?

8 Okay. Well, thank you very much.

9 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10 We go to Assemblywoman Hyndman.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

12 I don't think a joint public hearing  
13 for higher ed would be complete without  
14 On Point.

15 (Laughter.)

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I think as  
17 long as I've been here, you've been here.

18 So you have a \$500,000 ask in this  
19 year's budget. Have you been receiving,  
20 every time you've testified, the requested  
21 amount? I'm just curious.

22 MR. ROWSER: Never.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: No?

24 MR. ROWSER: I've never received a

1 requested amount.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Oh. Always  
3 less.

4 MR. ROWSER: Much less.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Always less,  
6 okay. Thank you.

7 MR. ROWSER: But we keep hope alive.

8 (Laughter.)

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I'm in Queens,  
10 but my colleagues in -- Assemblymember Hunter  
11 speaks very highly of the program and its  
12 effectiveness. So thank you.

13 And thank you all for your testimony.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Robert  
16 Jackson.

17 SENATOR JACKSON: So you said a lot  
18 less. But are you receiving money from the  
19 Senate or the Assembly? If you know.

20 MR. ROWSER: They both tell me they  
21 all gave me the 200 that we get. We get 200  
22 the last couple of years. Three years ago I  
23 think we got 400, but the last two years we  
24 got two. Both say they did it.



1                   MR. ROWSER: New Settlement is in the  
2                   Bronx. On Walton Street. I think it's on  
3                   Walton Street is where their office is.

4                   SENATOR JACKSON: Okay. And as far as  
5                   the young woman, as far as the scholarship, I  
6                   think that I'm so happy for you because  
7                   you're getting a good education and you're  
8                   going to be part of -- right now you're part  
9                   of the leadership of leading the way, which  
10                  is very, very important.

11                  MS. SISTI: Thank you.

12                  SENATOR JACKSON: And as far as  
13                  fostering youth success, we have to help all  
14                  that we can. In my involvement in education,  
15                  it doesn't matter who you are, whether you're  
16                  Black, white, Asian, rich, poor -- it doesn't  
17                  matter. We're trying to get all of you a  
18                  good education so you can be our future  
19                  leaders of our great state. So please keep  
20                  up the work that you're doing. I'm proud of  
21                  all of you.

22                  (Inaudible exchange.)

23                  SENATOR JACKSON: All the time. Like  
24                  me, right?

1 (Laughter.)

2 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

3 To close out this hearing, a question  
4 by Assemblymember Eachus.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you, Chair.

6 We have two chairs with patience like  
7 angels. And I thank them for that.

8 Thank you all for what you do. I  
9 really, really thank you. I thank you for  
10 being here and all.

11 But I just want to point out, Marcy,  
12 my family has been personally affected by  
13 exactly what you're talking about. It is my  
14 hope -- I am Assemblymember Chris Eachus --  
15 that you contact my office and we can be sure  
16 that you get the proper support that you  
17 need.

18 DR. FERDSCHNEIDER: Thank you so much,  
19 sir.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Sure.

21 Deidra, thank you. Having had  
22 13 foster brothers and sisters myself, they  
23 can have a very traumatic life as they grow  
24 up, and they need all the support that we can

1 give them. So congratulations and thank you  
2 very much for that.

3 And then, finally, Alexandria. Were  
4 you here when we were talking to Dr. Linares  
5 from HESC?

6 MS. SISTI: Yes.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Yeah. I was  
8 making some statements from my personal  
9 experience of being in high school. You're  
10 not that far away from high school,  
11 especially compared to most of us here.

12 Would you agree that the NY FAFSA  
13 READY program really needs more promotion  
14 than what it's getting? When you talk about  
15 disadvantaged students, you're right, it  
16 doesn't necessarily mean that they're poor or  
17 anything else like that, but they're  
18 generally not connected with school the way  
19 better students are. And we need to really  
20 get to them to fill out the FAFSA form to go  
21 to the next step with your TAP and Excelsior  
22 and so on like that.

23 MS. SISTI: Yes, I would have to agree  
24 with you that it is a very important program

1 and it definitely needs to be put in the  
2 forefront to high schoolers.

