

1 BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE SENATE FINANCE
2 AND ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEES
3 -----

4 JOINT LEGISLATIVE HEARING

5 In the Matter of the
6 2025-2026 EXECUTIVE BUDGET ON
7 HIGHER EDUCATION
8 -----

9 Hearing Room B
10 Legislative Office Building
11 Albany, New York

12 February 25, 2025
13 9:36 a.m.

14 PRESIDING:

15 Senator Liz Krueger
16 Chair, Senate Finance Committee

17 Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow
18 Chair, Assembly Ways & Means Committee

19 PRESENT:

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

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

24 Assemblywoman Alicia Hyndman
Chair, Assembly Higher Education Committee

Senator Toby Stavisky
Chair, Senate Higher Education Committee

Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon

Senator John C. Liu

Assemblyman Robert Smullen

1 2025-2026 Executive Budget
2 Higher Education
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3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Assemblyman Harvey Epstein

5 Senator Robert Jackson

6 Senator Lea Webb

7 Assemblywoman Monique Chandler-Waterman

8 Senator Dean Murray

9 Assemblyman Scott Gray

10 Senator Peter Oberacker

11 Assemblywoman Chris Eachus

12 Assemblywoman Karen McMahon

13 Senator Andrew Gounardes

14 Assemblywoman Sarah Clark

15 Assemblyman Matt Slater

16 Senator Shelley B. Mayer

17 Assemblywoman Rebecca A. Seawright

18 Assemblyman Al Stirpe

19 Assemblyman Steven Otis

20 Senator Patricia Fahy

21 Assemblyman David Weprin

22 Assemblywoman Dr. Anna R. Kelles

23 Assemblyman Kwani O'Pharrow

24 Senator Joseph Griffo

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3 PRESENT: (Continued)

4 Assemblyman Nader J. Sayegh

5 Assemblywoman Judy Griffin

6 Senator Rachel May

7 Assemblyman Sam Pirozzolo

8 Assemblywoman Marianne Buttenschon

9 Senator Julia Salazar

10

11

12 LIST OF SPEAKERS

13 STATEMENT QUESTIONS

14 Dr. John B. King, Jr.
 15 Chancellor
 15 State University of New York
 -and-

16 Félix V. Matos Rodríguez
 16 Chancellor
 17 City University of New York

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18 Dr. Guillermo Linares
 18 President
 19 NYS Higher Education
 19 Services Corporation (HESC)

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20 Betty A. Rosa
 21 Commissioner
 21 New York State Department
 22 of Education

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4 STATEMENT QUESTIONS

5 Dr. James Davis
 6 President
 6 Professional Staff Congress/CUNY
 -and-
 7 Andrew Sako
 8 President
 8 Faculty Federation of
 9 Erie Community College
 -and-
 10 George Cushman
 10 Chair
 11 New York Community College
 11 Trustees (NYCCT)
 -and-

12 Dr. Frederick E. Kowal
 13 President
 13 United University Professions
 -and-

14 Bradley Hershenson
 15 Business Agent
 15 CWA 1104 GSEU

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16 Gio Harvey
 17 President
 17 SUNY Student Assembly
 -and-
 18 Gabrielle Lerner
 19 President
 19 Empire State University
 20 Student Government Association
 -and-
 21 Daniel Reden
 21 CUNY Student Trustee
 22 Chairperson
 22 CUNY University Student
 23 Senate

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3 LIST OF SPEAKERS, Cont.

4 STATEMENT QUESTIONS

5 David J. Adams
 6 General Counsel
 6 Senior Vice President,
 7 Government Relations
 7 Kaplan North America
 -and-
 8 Elisabeth Espinosa
 9 Director, Outreach Programs
 9 Catholic Charities
 10 Tri-County Services
 -on behalf of-
 10 Anti-Hunger Advocacy Day
 11 Coalition
 -and-
 12 Lola W. Brabham
 12 President
 13 Commission on Independent
 13 Colleges and Universities
 14 (CICU)
 -and-
 15 Donna Stelling-Gurnett
 15 President
 16 Association of Private
 16 Colleges (APC)
 17 -and-
 17 Ruth Genn
 18 Executive Director
 18 Literacy Advocacy Collective
 19 -and-
 19 Chris Lacosse
 20 Director
 20 NYS University Police Officers
 21 Benevolent Association
 21 PBA of New York State

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3 LIST OF SPEAKERS, Cont.

4 STATEMENT QUESTIONS

5 Elizabeth Altman
6 President
7 Friends of the NYS
8 Liberty Partnerships
9 -and-
10 Renaldo D. Alba
11 President
12 Association for Program
13 Administrators of STEP
14 and CSTEP (APACS)
15 -and-
16 Kevin Marken
17 Utica Director
18 On Point for College
19 -and-
20 Blair Horner
21 Executive Director
22 New York Public Interest
23 Research Group (NYPIRG)

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1 CHAIR PRETLOW: Good morning. I'm
2 Gary Pretlow, chair of the New York State
3 Assembly Ways and Means Committee. Today we
4 begin the 10th in a series of 14 hearings
5 conducted by the joint fiscal committees of
6 the Legislature regarding the Governor's
7 proposed budget for fiscal year '25-'26.
8 These hearings are conducted pursuant to the
9 New York State Constitution and the
10 Legislative Law.

11 Today the Assembly Ways and Means
12 Committee and the Senate Finance Committee
13 will hear testimony concerning the Governor's
14 proposed budget for higher education.

15 I'll now introduce the participating
16 members from the Assembly. After that,
17 Senator Krueger will introduce members from
18 the Senate.

19 In addition, ranking Ways and Means
20 Member Ra will introduce members from his
21 conference.

22 Joining us today -- I have a list
23 somewhere. Okay, sorry about that. Joining
24 us today is the chairperson of the

1 Higher Education Committee, Alicia Hindman --

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Hyndman.

3 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Hyndman. I always
4 say Hindman. Hyndman. This is Higher
5 Education; I should say it right, right?

6 Assemblymember Clark, Assemblymember
7 Eachus, Assemblymember Seawright,
8 Assemblyman Stirpe, Assemblymember Epstein,
9 Assemblymember Otis, and Assemblymember
10 Weprin.

11 Senator?

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good morning.
13 Hi, I'm Liz Krueger, chair of Senate Finance,
14 and I'm joined by Toby Stavisky, our chair of
15 Higher Ed; Senator John Liu; Senator Jackson;
16 Senator Gounardes; Senator Webb;
17 Senator Mayer; Senator Fahy.

18 And should I pass it over to my
19 colleague Tom O'Mara to introduce the
20 Republicans?

21 SENATOR O'MARA: Yes, good morning.

22 On our side we have ranking member on
23 the Higher Ed Committee Senator Joe Griffo,
24 and Senators Peter Oberacker and Dean Murray.

1 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Ed?

2 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Good morning. We
3 have with us our ranker on Higher Ed,
4 Assemblyman Smullen, as well as
5 Assemblyman Slater.

6 CHAIR PRETLOW: Thank you.

7 Those of you who have been following
8 these hearings know that we have some fairly
9 strict time limits. Governmental witnesses
10 are allotted 10 minutes for testimony.
11 Nongovernmental witnesses are allotted
12 three minutes for testimony. The time limits
13 are for questions and answers.

14 The chairs of the relevant committees
15 of each governmental witness will get
16 10 minutes and a second round of three
17 minutes if desired. Ranking members of these
18 committees will each get five minutes. All
19 other members of the relevant committees will
20 each get three minutes.

21 All witnesses, please note we have
22 your written testimony. So we would ask you
23 that you not read your testimony, but
24 summarize it, to leave more time for

1 questions.

2 To all legislators, please let myself
3 or Senator Krueger know if you wish to
4 question a witness or a panel of witnesses.

5 Everyone, please look around. We have
6 several time clocks. When the clock winds
7 down to zero, I will have to cut you off.
8 Please note that when the yellow light comes
9 on, you have 30 seconds remaining on the
10 clock. Please try to summarize your answer
11 if you're in that 30-second window.

12 Please be considerate and respect the
13 clock so everyone has a chance to be heard.

14 Please note that these time frames for
15 questioning include both questions and
16 answers, as I just said. So members are
17 respectfully requested not to commence a new
18 question with insufficient time on the clock
19 to permit a witness to answer.

20 Due to the length of our hearings, we
21 have no alternative but to strictly enforce
22 these time limits.

23 With that, I want to introduce our
24 first panel: Chancellor John King and

1 Chancellor Félix Rodríguez.

2 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Good morning.

3 I want to thank Chairs Pretlow and
4 Krueger, along with Chairs Hyndman and
5 Stavisky, for having us here today.

6 I'd also like to recognize Ranking
7 Members Smullen and Griffo, Ra and O'Mara.

8 It's a privilege to come before you
9 this morning to discuss SUNY's progress
10 advancing affordability and excellence on
11 behalf of the New Yorkers we are proud to
12 serve.

13 Before I begin, I want to thank you
14 for your confidence in SUNY and the record
15 investments that you've made in our students,
16 faculty and campuses over the last two years.
17 The SUNY Board of Trustees and I are
18 committed to ensuring that SUNY is the
19 nation's best statewide public system of
20 higher education, and the resources you are
21 providing are integral to that success.

22 Last fall Governor Hochul announced
23 the great news that total enrollment
24 increased at SUNY by 3.4 percent. We've seen

1 enrollment gains in every SUNY sector for two
2 consecutive years, marking the first time
3 SUNY has experienced back-to-back systemwide
4 enrollment increases in 15 years.

5 I'm especially pleased that in fall
6 '24, roughly half of our first-time
7 undergraduates were Pell recipients. This is
8 truly a testament of SUNY's role as an engine
9 of upward mobility.

10 SUNY is where affordability and
11 excellence meet. While we're completely
12 focused on building on this progress, it is
13 clear that SUNY is on the move. I often say
14 that there's a place at SUNY for every
15 New Yorker, and maintaining SUNY's
16 extraordinary affordability is vital to
17 helping students and families find their
18 perfect SUNY campus and thrive.

19 Fifty-two percent of in-state
20 undergraduate students attend SUNY
21 tuition-free, thanks to state, federal and
22 institutional financial aid. I want to thank
23 you for championing an expansion of the
24 Tuition Assistance Program that is helping

1 more New Yorkers afford college even as we
2 speak.

3 In addition, the state's new universal
4 FAFSA law went into effect this year, and I
5 want to express our gratitude. Filling out
6 the FAFSA opens the door to financial aid,
7 and this important law, in place in nearly a
8 dozen other states, will help New Yorkers
9 access all available financial aid. I look
10 forward to working with you and Governor
11 Hochul to continue this progress.

12 Since I became chancellor, there have
13 been four pillars driving our work:
14 situation success; research and scholarship;
15 diversity, equity and inclusion; and economic
16 development and upward mobility. I want to
17 highlight just a few areas of progress.

18 One of our most important student
19 success initiatives is to scale ASAP and ACE,
20 the nation's most effective evidence-based
21 strategies for helping students earn their
22 degree. And we now have 4,270 SUNY students
23 enrolled in ASAP and ACE at 25 campuses, and
24 we are already seeing promising early results

1 in persistence and credit attainment.

2 SUNY is also expanding support to help
3 every student succeed. Thanks to your
4 support, SUNY is investing in services for
5 students with disabilities, enhanced mental
6 health support, and combating food
7 insecurity. And we also have a homeless
8 liaison on every SUNY campus.

9 Governor Hochul has charged SUNY with
10 doubling research, and we are seeing
11 extraordinary progress -- from artificial
12 intelligence to quantum, climate action to
13 biotech, health advances to semiconductors.
14 SUNY is especially proud of the launch of the
15 Empire AI research center for the
16 public good, housed at the University
17 at Buffalo and involving SUNY's four
18 University Centers.

19 I want to emphasize our unwavering
20 commitment to ensuring that our campuses are
21 safe places to teach and learn and that they
22 foster inclusive communities. From our
23 funding, SUNY's mission has been to, quote,
24 provide to the people of New York educational

1 services of the highest quality with the
2 broadest possible access, fully
3 representative of all segments of the
4 population, close quote.

5 We have no intention of backing away
6 from that mission and its inherent commitment
7 to a diverse and inclusive university and
8 society. There is no place at SUNY for
9 antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms
10 of discrimination and harassment. And SUNY
11 required all faculty and staff to participate
12 in Title VI training this fall.

13 The final area of advancing SUNY's
14 excellence is our progress toward the goal
15 that every SUNY undergraduate participate in
16 a high-quality internship. SUNY students are
17 supporting veterans through the veterans
18 enrollment and support internship program,
19 conducting groundbreaking research through
20 the Chancellor's Summer Research Excellence
21 Fund. We've established an initiative for
22 EOP participants to intern with state
23 agencies, among many other internships made
24 possible through increased state support.

1 In addition, this year SUNY launched
2 Governor Hochul's Empire State Service Corps,
3 funding 500 paid service positions for
4 students in areas like K-12 tutoring, peer
5 mental health support, addressing food
6 insecurity and climate action.

7 Now, let's turn to the FY '26
8 Executive Budget. Governor Hochul and the
9 Legislature's historic investments in SUNY
10 over the past two years have been vital to
11 keeping SUNY affordable and advancing our
12 excellence. This includes the record
13 \$277 million increase over the last two years
14 that has provided 20 percent-plus funding
15 increases to every single state-operated
16 campus.

17 And for community colleges, last
18 year's budget included the first operating
19 funding increase in nearly a decade, helping
20 to prepare students for essential healthcare
21 careers and funding additional mental health
22 services.

23 I want to highlight just a few
24 components that we're grateful to

1 Governor Hochul for including in the '26
2 Executive Budget and eager to work with you
3 to advance. The Executive Budget includes
4 114 million in additional funding for our
5 state-operated campuses, which supports the
6 well-deserved state-approved collective
7 bargaining agreement with our faculty and
8 staff and is absolutely essential for
9 maintaining SUNY's momentum.

10 We're especially thrilled about
11 Governor Hochul's plan for free community
12 college. Building on successful programs in
13 Massachusetts and Michigan, Governor Hochul's
14 proposal provides free tuition, fees, books
15 and supplies for adults age 25 to 55 who
16 pursue an associate's degree in high-demand
17 fields.

18 This investment is in addition to
19 maintenance of the 100 percent community
20 college funding floor, which will avoid
21 \$76 million in lost direct state tax support.

22 The Governor also announced plans to
23 expand the nationally recognized ASAP and ACE
24 retention and completion programs that I

1 described. Thanks to Governor Hochul's
2 budget, we'll be able to scale these programs
3 on the path to 10,000 students in the next
4 two years.

5 In addition, the Executive Budget
6 includes \$550 million for critical
7 maintenance upgrades for state-operated
8 campuses and \$130 million for the community
9 college capital funding match.

10 The Governor has also proposed a
11 \$25 million SUNY green energy loan fund that
12 will help transform SUNY's buildings to be
13 more energy efficient. This investment will
14 help advance SUNY's newly adopted Climate and
15 Sustainability Action Plan, as well as our
16 campuses' work developing clean energy master
17 plans.

18 To help SUNY double research,
19 Governor Hochul is proposing the \$200 million
20 New York State innovation fund for capital
21 investments in cutting-edge laboratory
22 facilities. And the Executive Budget makes
23 historic capital investments in SUNY's
24 hospitals, with essential support for

1 SUNY Downstate's future and for
2 Upstate Medical to deliver needed services to
3 the region.

4 Finally, I want to recognize the many
5 questions as we work to navigate the
6 directives coming from the new federal
7 administration. Let me just say that our
8 institutions have the unique power to bring
9 Americans together across all lines of
10 difference -- geography and race, region and
11 income, politics and nationality. Students
12 who live together, who learn together, who
13 talk to each other will have a better chance
14 of understanding each other and finding
15 commonalities throughout their lives.

16 That is why I continue to wake up
17 every morning believing deeply in the unique
18 power of higher education to strengthen the
19 lives of our students and the health of our
20 democracy. And I go to sleep each night
21 proud of the work we are doing to tangibly
22 deliver on these aspirations for the students
23 we are privileged to serve.

24 Thank you, and I look forward to your

1 questions.

2 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

3 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So
4 good morning, and delighted to be here
5 joining Chancellor King. And I bring you
6 greetings on behalf of the City University of
7 New York, our 25 campuses, our 390,000
8 degree-seeking and continuing education
9 students, and our 40,000 faculty and staff.

10 I want to thank Governor Hochul and
11 all of you, our friends in the State Senate
12 and Assembly, for your commitment to public
13 higher education, and for your support for
14 our ability to continue delivering on CUNY's
15 promise as one of our state's most potent
16 economic engines. Please know that your
17 support is not taken for granted at a time
18 when some seem interested in undermining our
19 progress.

20 This past year we have welcomed more
21 students and introduced more programs to help
22 guide them to degrees and careers. We had a
23 banner year as a research institution and
24 celebrated our best year ever for major gifts

1 from our generous philanthropic donors,
2 including the two largest in CUNY's history.
3 And we completed 73 capital projects totaling
4 760 million, a critical advance in our
5 ongoing project to modernize the university.
6 All of this has helped broaden CUNY's reach
7 as New York's most impactful public
8 institution and advance the goals of our
9 strategic roadmap that I shared with you in
10 2023.

11 One of the key indicators of our
12 impact is enrollment, as it reflects that
13 more New Yorkers are accessing opportunities
14 for a brighter future. For the second
15 consecutive year the CUNY student body has
16 expanded, adding nearly 12,000 students over
17 two years, representing a growth of
18 5 percent. And we're not slowing down. This
19 past fall, more than 55,000 New York high
20 school seniors applied to CUNY colleges
21 during our four-week fee-waiving period, an
22 initiative that we started in 2023 with
23 Governor Hochul's support.

24 During this period CUNY also sent

1 letters to New York City high school seniors,
2 accepting them to community colleges and
3 encouraging them to apply to our senior
4 colleges. It's part of an ongoing
5 partnership with the New York City Public
6 Schools that this year drove a 13 percent
7 year-over-year jump in applications completed
8 during the fall semester.

9 All of our students benefit from
10 CUNY's continuing growth of career-connected
11 programs that also strengthen our city and
12 state. One example is York College's
13 Aviation and Aerospace Academy, a new STEM
14 education partnership with the Port
15 Authority. Another is a program at
16 Bronx Community College that is the first in
17 New York State to award an online certificate
18 in nuclear medicine technology, a field with
19 a severe shortage of technicians in our
20 state.

21 This year we have built on our
22 momentum in partnering with employers and
23 doing more to connect classrooms to careers.
24 We now have more than 31,000 employers in

1 every in-demand field actively recruiting in
2 the CUNY system. And with support from
3 public and private partners, we have
4 connected more than 16,000 students directly
5 to paid internships in the last three years,
6 in addition to students who landed
7 internships on their own.

8 Meanwhile, over 100 of our academic
9 departments have begun incorporating
10 career-infused degree maps to help students
11 reach milestones tailored to their majors as
12 part of their course planning. And at the
13 heart of these efforts are our faculty, who
14 are integrating career connections into their
15 own classrooms.

16 This spring we are preparing to launch
17 CUNY Beyond in the fall of 2025, our campus
18 roadmap for career success connecting
19 classrooms to careers throughout our
20 students' academic journeys. This
21 wide-ranging strategy makes CUNY the first
22 system in the country that will scale up
23 approaches that we know work at every step of
24 a student's academic journey. These

1 approaches include working with high schools
2 to offer career-connected college courses,
3 introducing career discussions in
4 orientations and first-year seminars,
5 embedding careers in curriculum, expanding
6 paid internships, and growing our engagement
7 with employers.

8 We began the current spring semester
9 with the rollout of the CUNY Transfer
10 Initiative, a sweeping reform that would
11 eliminate longstanding obstacles to credit
12 transfers when students move from one CUNY
13 college to another. The new system will
14 streamline the transfer process and smooth
15 the road to a bachelor's degree. We expect
16 to save students an average of \$1,220 in
17 excess tuition costs with this initiative.

18 Looking beyond our campuses, our more
19 than 10,000 faculty researchers garnered
20 \$672 million in external funding for
21 research, training and other sponsored
22 activity -- an all-time record high for the
23 university for a second straight year.