3 Children at my high school -- I know a  
4 lot of the times college -- they wouldn't  
5 even think about it because just the idea of  
6 filling out the form for FAFSA was terrifying  
7 to them. You know, a lot of people that are  
8 in my town are undocumented immigrants and  
9 their parents may not speak English, so it's  
10 up to them, at 17 years old, to figure out  
11 how to fill out FAFSA completely on their  
12 own. And that's not okay, and that's not  
13 fair. You know?

14 I'm lucky enough to have an aunt that  
15 helps me along the way, but that wouldn't  
16 have been unless her daughter went to college  
17 before me. I think that FAFSA is very  
18 confusing, it's a very confusing form to fill  
19 out. I have friends that tell me all the  
20 time, they're like, I get no money but it's  
21 because I don't know how to fill it out  
22 properly, so I'll just pay for college out of  
23 pocket and be in debt for the rest of my  
24 life.

1                   And nobody should have to do that to  
2                   achieve a higher education to get to where  
3                   they want to be in this world.

4                   ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: And I put that  
5                   responsibility on me, and hopefully my other  
6                   fellow legislators accept the same thing.

7                   Thank you very much.

8                   MS. SISTI: Thank you.

9                   CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

10                  We actually have one more questioner  
11                  from Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon.

12                  ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you. And  
13                  thank you to all of you for your really  
14                  excellent testimony.

15                  And, you know, I just want to endorse  
16                  Assemblymember Fahy's comments about  
17                  Mr. Soto's testimony as well as yours, you  
18                  know, working with foster students. So few  
19                  foster students are able to be successful in  
20                  college, and it really is an incredible area  
21                  that we need to focus on.

22                  And thank you, Alexandria for your  
23                  work as well.

24                  You know, one of the issues with FAFSA

1 of course is reading levels, is familiarity.  
2 It's also disability accommodations on the  
3 filling out of that FAFSA form, which needs  
4 to improve.

5 But I have a question for Mr. Rowser.

6 MR. ROWSER: Yes.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And that is your  
8 program strikes me as having a lot of  
9 similarities with some of the TRIO programs,  
10 the Upward Bound and also students' special  
11 services. Is that something that you guys  
12 have thought about, or would you have access  
13 to such -- that type of federal funding as  
14 well?

15 MR. ROWSER: We have not had access to  
16 that kind of federal funding in the past. We  
17 do work with many of the TRIO programs.

18 A little bit different in what we  
19 do -- and I just heard the young lady talk  
20 about FAFSA -- is we do FAFSA completion  
21 programs. We go around the city to all the  
22 high schools in the communities. We provide  
23 transportation -- some of the things that the  
24 TRIO programs don't do, On Point does.

1                   You know, if a student has a toothache  
2                   and they need dental care, we have dentists  
3                   who do pro bono work, so we go pick them up,  
4                   bring them home, fix their teeth and take  
5                   them back. So just, you know, a little bit  
6                   more. But we have not had access to TRIO  
7                   funding. We tried.

8                   ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: I used to run a  
9                   TRIO program, so I always think about those  
10                  programs. And if there's a way that you  
11                  could maybe, you know, take advantage of  
12                  them, if they can be helpful to you or not --  
13                  I don't know if it's true or not.

14                 MR. ROWSER: We've got about  
15                 98 percent, we haven't got higher when we  
16                 applied. We're working on it, though.

17                 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Keep doing the  
18                 great work you're doing. It's really  
19                 impressive. Thank you.

20                 MR. ROWSER: We need On Point  
21                 everywhere.

22                 CHAIRWOMAN WEINSTEIN: Thank you.

23                 So with that, we conclude the -- first  
24                 I just want to thank the panel for being

1           here, colleagues for being here.

2                       So with that, we conclude the  
3           Higher Ed hearing, joint budget hearing for  
4           today. Our next joint budget hearing will be  
5           on Tuesday the 13th. Starting at 9:30, we  
6           will be addressing the Governor's mental  
7           health budget.

8                       CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you,  
9           everyone.

10                      (Whereupon, at 3:37 p.m., the budget  
11           hearing concluded.)

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