24 To give you just a few examples of

1 CUNY research that improves the lives of
2 New Yorkers, our scientists are advancing a
3 new diagnostic tool to treat breast cancer
4 patients whose tumors are elusive. They're
5 revolutionizing quantum technology to bring
6 ultra-broadband internet to New Yorkers. And
7 they are pioneers of an emerging technology
8 that tracks infectious diseases through
9 wastewater.

10 At the same time, as you know, these
11 are challenging times as we continue fighting
12 antisemitism, bigotry, and the rise of
13 intolerance and hate in all forms. It is a
14 special obligation for a university as
15 diverse as CUNY, and we have taken strong
16 action in the year since I last appeared
17 before you.

18 Now let me turn to the Governor's
19 Executive Budget. I'd like to express my
20 deep gratitude to Governor Hochul for an
21 Executive Budget that provides significant
22 new operating and capital funding for CUNY,
23 which builds on additional funding for CUNY
24 that Governor Hochul, you and your colleagues

1 appropriated over the last few years.

2 For CUNY's operating budget, there is
3 an increase of \$96 million in operating
4 support for our senior colleges, which will
5 almost fully cover wage increases for fiscal
6 year 2026 associated with the contract
7 agreement we signed with our faculty union in
8 December. An additional \$34 million is
9 needed to fully cover the cost of those wage
10 increases, and we look forward to working
11 with you in the weeks ahead to include this
12 funding in the enacted budget.

13 We are also grateful for the
14 Executive Budget's adding of one-time funding
15 of \$192.2 million to cover one-time payments
16 for the retroactive wage increases and the
17 lump-sum ratification bonus.

18 We are pleased to see that the
19 community college funding floor is continued
20 at 100 percent of the previous year's
21 funding. We're also appreciative of the
22 continuation of \$5.3 million in community
23 college general operating support first
24 enacted last year, which will further help

1 shore up the colleges' finances.

2 The funding provided for our senior
3 colleges to support CUNY's labor costs,
4 coupled with operating support for our
5 community colleges, will mean that CUNY will
6 not need to absorb a big chunk of mandatory
7 costs which would undoubtedly exacerbate the
8 university's structural deficit.

9 Regarding that structural deficit, we
10 have made significant progress in reducing
11 it -- from a high of \$234 million in fiscal
12 year 2022 to a projected \$62 million at the
13 end of this fiscal year, thanks to expense
14 reduction strategies, enrollment growth, and
15 additional operating aid that you enacted.
16 Our goal is to sustain our momentum, and we
17 ask for your assistance in fully funding the
18 university's mandatory needs, including
19 fringe benefits and inflationary increases.

20 We applaud the Governor's inclusion of
21 \$18.8 million for the New York State
22 Opportunity Promise Scholarship program to
23 provide free community college tuition,
24 \$8 million for our ASAP and ACE programs, and

1 \$5 million for artificial intelligence
2 initiatives.

3 And let's build on that strong
4 foundation with:

5 • a \$7 million investment for CUNY
6 Beyond, the first-of-its-kind systemwide
7 Career Success Campus Model that I mentioned
8 earlier;

9 • an additional \$4 million investment
10 to extend the Opportunity Promise
11 Scholarship;

12 • an \$8.9 million investment for STEM,
13 Health and Arts programs to help defray their
14 higher instructional costs; and

15 • a continuation of \$4 million for
16 CUNY's School of Medicine.

17 Turning to the capital budget, the
18 Executive Budget provides critical
19 infrastructure investments to modernize our
20 25 campuses. The plan allocates nearly
21 \$500 million in new capital funding for our
22 four-year schools and community colleges.
23 This support will enable us to maintain our
24 campuses in a state of good repair and make

1 strategic investments in research facilities.

2 To conclude, the budget season
3 presents challenges for all of us responsible
4 for public education in our state. While the
5 specifics may vary, our objectives remain
6 consistent.

7 This year, as we confront new
8 uncertainties, I recognize the presence of
9 steadfast allies and true supporters of
10 higher education and opportunity within this
11 room and in Albany. Your commitment has been
12 demonstrated repeatedly, and I am confident
13 that we can rely on you during this crucial
14 time. I extend my most sincere gratitude for
15 your continued partnership and support, and I
16 look forward to your questions.

17 CHAIR PRETLOW: Thank you.

18 Assemblyman Otis. Three minutes.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you, Chair.

20 And thank you, Chancellors.

21 Chancellor King, love you to talk a
22 little more about what the growth has been on
23 the AI consortium, which is so focused at
24 SUNY Buffalo and other SUNY campuses. And

1 just if you could expound a little more in
2 detail beyond your testimony about the
3 progress in the last year.

4 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Sure. Thank
5 you. And thank you, Assemblyman Otis, for
6 coming with the Science and Technology
7 Committee to visit UB.

8 The great news is the project is
9 moving very rapidly. Thanks to support from
10 the Simons Foundation, we were able to launch
11 an alpha version of the supercomputer. So
12 we've marshaled \$400 million in
13 public/private investment to build what will
14 eventually be one of the largest
15 supercomputers on any higher ed campus.

16 But we were able to start with the
17 alpha version, thanks to the Simons
18 Foundation. And we already have researchers
19 across our institutions pursuing AI research
20 for the public good on that alpha version --
21 questions like how can we leverage AI to
22 better treat disease, how can we leverage AI
23 to better tackle issues of climate
24 resilience.

1 So we're excited that the project is
2 moving well and the partnership is working
3 well, with CUNY and with our private
4 institution partners as well.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: I want to thank you
6 for our road trip of the Science and
7 Technology Committee to Buffalo. And I think
8 what was most outstanding: The presentations
9 that your professors made about how
10 multifaceted the AI work is. It covers AI to
11 assist students in learning. You mentioned
12 the medical research and a whole host of
13 other endeavors.

14 What is your forecast for the next
15 year in terms of continuing to grow out based
16 upon the AI Consortium model?

17 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: You know, we're
18 very excited about the momentum. You know,
19 one of the major federal grants that
20 University at Buffalo has is focused on
21 leveraging AI to provide better services for
22 students with disabilities, particularly
23 students with speech language issues.

24 So we're excited about that work. We

1 have a lot of eager faculty across our four
2 University Centers to take advantage of the
3 opportunities. The Governor has an
4 additional \$90 million in her budget for the
5 expansion of Empire AI to give our SUNY
6 researchers more access, as well as to bring
7 in some additional partners, particularly
8 from the Rochester area. So we're excited
9 about the direction.

10 The one risk is that the federal
11 climate around federal research is
12 complicated at the moment, to say the least.
13 But when I talk with members of Congress on
14 both sides of the aisle, they believe
15 strongly in the need for federal investment
16 to ensure the U.S. leads in artificial
17 intelligence vis-a-vis our international
18 competitors.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: That's great.

20 Chancellor Rodriguez, in terms of
21 CUNY, CUNY's involvement in AI, if you could
22 share some of that with us.

23 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

24 Yeah, thank you for the question. We are

1 partners in the Empire AI --

2 (Time clock sounds.)

3 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: And that question
4 won't get an answer, unfortunately.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: We will connect
6 later.

7 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:
8 We'll bring you on a tour to the city, and
9 then I can answer all your questions.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: I'm there. Thank
11 you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Hi. And actually
13 probably all during the day there will be
14 questions that you either don't have the time
15 to answer, or you may need to actually get
16 back to us. We two chairs would be
17 appreciative if you put those answers in
18 writing, and we'll make sure everybody gets
19 the answers.

20 So thank you. And I'm going to turn
21 it over to Chair Toby Stavisky for
22 10 minutes.

23 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. And
24 thank you, gentlemen, for coming from various

1 parts of the state.

2 First let me start with
3 Chancellor King. The Upstate and Downstate
4 medical schools and hospitals have been a
5 concern, particularly down -- I know Upstate
6 has issues also, but focusing on Downstate,
7 this has been going on for quite a while.

8 How long has it been on the radar
9 where Downstate has some very serious
10 problems? And the focus of my question is
11 how are you implementing it, at what rate?
12 Is there a timetable for the board to make
13 recommendations and so forth? Can you bring
14 us up-to-date on that issue?

15 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thanks for the
16 question, Senator.

17 So, you know, Downstate is a very
18 important institution. Particularly the
19 Health Sciences University is such a key
20 provider of diverse doctors and healthcare
21 professionals for New York State.

22 The hospital has been struggling
23 financially for two decades or more,
24 particularly intense struggles in recent

1 years. And when I was before you last year
2 we were headed towards running out of cash by
3 the summer and struggling with a building
4 with significant disrepair and real risk of
5 failure that would harm patients.

6 So fortunately, thanks to the
7 leadership of folks in this room and
8 Governor Hochul, last year the state
9 committed to cover the deficit, \$100 million,
10 and committed \$300 million in capital. This
11 year the Governor proposes another year of
12 deficit funding during a transition period
13 and an additional 450 million in capital. So
14 nearly a billion dollars invested.

15 Last year's budget created a community
16 advisory board, which is meeting currently.
17 We actually have a public hearing later this
18 week. And that community advisory board is
19 going to make recommendations by April 1st --
20 that's the timeline that was in last year's
21 budget -- on a path forward that will involve
22 inpatient and outpatient services to ensure
23 the long-term financial sustainability of the
24 hospital, I'm hopeful that we will have such

1 a plan by April 1st.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

3 A totally different topic -- and I do
4 have questions for CUNY also. Last year we
5 had, as you said, record increases in TAP,
6 particularly in the income eligibility, where
7 we raised it from -- family income from
8 \$80,000 a year to \$125,000 a year.

9 I don't know if you have the numbers
10 available. But how did that affect -- in
11 that cohort of income-eligibility students,
12 how did that affect your enrollment? Did you
13 see an increase as a result?

14 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: You know, we
15 think there are a multitude of factors in our
16 enrollment increases this year. But there's
17 no question that the expansion of TAP helped.
18 I'm very grateful to you for your leadership
19 on that.

20 We projected last year that it would
21 be upwards of 40,000 SUNY students who would
22 benefit directly from the TAP expansion,
23 either because of raising the income
24 threshold or doubling the minimum award. We

1 don't yet have final numbers for this year's
2 impact, but we believe that that 40,000 was a
3 good projection.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: For SUNY alone.

5 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: For SUNY alone.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: Good, thank you.

7 Those are students I believe who would have
8 gone perhaps out of state if it weren't for
9 that increase.

10 Lastly -- because I do want to ask our
11 chancellor from CUNY some questions -- there
12 was a story in the newspaper, in the New York
13 Times about a week or so ago talking about
14 the potential for federal cuts to the
15 research, to the sciences particularly, the
16 health sciences. How is that -- those
17 projected cuts, either at NIH or any other of
18 the agencies, how is that going to affect the
19 research capabilities at SUNY?

20 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We are very
21 worried about potential federal research
22 cuts. The proposed cuts at NIH would have
23 meant reductions in research on treatment and
24 cures for Alzheimer's, cancer, treatment and

1 monitoring of 9/11 first responders. It
2 would have cost \$80 million, roughly -- 79,
3 \$80 million to the SUNY system, just the NIH
4 cuts alone.

5 Fortunately, Attorney General Tish
6 James and 21 other attorneys general filed
7 litigation which secured a temporary
8 restraining order, so those cuts are not
9 moving forward currently. But we're working
10 hard to remind certainly the members of our
11 congressional delegation how much federal
12 research matters for the SUNY system. It's
13 upwards of \$700 million each year that we get
14 in federal research funding.

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

16 Now, turning to CUNY, a real quick
17 first question I always ask is what is your
18 faculty-to-student ratio and the number --
19 the percentage of adjuncts for CUNY
20 systemwide?

21 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So
22 systemwide, it is 61-39 in terms of full-time
23 faculty to part-time faculty.

24 And I know you also were wondering

1 about the class size ratio. And that has
2 gone down from about 27 students per class in
3 2019 to 23.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: So the ratio
5 presumably is improving for full-time
6 faculty.

7 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And
8 that has been in large part thanks to an
9 investment and support that we received from
10 you about two or three years ago. We had
11 about 700 new faculty lines that came into
12 the system through the support in the budget
13 process.

14 And that clearly has begun to shift us
15 to being less dependent on part-time faculty
16 and have more full-time faculty, which is a
17 goal which, you know, we aspire to keep
18 improving and I know is an interest of this
19 body too. So thank you for that question.

20 I also have TAP numbers and I have
21 research numbers, if you want those too.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: Sure. Yeah, you
23 can get them to us.

24 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

1 Okay.

2 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. You
3 know where to reach me.

4 (Laughter.)

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: You mentioned
6 capital investments. I serve, and
7 Assemblymember Seawright -- we both serve on
8 the CUNY Construction Fund. And I've asked a
9 lot of questions at the meetings. How many
10 new buildings are under consideration
11 compared to the critical maintenance that
12 much of the money is devoted to?

13 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So
14 the DASNY allocation last year was
15 523 million in terms of the projects. We are
16 working with DASNY very aggressively to
17 create a better timeline to be able to get to
18 projects and build them faster.

19 We have a goal of improving our state
20 of good repair up to about 60 percent, where
21 we are. As you know, many of our
22 buildings -- and many of you not only have
23 visited our buildings but, you know, there's
24 meetings of community leaders and community

1 groups that use our facilities. So you're
2 familiar with the campus.

3 So we are really trying to renovate
4 those campuses that are showing the wear and
5 tear of age, investing in some of the
6 critical infrastructure for them, which might
7 not be at some times the most sexy: HVAC,
8 elevators, escalators, all those things. But
9 those are the -- you know, the spine that
10 makes all the buildings work and to keep them
11 safe.

12 So we can give you a list of some of
13 the new programs. We have about
14 800 construction programs right now open all
15 throughout our 25 campuses, to give you a
16 sense of that scope. But we can give you a
17 breakdown, campus by campus, of both critical
18 maintenance and what's new.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, I'm troubled
20 by the lack of new construction. Some of the
21 buildings where I took classes as a graduate
22 student a very long time ago are still being
23 used. And a lot of this money is going for
24 HVAC repairs or replacements.

1 One other question, real -- well, I'll
2 have to save it. But could you tell us about
3 your career success model. And we can
4 continue in the second round if you don't get
5 to finish.

6 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So
7 thank you for your interest.

8 So with your support we've been able
9 for the past five years to do a number of
10 pilot projects in several campuses in this
11 effort to connect students to be thinking
12 about careers from even before they step on
13 our campus and all through their four years.

14 We want to do it in a systematic way.
15 So the program that we're proposing is
16 putting all those things together and making
17 sure that it's CUNY-wide. And I'll be happy
18 to talk more about it.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

20 CHAIR PRETLOW: Thank you.

21 Assemblywoman Hyndman. Ten minutes.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,
23 chair. I get 10 minutes.

24 (Laughter.)

1 CHAIR PRETLOW: You get 10 minutes.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Oh, I don't
3 know what to do. It's good being a chair.

4 So thank you both for your testimony.
5 It's been very productive meeting with you
6 and your staffs over the last couple of
7 weeks. So I have several questions, and you
8 can -- they apply to both of you, so you can
9 answer in any order.

10 The Black Leadership Institute, the
11 Asian Leadership Institute. And in light of
12 the president's "Dear Colleague" letter, are
13 these programs exempt because they're not --
14 because they're professional programs and not
15 for undergraduate or graduate programs?

16 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: The key thing
17 for those three programs is that they are
18 open to all applicants. So they were created
19 with a particular focus to ensure diversity
20 across our leadership, but each program is
21 open to all applicants.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay, great.

23 Chancellor Matos Rodríguez, I think a
24 year or two ago the City Council in New York

1 City added money for programs to increase
2 those students who had left college but had
3 some college credits. And I just wanted to
4 know is that -- how is that program going?
5 Particularly because I know there was a spike
6 in numbers of students who actually
7 reenrolled.

8 If you could tell us how that program
9 is going.

10 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

11 Well, thank you for the question. And, you
12 know, greetings from the 4,500 students who
13 are in your district from CUNY, 10,000 in
14 Senator Stavisky's district, and 500 in
15 Assemblyman Otis's district. I just want to
16 make sure that everybody feels the love of
17 your constituents.

18 And you're asking about CUNY
19 Reconnect.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Yes.

21 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

22 We're very, very, very proud of that program.
23 We've brought over 40,000 students over
24 two years. And it's part of our ongoing

1 strategic enrollment growth strategy.

2 There are close to a quarter-million
3 New Yorkers over the age of 25 that have some
4 college and no degree. Some of them might be
5 CUNY students who for different reasons were
6 not able to complete, but they're hungry for
7 the skills, the degrees particularly in
8 in-demand fields that we have. And
9 CUNY Reconnect has allowed us to be able to
10 go to them, talk to them, expose them to
11 different new fields, bring them back,
12 provide support -- in some of the cases it's
13 childcare for some of those that are older
14 and have started their families. For some of
15 them it's a schedule that combines more
16 part-time kinds of studies.

17 But it's been incredibly successful.
18 It's also been I think a great tool for us to
19 learn how to better serve those students,
20 right, to continue, to tap into that demand.

21 So we look forward to continuing that
22 program. And like I said, one of the
23 additional things is that as we engage that
24 population more, we keep adapting the way in

1 which we do things, servicing our students,
2 what do they need, to actually have less
3 students that will need to not be retained,
4 right, and go there.

5 So incredibly successful program. And
6 now we have the opportunity, with the
7 Governor's, you know, scholarship program for
8 community colleges, to continue to build on
9 that model of bringing, again, adults that
10 have stepped out of higher ed to come back
11 and go into fields that are high demand and
12 finish quickly and contribute to the economy.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: You also in
14 your testimony said that this past fall more
15 than 55,000 New York high school seniors
16 applied. Of those seniors that applied, how
17 many were admitted? And how many had to take
18 remedial courses, which sometimes is the
19 case?

20 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So I
21 have to get you the specific number of how
22 many sort of ended up applying and coming to
23 CUNY. Just on average, about 56 percent -- I
24 mean 26 percent of all the students that come

1 into CUNY require some kind of remedial
2 assistance. That number is about 56 when you
3 talk about the community college. So I can
4 give you a breakdown there.

5 But let me tell you that one of the
6 most encouraging things when you need sort of
7 to be energized about the work that we do,
8 was going to some of those high schools and
9 handing out that individualized letter to the
10 seniors saying: You already have a place at
11 the City University of New York. Now you
12 have to do your part, complete your
13 application, do that fee waiver, finish and
14 graduate, and there's a place for you.

15 The amount of pressure that our
16 high schoolers feel about connecting to
17 higher ed I think is something that our
18 generation didn't experience. And it's
19 phenomenal to be able to see them have a
20 clearer path to CUNY. And -- you know, and
21 the numbers of applicants increase
22 significantly, and I think they're part of
23 the enrollment growth that we saw.

24 I think also part of the dent that we

1 did in navigating the FAFSA debacle was that
2 we have started earlier in engaging those
3 students so it allows to -- when FAFSA was
4 running slow, to stay with them and be
5 supportive. So we want to continue to build
6 on that.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay.

8 Chancellor King, the ACE and ASAP
9 programs, the Executive Budget cut some of
10 that. Do you want us to restore so that you
11 can add staff or counselors, or is this just
12 to maintain what you already have?

13 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: So in the
14 Executive Budget the Governor proposes
15 12 million for ASAP and ACE, which makes the
16 funding permanent. Because we originally
17 funded those programs through the
18 Transformation Fund, which was one-time
19 funding that we got two years ago. And so
20 it's -- we're encouraged that that funding is
21 permanent, and that will allow us to grow the
22 program. And the Governor has conveyed that
23 she intends to allow us to grow it even
24 further next year, given the track record of

1 improving completion.

2 Where we did see a cut is the EOP
3 program, which was cut by \$1.9 million. That
4 is a program where we would love to see that
5 restored. And we would also love to be able
6 to grow the EOP program.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I visited
8 Queens College last week, and a couple of the
9 students said that with the ACE and ASAP they
10 feel that there's more work that needs to be
11 done as far as increasing the number of
12 counselors. They said on the front end when
13 they enter the program they feel they have a
14 lot of support, but as the years go on -- a
15 couple of them were in their second year and
16 they felt that they needed to expand the
17 number of counselors.

18 Is that something that that funding
19 would allow you to do?

20 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: In
21 our end, absolutely yes. And I want to thank
22 you for that question and answer that in two
23 ways.

24 In our case -- the funding that is in

1 the Executive Budget for ASAP and ACE, in our
2 case we probably use it more towards
3 stabilizing ACE. Our 3,000 students that we
4 have on ACE now are paid for in a combination
5 of state funding and philanthropic dollars.
6 We got investors to say this is a worthwhile
7 program, give us some of that money.
8 Eventually the state will come in and take
9 over that.

10 So we want to go back to that promise
11 and do that to stabilize particularly ACE.
12 It is a great practice, right, to be able to
13 attract philanthropic donors in that manner.

14 The other thing, Assemblywoman, that
15 we're also thinking about is how do we learn
16 from all these programs which cause those
17 students to have additional support. You
18 were talking about advisors and counselors,
19 right. And how do we learn from that so that
20 it is not just the students who belong in
21 those programs that can benefit from what we
22 have learned in supporting those programs
23 that we do can do that on scale across the
24 system. Right?

1 So it's a very pertinent question and
2 we're working very hard on that. But it is
3 an issue. Thank you.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

5 And lastly, the Governor's Opportunity
6 Promise Scholarship, do the community
7 colleges have the capacity and resources to
8 take on these additional students? And I
9 think -- I ask that because a lot of the
10 community colleges have said that they need
11 additional help. It's not just the tuition
12 for them, it's also building these programs
13 up to capacity.

14 And I don't know how much -- you know,
15 if you can't answer fully in the time
16 allotted, I'd appreciate a follow-up.

17 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

18 They're ready. One of the great things in
19 the way the funding was constructed is that
20 there's funding there to support the students
21 but also to support us in being able to get
22 faculty, counselors, the additional
23 infrastructure to do it right.

24 I think the community colleges are

1 really, really happy about this opportunity.

2 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'd say our
3 community colleges are excited about the
4 opportunity. We are ready to serve more
5 adult learners.

6 That said, our Board of Trustees
7 proposed additional operating dollars for
8 community colleges to help with the
9 development of these high-cost workforce
10 development programs. Take, for example,
11 nursing. There's a lot that you need to
12 invest in equipment, in the faculty.

13 And we certainly look forward to a
14 continuing conversation about the operating
15 needs of the community colleges.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18 Next is our ranker, Senator Griffo.

19 SENATOR GALLIVAN: Good morning,
20 gentlemen.

21 Chancellor King, we heard you talk
22 about -- and I respect the need at Downstate
23 Medical Center. And we heard you talk about
24 almost a billion dollars in investment that's

1 being made there, between modernization,
2 revitalization and operating funds.

3 When Commissioner McDonald was here,
4 he talked about the unique and specific needs
5 of Upstate Medical Center, and the unique
6 role that they play as a critical access as
7 well as an academic institution. And while
8 he was showing his love, he couldn't show the
9 money.

10 So what I would ask you today is what
11 will you and can you do to advocate for that
12 parity and to include more additional
13 resources for Upstate Medical Center in this
14 budget?

15 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thanks,
16 Senator Griffo. So the good news is that,
17 you know, the Governor includes \$200 million
18 in her Executive Budget for a project that we
19 proposed together with Upstate which would
20 allow them to build a \$450 million annex to
21 replace their emergency room, which is
22 severely out of date, to add additional
23 operating room capacity, and to add a new
24 burn unit.

1 We think that's an important project.
2 I actually joined the Governor for a visit to
3 Upstate about two weeks ago. She walked
4 through the emergency room, she sat with
5 President Dewan and the hospital CEO and
6 talked through the plans for the annex. She
7 understands the need. And we're going to
8 continue to advocate for Upstate. It's a
9 crucial healthcare provider, as you know, for
10 all of Central New York.

11 I will say one thing that would be
12 helpful in the short term, the Governor's
13 budget does not include covering the debt
14 service for our hospitals, and that is a very
15 concrete step that could be added, as it has
16 been by the Legislature in recent years.
17 That would be incredibly helpful.

18 SENATOR GRIFFO: But I also think we
19 need additional financial resources there
20 this year, based on that. And hopefully you
21 understand that, as well as Commissioner
22 McDonald, and in consultation and
23 cooperation, maybe we can see that additional
24 money as the final budget is presented.

1 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yes, I would
2 say the Department of Health has an
3 application before them for funding that
4 would help Upstate. It's about a
5 \$200 million project, a partnership between
6 Upstate and Oswego Health. And so I hope the
7 Health Department will take the opportunity
8 to contribute to the effort at Upstate.

9 SENATOR GRIFFO: Commissioner
10 Rodríguez, last fall Judge Lippman, at the
11 request of the Governor, submitted a report
12 that outlined 13 recommendations for CUNY to
13 embrace campuses to make changes to make it
14 safer for Jewish students and faculty.

15 Have you implemented those changes?

16 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Well, thank you
17 for the question. And obviously, you know,
18 we are extremely concerned about issues of
19 hate, antisemitism, students not feeling safe
20 on the campus, so we welcomed the review by
21 Judge Lippman.

22 Some of the recommendations were
23 things that we had been working on even
24 before the recommendations came. And we have

1 embraced the 13 recommendations. To give you
2 some examples of some of the things that we
3 have done, a big thing on the judge's report
4 is centralizing of the system to issue
5 complaints against discrimination and
6 harassment, the quick turnaround in the
7 investigations associated with that. Bigger
8 uniformity and training for the different
9 campus staffers that navigate those
10 responses -- chief diversity officers, the
11 investigators who participate in that.

12 All of those things we've done. We
13 launched the Center for Inclusive and
14 Equal Opportunity that is centralizing all
15 that. It would allow us to be more efficient
16 in responding to all the other complaints,
17 have better data and monitor it to be able to
18 be accountable to you and to others on the
19 work that's being done, and to be much more
20 effective in uniform training all across the
21 system.

22 So we're very much working on that.
23 Thank you for the question.

24 SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you.

1 And one quick question for both of you
2 to end this. You all were -- your optimism
3 on enrollment is encouraging, but we still
4 see campuses facing significant deficits. So
5 do you foresee or anticipate, either one of
6 you, any potential consolidation or closure
7 of campuses in the upcoming year?

8 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We do not. And
9 we're completely committed to the 64
10 communities where we have SUNY campuses.

11 And I would say the handful of
12 campuses we're most worried about are making
13 real progress. Potsdam, for example, a
14 campus that lost a lot of enrollment, saw
15 growth last year and has cut their deficit by
16 about 62 percent over the last two years.

17 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And
18 I'll echo that on our end, we had nine
19 schools of high fiscal concern when we began
20 this journey on the structural deficit.
21 We're down to five.

22 On the enrollment front, even though
23 some folks talk about demographics, I keep
24 quoting that quarter-million of New Yorkers

1 with some college and no college degree --
2 plenty of people out there to benefit from
3 higher ed.

4 SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you.

5 CHAIR PRETLOW: Thank you.

6 We've been joined by Assemblymember
7 Kelles, Assemblymember Sayegh, and
8 Assemblymember Simon.

9 I'm now calling on Assemblymember Ra,
10 as ranker on Ways and Means, for five
11 minutes.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And before you start
13 the clock, if I can acknowledge we've been
14 joined by Assemblymembers Gray and Pirozzolo.

15 Good morning, gentlemen. Thanks for
16 being here with us.

17 I do have a few questions, but
18 Chancellor King, I do want to quickly
19 mention -- I know you're aware of it -- me
20 and several colleagues wrote another letter
21 to you last week about Nassau Community
22 College. We've been without a full-time
23 president for many years. The board has
24 expressed a very clear intention to keep

1 Dr. Conzatti, who has been with the
2 institution for many years, is an alumnus of
3 the institution.

4 And I really would urge you again to
5 take action with regard to that, because we
6 need a full-time president. I know that
7 there's been some communication that, you
8 know, after a certain amount of time that the
9 person would have to be removed or not
10 considered. But I would urge you to approve
11 her because the board has expressed a very
12 clear preference for her.

13 With that said, I want to talk about
14 what my colleague was mentioning. In
15 particular, I was speaking with my local
16 community college a few weeks ago about this
17 Opportunity Scholarship. And we all know
18 that our community colleges have experienced
19 a decline in enrollment. It's coming back
20 up, which is a positive. And this is an
21 opportunity, I think, for them to get more
22 students in.

23 But as my colleague had mentioned,
24 some of these programs that are part of this

1 are very expensive programs to operate. And
2 when we look at our funding, as you know, the
3 traditional community college model in a lot
4 of the state, there's the third local, the
5 third state, the third student. And that
6 student third is probably 40 percent or more
7 right now.

8 So how can we better have parity in
9 terms of the support we are providing to the
10 community college student with what we're
11 providing to the students that are at
12 four-year SUNY institutions?

13 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Look,
14 additional operating aid for community
15 colleges would be very helpful. I look at
16 last year's example; it's the first operating
17 aid increase in nearly a decade, \$8 million.
18 We were able to deploy \$5 million of that to
19 expanding healthcare workforce development
20 programs. Some of our community colleges
21 were able to dramatically increase the
22 capacity of their nursing programs -- Rad
23 Tech, other areas of real need for our
24 hospitals and healthcare providers. Three

1 million dollars we put towards mental health
2 services, which is a critical need at our
3 community colleges.

4 The SUNY Board proposed a \$30 million
5 operating aid increase for the community
6 colleges, with a focus on programs like
7 advanced manufacturing, healthcare,
8 cybersecurity and IT, renewable energy jobs.
9 That additional operating support would help
10 the community colleges reach even more adult
11 learners.

12 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

13 Again, we -- in our case, the partnership is
14 with the City of New York, and we face some
15 things there that have been challenging in
16 terms of support for the community colleges.
17 Enrollment is growing, which is -- was a
18 concern. I mean, there was a sector that was
19 most effective because of the pandemic
20 nationwide and in both of our systems.

21 We've been getting a lot better,
22 bringing a lot more of those adult learners
23 and folks who have been out of the workforce
24 and sort of coming back. And so I remain

1 very optimistic about the capacity to sort of
2 be able to build up our enrollment in that
3 way.

4 I also believe that the scholarship
5 program that's been proposed by the Governor
6 is going to be a very good marketing tool
7 that's going to bring us, you know, more
8 students of every kind coming to the
9 community college. And when you think that
10 in our case 75 percent or so of the community
11 college students de facto go tuition-free,
12 between TAP and Pell, right, we feel that any
13 student that comes our way, either because
14 they're curious about the new program or they
15 end up going to another area, we're going to
16 be able to service them well.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you, and
18 especially mentioning the nursing. Obviously
19 it's beneficial to everybody. It's a field
20 that we know there is a shortage of
21 professionals in right now.

22 Lastly, I just want to reiterate what
23 Senator Griffo was talking about with the
24 Lippman report and the implementation.

1 Chancellor Matos Rodríguez, the
2 feedback I get from constituents, whether
3 they're on the faculty, staff, students, is
4 that not enough is being done and they
5 continue to not feel safe as Jewish
6 professors, students on campus. So we really
7 need strong action to make those students
8 feel safe on our campuses.

9 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:
10 Fully committed. Thank you.

11 CHAIR PRETLOW: Thank you.

12 Senator John Liu.

13 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
14 Thank you, Chancellors, for joining
15 us, as always.

16 Chancellor King, I have some follow-up
17 questions from some correspondence we had
18 earlier this past year, and I had not gotten
19 any satisfactory response from you and your
20 team.

21 The questions surround the -- this
22 no-bid contract that SUNY entered into with a
23 major publishing company. The concerns were
24 that, number one, entering into this kind of

1 major contract on a no-bid basis leads to --
2 certainly encourages certain kinds of
3 monopolistic tendencies. And that's
4 something I think we would agree we do not
5 want to see in academic publishing.

6 The second concern is that this major
7 publisher has been accused of and in some
8 ways shown to have acceded to censorship by
9 foreign governments. And, you know, that
10 obviously raises a huge amount of questions
11 and concern.

12 Has there been anything done with
13 regard to this particular no-bid contract?
14 And has your office looked into whether this
15 contract may be promoting a monopoly and if
16 the -- whether the censorship concerns are
17 founded?

18 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thanks,
19 Senator, for the question. A couple of
20 pieces of context.

21 One, we don't have a contract where we
22 are making purchases from this company. It's
23 a setup where we have done a contract with
24 them to create pricing for our campuses that

1 can choose to purchase from this company so
2 that the prices are lower --

3 SENATOR LIU: But it's the only
4 company that all 64 campuses have ready
5 access to. So while it's not a strict
6 requirement, it's really a very strong
7 inducement for all campuses.

8 I mean, SUNY is not -- it's not a fast
9 food franchise where you're trying to lower
10 costs for all your campuses, right? You want
11 to make sure that there's a long-term
12 preservation of academic freedom.

13 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Certainly
14 strongly support academic freedom. And our
15 campuses are purchasing textbooks and
16 articles from a variety of sources.

17 The company that you're describing is
18 the sole publisher of several academic
19 journals that are widely used throughout
20 higher education.

21 SENATOR LIU: And some of those
22 publications have been changed to accede to
23 demands by foreign governments in terms of
24 some of the content. Is that something

1 you're aware of?

2 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I'm aware that
3 that has been alleged. And that's really a
4 State Department issue more than it is a SUNY
5 issue.

6 SENATOR LIU: You mean a United States
7 State Department? I think --

8 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah.

9 SENATOR LIU: -- it's a SUNY issue. I
10 mean, if you have materials, academic
11 materials that are being censored by foreign
12 governments, that's a consideration that SUNY
13 should take into account when spreading all
14 this -- or disseminating this material to all
15 64 campuses.

16 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: The contract
17 that we have has gone through all of the
18 state processes. What you're describing is a
19 foreign policy question, not a state
20 contracting question.

21 SENATOR LIU: Okay. Thank you.

22 CHAIR PRETLOW: Assemblyman Eachus.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you,
24 Chair Pretlow.

1 Chancellor King, you have already
2 mentioned about the federal Congress looking
3 at AI money. You also talked about the
4 federal research money and the possibilities
5 of those being there or not being there.

6 With this totally absurd outlook by
7 the federal government on DEI, have you
8 calculated how much money possibly we could
9 lose in that situation?

10 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Well, you know,
11 in many ways, given SUNY's mission, the work
12 on diversity is core to who we are, what we
13 do at SUNY.

14 The federal government issued, the
15 president issued these executive orders that
16 have been challenged in court. There was a
17 preliminary injunction that was granted on
18 Friday night which has stopped action on
19 those.

20 We think that our work on diversity
21 and inclusion is 100 percent consistent with
22 our tradition. And the missives from the
23 federal government to date have not been
24 consistent with the law.

1 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: So you're as lost
2 as the rest of us are on what's going to
3 happen.

4 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Look, that --

5 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: All right, thank
6 you.

7 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: That's -- for
8 the whole higher ed sector, that's right.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Yeah. You talked
10 about these, but I just want to go back to
11 it. I believe last year we talked about 17
12 to 19 campuses that were in fiscal jeopardy.
13 You mentioned Potsdam has improved.

14 What about all the others, how are
15 they doing?

16 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, so the 17
17 is a list that is not ours. I mean, we
18 identified -- in our Long-Term Enrollment and
19 Sustainability Report that we provided to the
20 Governor and the Legislature in December of
21 '23, we identified five campuses that we felt
22 had significant structural deficits that
23 needed to be addressed.

24 Potsdam, I mentioned, has cut theirs

1 by 62 percent. Fredonia has taken important
2 steps on financial responsibility and has cut
3 their deficit in half. SUNY Delhi has
4 eliminated their deficit, now has a surplus,
5 and has seen significant enrollment growth.

6 Buffalo State is earlier on in their
7 financial sustainability initiative, but they
8 did identify 37 programs that they're
9 discontinuing that enroll, between those
10 37 programs, a total of 34 students. When
11 they complete that process, they will be in a
12 much better position. They've cut their
13 deficit by a quarter. We think they're going
14 to make rapid progress.

15 And then there's SUNY Maritime, which
16 actually had an operating surplus this year.
17 And the key for SUNY Maritime is our work
18 together on supporting the Summer at Sea,
19 which is a unique feature where the students
20 at SUNY Maritime who are pursuing licensure
21 have to pay additional -- the additional cost
22 of a summer at sea. And we're working on a
23 revolving loan fund to help address that.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: You should take

1 credit for those. Thank you very much for
2 leading the way with that.

3 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you.
4 Thank you. Appreciate it.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
6 Senator Oberacker.

7 SENATOR OBERACKER: Good morning.
8 Welcome to Albany, Chancellors.

9 And my first question of course is for
10 Chancellor King, you know, as someone who has
11 a rather large footprint of SUNYs in my
12 district -- six that are directly in my
13 51st Senate District, two just outside, for a
14 total of eight.

15 I've got a quick question, and it
16 really applies more to the technology side.
17 What are SUNY's plans for securing additional
18 capital budget support for its technical
19 colleges?

20 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: The capital
21 needs are significant at SUNY. You know, we
22 have -- and Chancellor Matos Rodríguez
23 mentioned this for CUNY -- at SUNY we have a
24 \$9 billion critical maintenance backlog. The

1 Governor's budget proposes 550 million for
2 critical maintenance and 200 million for a
3 lab innovation fund.

4 We're grateful for that. But if we
5 want to ensure the long-term success of
6 SUNY's institutions, including our technical
7 colleges, we need more capital investment.
8 You know, at SUNY Delhi, as you know, and I
9 know you care deeply about SUNY Delhi, they
10 could expand significantly their mechatronics
11 program, but they need space to do it.

12 And so we -- our Board of Trustees
13 proposed a five-year \$10.7 billion capital
14 plan that would address critical maintenance,
15 clean energy and lab space.

16 We used to have, at SUNY, a five-year
17 capital plan before the 2008 financial
18 crisis. We think it's time to go back to
19 that kind of long-term planning.

20 SENATOR OBERACKER: Great. And thank
21 you for the shout out to SUNY Delhi. I am a
22 SUNY Delhi alumnus -- go, Broncos -- so
23 anything that we could do, I'd be more than
24 happy, Chancellor, to take that into my

1 51st Senate District if you have any extra
2 billions hanging around.

3 So -- and quickly to Chancellor
4 Rodríguez, as a member of the Minority
5 Conference, and I am on the -- yeah, I'm
6 trying to think of it. Isn't that great when
7 the -- when it comes down. I am on the
8 Antisemitism Task Force, and I just wanted to
9 thank you for your continued response to
10 those issues on your campuses. Anything that
11 we could do to of course maintain the safety
12 is by far I think priority one.

13 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

14 Well, thank you. And like I said, back to
15 the question, we're committed to the
16 Lippman Report provided a good blueprint,
17 right, of a number of things that either we
18 were doing that we need to continue to do --
19 that is a personal commitment of mine.

20 And again, we are in very polarizing
21 times and we need to find ways to bring
22 people together. And this is one particular
23 thing also that, given the history of CUNY
24 and the Jewish community, is of particular

1 matter to me. So thank you.

2 SENATOR OBERACKER: Thank you for the
3 job you're doing.

4 CHAIR PRETLOW: Thank you.
5 Assemblymember Clark.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Thank you.

7 And I will address my questions to
8 Chancellor King, who I actually first want to
9 thank for your commitment to Monroe Community
10 College in my district, particularly on
11 creative solutions around hunger and ensuring
12 that the students there are getting their
13 basic needs met, which we know is a
14 increasingly growing problem that we are all
15 looking for more and more ways to address.
16 So first want to thank you, and now some
17 questions.

18 I want to echo -- and I know it's been
19 brought up on these very expensive programs.
20 From what we're hearing in community
21 colleges, I think we all agree that finding
22 ways to get more people access, particularly
23 in high-demand fields, is something we all
24 want. And we have talked a little bit about

1 the expense that -- what we've been told by
2 the community colleges is that just covering
3 the tuition alone is going to make them
4 operate at deficits every day because they're
5 such high-need programs, they're lower-ratio.

6 I know you've already sort of captured
7 that that is an issue and something that
8 you've flagged.

9 Is there a way to get a number for us
10 as we start developing the budget about what
11 really giving the needed dollars to support
12 those programs would be, so that we can
13 adequately ensure that our community colleges
14 aren't losing money every day when they start
15 operating these at a bigger --

16 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah,
17 appreciate the question, Assemblywoman. And
18 thank you for your support for the work that
19 we're doing on basic needs, including at
20 Monroe.

21 Look, our SUNY Board of Trustees
22 proposed a \$30 million operating aid increase
23 with detailed plans for how that would create
24 more slots in healthcare, advanced

1 manufacturing, the semiconductor industry,
2 renewable energy and green jobs, and IT and
3 cybersecurity. And that's investments in
4 both faculty and equipment to support those
5 programs.

6 I will say, you know, our hope is that
7 the Governor's free tuition proposal will
8 drive an enrollment increase that will bring
9 new revenue with it. When Massachusetts
10 implemented a similar initiative, they saw an
11 8 percent enrollment increase. So we're
12 encouraged by what the Governor is proposing.

13 And you're right, there are additional
14 operating support needs at the community
15 colleges.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Our big concern
17 is that if the tuition isn't covering what
18 community colleges need to operate that
19 program every day, even by increasing it
20 two-, threefold isn't going to solve that
21 problem. And that we all want to be
22 cognizant of it as we start figuring out
23 final numbers for the budget and what we need
24 to do.

1 My final quick question -- and it's on
2 room and board. We've done a lot around TAP,
3 we've done a lot around tuition, ensuring
4 people have more and more access, more
5 families get access. As someone who is the
6 parent of a child currently in a SUNY
7 college, but looking even across the country,
8 room and board in New York State is
9 considerably higher at our universities. So
10 as we've done a lot to cap tuition, I still
11 feel like this is an access point that's
12 really hindering our kids.

13 Is there anything being done around
14 it?

15 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, look, our
16 campuses are very sensitive to trying to keep
17 the costs of room and board down. But it is
18 a challenge. I do think additional state
19 financial aid for students would be helpful,
20 particularly for our lowest-income students.

21 CHAIR PRETLOW: Thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

23 Senator Rachel May.

24 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

1 Chancellor King, thanks for being here
2 and for answering our questions.

3 I have two, of a thousand, but I'll
4 keep it to two.

5 Just a couple of weeks ago when NIH
6 announced that it was planning a change to
7 F&A reimbursements, you estimated that that
8 would cost SUNY \$79 million. That one is on
9 hold, as I understand it now. But what are
10 you doing to plan for a federal government
11 that wants to take us back to the Dark Ages
12 when it comes to scientific research?

13 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, look.
14 you know, in the short run we are definitely
15 leaning into the litigation strategy. We
16 worked very closely with the Attorney General
17 to prepare the materials for the litigation
18 that got the temporary restraining order.

19 In the long run, it will be very
20 challenging to replace these federal dollars.
21 The federal government is one of the crucial
22 investors in healthcare research across the
23 country. And if we don't have those funds,
24 we will ultimately be unable to continue many

1 of these research projects. And it will
2 make --

3 SENATOR MAY: Are you engaging with,
4 say, Republican lawmakers in parts of the
5 state where it's going to affect their
6 constituents as well, to get them to push
7 back against what's happening?

8 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yes. And I
9 went down to Washington the week before last
10 to meet with members of our delegation, both
11 sides of the aisle, to talk about the ways in
12 which the research dollars not only drive
13 important advances in healthcare but also
14 ensure jobs in their districts. So we're
15 going to keep making that case.

16 SENATOR MAY: Let me get to my other
17 question, which is I was startled when I was
18 talking with SUNY -- ESF staff and students
19 that they were saying that being part of the
20 SUNY system comes with a lot of obligations
21 in terms of hiring, tuition benefits they can
22 offer, various things like that --
23 overhead -- but not the kinds of benefits
24 that you might expect. So being able to have

1 subscriptions to academic journals that are
2 being done systemwide, bringing down the cost
3 in various ways.

4 What are you doing to make sure that
5 the campuses feel the benefit of being part
6 of the system and not just the restrictions?

7 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah. So over
8 the last two years we've been very committed
9 to growing shared-service arrangements. The
10 first was around our Office of General
11 Counsel, where we added additional staff at
12 SUNY system, and we've been able to produce
13 hundreds of thousands of dollars in savings
14 on the cost of outside firms by bringing that
15 work in-house and having it shared across the
16 SUNY system.

17 We are launching --

18 SENATOR MAY: While I have just a
19 couple of seconds, tele-mental health is one
20 of the arenas where they shouldn't have to
21 come up with separate contracts.

22 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: That's right.
23 That's right. And we've been doing
24 telepsychiatry through Upstate Medical,

1 actually, which has been very helpful to
2 campuses.

3 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

5 We've been joined by Assemblymember
6 O'Pharrow.

7 And next on my list for questioning is
8 Assemblymember Smullen, five minutes.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Thank you,
10 Chair.

11 The first question is for
12 Chancellor King. We talked a little bit
13 about the capital plan that SUNY is in the
14 process of building or rebuilding. It only
15 makes sense; strategic planning is how you
16 plan for the future that will inevitably be
17 here in five, 10, 15, 20 years. This year is
18 750 million or so that's in there.

19 One of the concerns I have is that
20 some of the other mandates from the state,
21 from the Climate Leadership and Community
22 Protection Act for electrification of the
23 campuses. SUNY has about 40 percent of all
24 the state buildings in New York State. How

1 are you dealing with the inflationary costs?

2 And how are you dealing with the
3 actual nuts and bolts of translating money
4 into capital projects and then having to deal
5 with this electrification issue?

6 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Look, our work
7 over the last few years as we've done
8 critical maintenance projects, we've been
9 trying to shift over to clean energy in order
10 to realize the energy cost savings over time.
11 And that has worked. You know, we will
12 hit -- we are on track to hit the --

13 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: For efficiency
14 it works.

15 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: That's right.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: I wouldn't agree
17 with the production of electricity, but --

18 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: So from the
19 standpoint of our planning for our
20 construction work, we are trying to think
21 about how can we gain long-term energy
22 savings. And we will hit our 40 percent
23 reduction in greenhouse gas targets by 2030
24 at our current pace. So we're excited about

1 that.

2 There are some great opportunities to
3 realize additional savings like geothermal
4 networks, which we can do very efficiently at
5 SUNY because you don't have to negotiate with
6 every individual property owner, we have a
7 whole community of buildings that we can move
8 over to geothermal.

9 But that takes up-front capital
10 investment, and that's part of why we need
11 this long-term capital plan, so that we can
12 embark on those kinds of projects.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Okay. Well,
14 thank you.

15 Now, I've heard both of you express
16 reluctance about complying with federal
17 directives having to do with federal research
18 dollars. That's actually a requirement by
19 the law. And you've expressed that you're,
20 you know, hopeful that the litigation is
21 going to prevent you from having to comply
22 with federal statute.

23 What happens when you lose that? For
24 the CUNY chancellor, a lot of the issues have

1 to do with antisemitism on campus and making
2 sure that federal laws are actually complied
3 with. How is CUNY dealing with its amount of
4 research dollars? How many research dollars
5 does it have at risk? And what are you going
6 to do if you lose that lawsuit?

7 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So
8 let me -- do you want --

9 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Just
10 quickly. Respectfully, Assemblyman, I think
11 one of the reasons the temporary restraining
12 order was granted so quickly is that the law
13 is clearly on the side of the federal
14 government following through on what Congress
15 appropriated and the clear language that
16 Congress provided about NIH funding. So --

17 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: It's not all NIH
18 funding, though. I know --

19 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: No, I'm just on
20 that NIH issue.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: -- there's a
22 variety of funding sources.

23 I'm saying as a whole the federal
24 funding to state educational establishments

1 is set by the federal government. And if
2 they say it has to be a certain way, then you
3 have to comply unless you're directed
4 otherwise by a court. So that was my
5 question to the CUNY chancellor.

6 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So
7 thank you for the question.

8 So, I mean, your first question was
9 what would be sort of the -- we receive about
10 \$200 million in federal grants and contracts.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: How much is that
12 out of your total budget?

13 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: That
14 is -- it's a significant chunk. How's that
15 in terms of --

16 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: I mean, is it
17 10 percent, 20 percent? What's your budget?

18 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I
19 mean, it's 4 billion on the state side, so --

20 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: Thirty-five
21 percent.

22 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So
23 you can do the math. So it's 200 on the
24 federal side in terms of direct grants and

1 contracts, right? So a significant chunk of
2 the work that we do.

3 Again, on dollars from NIH and those
4 grants, we're actually following the law.
5 And the law right now says the courts are
6 deciding it and the path will be shown
7 forward.

8 On the money around indirect, a couple
9 of things. A, there was bipartisan support
10 for the indirect formula in a prior attempt
11 to lower it in the Appropriations Committee
12 in Congress, right. So this is something
13 that folks have embraced historically, to
14 your point about thinking about long term.

15 And the "Dear Colleague" letter is a
16 guidance letter that we are in compliance
17 with all federal and state laws. If there's
18 a clear sense of someone that says that we
19 don't, then we'll make the change when that
20 moment happens. But until that happens,
21 we've been working around all applicable
22 federal and state and city laws.

23 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

24 ASSEMBLYMAN SMULLEN: I urge you to

1 comply. Thanks.

2 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5 Senator Gounardes.

6 SENATOR GOUNARDES: There we go.

7 Good morning. Thank you, both
8 chancellors.

9 I want to start by asking you both the
10 same question as it relates to the Governor's
11 community college Opportunity Promise
12 Program, it's my understanding that there are
13 some programs at both institutions that are
14 not currently eligible, even though they
15 offer associate's degrees similar to a
16 community college at a senior college, that
17 are currently not eligible for that.

18 Can you speak to that and how many
19 programs at each of your institutions are not
20 eligible for the Governor's proposal?

21 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So
22 on our end we have three campuses that grant
23 associate's degrees: The College of
24 Staten Island, New York City Tech, and Medgar

1 Evers College. In my testimony we
2 respectfully ask that as the process in the
3 budget goes, that additional funding is
4 provided so that the associate degree
5 programs in those three schools would be --
6 the same rules will apply to them that would
7 apply to the community colleges.

8 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: And for us, the
9 issue is really the technical colleges. So
10 it's Delhi and Cobleskill and Canton and
11 Farmingdale and Alfred State and Morrisville.

12 So we think it's between \$1 million
13 and \$3 million in additional funding each
14 year to cover the costs of including those
15 campuses in the free tuition.

16 SENATOR GOUNARDES: So 1 to 3 million
17 for SUNY.

18 And for CUNY, Chancellor Rodríguez?

19 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I
20 think it's 4 -- let me just -- it's in the
21 testimony, 4.8 I think is the number. Give
22 me a sec. Four million.

23 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Four million,
24 okay. So \$5 million, ballpark, including all

1 associate-degree programs that meet the
2 course of study criteria. Thank you.

3 Chancellor King, you had mentioned in
4 response to Senator Stavisky about Downstate.
5 I'm skeptical of the timeline. The advisory
6 committee that was formed in last year's
7 budget was just convened in December. They
8 met for the first time last month. We're
9 talking about coming up with a final plan by
10 April 1st. That's six weeks away.

11 Is that an adequate timeline to
12 actually ensure the future stability of this
13 incredibly crucial institution to
14 Central Brooklyn?

15 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We are working
16 towards that deadline that was agreed to last
17 year.

18 I do think we can put forward a plan
19 by April 1st that balances inpatient and
20 outpatient activities and the goal of
21 financial sustainability long term. But
22 we'll work within the schedule that is agreed
23 to by the Governor and Legislature.

24 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Okay, I'm

1 skeptical we'll meet that goal, but hopefully
2 you guys can prove me wrong.

3 And Chancellor Rodríguez, in my last
4 few seconds or moments here, can you talk a
5 little bit about the issue about transfer
6 eligibility with students? I know some of
7 the students I had last semester actually
8 raised this issue with me directly, the
9 confusion over transferring credits,
10 et cetera.

11 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:
12 Well, that's going to be gone. With the
13 transfer initiative now beginning, every --
14 if you're a community college major, all the
15 courses, you know, transfer immediately, not
16 just gen ed. Everything that you did
17 transfers to the senior colleges. And that
18 is addressing a big concern --

19 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: -- that's very
21 good.

22 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: --
23 of the over 6,336 members in your district.

24 SENATOR GOUNARDES: Thank you.

1 CHAIR PRETLOW: I hate to cut you off,
2 Chancellor, but I've got to move along. The
3 yellow light means something: 30 seconds.
4 When you see the -- you asked the question
5 too late.

6 (Laughter.)

7 SENATOR GOUNARDES: They were so good
8 at their answers.

9 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman
10 Epstein.

11 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you. And
12 thank you both for your work.

13 Just to both of you, the students with
14 disabilities, we have about over 100,000 in
15 our campuses across the state. We've seen
16 some money directly to SUNY. The Governor
17 cut back on money, the \$4 million we had in
18 the budget. Will you help and support in
19 trying to increase money for students with
20 disabilities in this budget?

21 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Look, there's
22 certainly more need than we have resources.
23 We were able, because of the support from --

24 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Chancellor, you

1 know I have only three minutes. So is the
2 answer yes?

3 (Laughter.)

4 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: The answer is
5 yes. Just want to make the point that we
6 were able to put \$10 million in ongoing
7 recurring funding towards support for
8 students with disabilities, thanks to the
9 support -- your support and the support of
10 the Governor.

11 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And
12 we've asked for 4 million in our budget
13 request.

14 And the transformational work with our
15 CUNY Accommodate, the new system that is
16 revolutionizing how we serve those students,
17 is only going to generate additional demand.
18 So fully supportive of that.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So we've heard a
20 lot from students about the ability to stay
21 in school. We talked about expanding paid
22 internships as well as the MetroCard proposal
23 I've seen Chancellor Matos Rodríguez put
24 together. Do you think that's going to --

1 can we move forward on those this year to try
2 to get more money for students so they can
3 actually finish school?

4 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

5 Well, I mean, we're fully supportive -- I
6 mean, in the budget request I think it's
7 about half a million dollars that our
8 Student Senate leadership put together to do
9 a pilot to sort of continue to expand.

10 We've seen the results of what a
11 MetroCard can do in terms of not just to
12 students being in school, but also
13 participating. So we're fully supportive of
14 that pilot.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And paid
16 internships as well, expanding paid
17 internships?

18 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: As
19 you know, that is -- patron saint of paid
20 internships. That is huge on our end.

21 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So can I ask you
22 on the capital, just on 17 Lex, \$250 million
23 you put in for 17 Lex, is any of that capital
24 covered by the Governor increasing capital

1 that she's proposed in the budget at this
2 point?

3 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: That
4 was like one of those commercials going too
5 fast. Can you repeat the question again,
6 please?

7 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Seventeen Lex,
8 you'd asked for 250 million in capital. Of
9 the proposed 500 million the Governor's
10 proposed increasing capital by this year, is
11 any of that going to 17 Lex?

12 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I
13 mean, we try to -- we're committed to that
14 project. We have to see at the end of the
15 journey how much capital we end up with at
16 the end and then distribute it. But it's a
17 priority to get that building ready for
18 Baruch.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: So you need more
20 capital, is that what you're saying?

21 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:
22 Always.

23 (Laughter.)

24 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Okay. Thank

1 you. And just -- so this issue of -- we
2 talked earlier about antisemitism on
3 campuses. We've seen the growth of
4 antisemitism. Are you both committed to
5 doing what we can at this moment in our
6 time -- we've seen the rise in the last year
7 and a half -- to do what we can to put
8 resources to combat the growth of
9 antisemitism across our campuses in New York?

10 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: One hundred
11 percent committed to making sure our campuses
12 are safe and supportive climates for our
13 Jewish students.

14 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And
15 absolutely. And we had a very productive
16 meeting yesterday with a group of Assembly
17 and Senate leaders, and the commitment from
18 my end and the entire team is there.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: And just on the
20 PSC CUNY, I know there's a contract. Does
21 that money that's in the budget cover the
22 increase needed in the contract? The
23 increase that they need for the contract.

24 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: We

1 need an additional 34 million.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Above what the
3 Governor proposed.

4 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Yes,
5 sir. Yup.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

7 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:
8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

10 Next up is Senator Webb.

11 SENATOR WEBB: Good morning. Thank
12 you both for being here.

13 So my questions kind of stem around
14 the continued efforts we're making as a state
15 to make higher education more affordable.
16 And so I was concerned to see in the budget,
17 you know, cuts to the Educational Opportunity
18 programs, which have a proven track record
19 for helping students to graduate and go on to
20 be successful. Similarly with cuts to
21 Bundy Aid, continued cuts to Bundy Aid. And
22 also with regards to the proposal for
23 operational money, which we know is critical
24 for all our SUNYs, especially our community

1 colleges.

2 So I was hoping that if either of you
3 could speak to these particular issues and
4 some plans to go in a different direction
5 with respect to those challenges.

6 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Sure. Quickly
7 on EOP -- and just appreciate all your
8 support for SUNY always.

9 The EOP program has an incredible
10 track record over decades of producing
11 incredible leaders, including folks in this
12 room. We think the funding should be
13 increased. So there was a \$1.9 million cut.
14 Our Board of Trustees had actually proposed a
15 \$4.5 million increase so that we could both
16 grow the number of slots, serve more
17 students, but also increase the award for
18 individual students. Because we know, even
19 with EOP support, there's often a gap in
20 terms of students' financial needs. So we'd
21 like to increase those awards as well.

22 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And
23 we also ask for additional support for SEEK
24 and College Discovery programs, which are

1 deeply embedded in the fabric of the City
2 University of New York. We are also being
3 good stewards of that funding. We've done
4 some internal work so that we can be more
5 efficient in the way that those funds can be
6 allocated.

7 We're also being additionally
8 creative. We for the second year now have
9 our STEM Summer Academy. We want many of
10 those students who are participating who are
11 low-income, many come from communities of
12 color which are underrepresented, for
13 example, in STEM fields and the sciences, to
14 give them a leg up. So we created this
15 summer program -- very, very well received --
16 to make sure that we have a lot more of those
17 students succeeding -- not just graduating,
18 but graduating from all these fields in high
19 demand and with high-paying jobs.

20 SENATOR WEBB: And then my last piece,
21 just with regards to community colleges.
22 Chancellor King, you and I have had several
23 conversations about the need and the role
24 that community colleges play.

1 You know, I am concerned that what the
2 community colleges will need in terms of
3 operational aid, that what's being proposed
4 is most certainly not enough. So again,
5 hoping that we can see an increase there.
6 But also with other SUNYs, there are several
7 that are high-needs that are facing deficits,
8 like SUNY Cortland in my district, that's
9 looking at an \$8 million deficit with regards
10 to operational aid.

11 So I hope we can continue to move in a
12 positive direction with increasing funding,
13 especially for operational costs.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIR PRETLOW: Thank you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblymember
18 Weprin.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Thank you,
20 Mr. Chairman.

21 Thank you, Chancellors, for your
22 testimony and your accessibility on a regular
23 basis. We truly appreciate that. And for
24 what you're doing on combating hate,

1 antisemitism and other hate across all
2 campuses.

3 I'm going to address this question to
4 Chancellor Matos Rodríguez. In the
5 Governor's Executive Budget CUNY received
6 96 million for general operating support,
7 which I understand is 34 million short of
8 what is needed for the recently ratified
9 contract with the Professional Staff
10 Congress.

11 How does the lack of full funding for
12 collective bargaining in the Governor's
13 budget impact CUNY? And what potential
14 consequences could arise from the funding
15 shortfall? How will this affect your
16 structural budget deficit?

17 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:
18 Well, thank you for your question and thank
19 you for your support and care of all CUNY,
20 and particularly the schools in Queens.

21 As I mentioned before, we need an
22 additional 34 million to be able to have the
23 full funding for the contract that we signed
24 with our colleges and the PSC in December.

1 We have invested a lot of work and
2 I've been here reporting to you about it, the
3 work that we have done in showing you that we
4 are good stewards of the resources that you
5 allocate in that direction, trying to cut the
6 structural deficit. And we've taken
7 sometimes painful and difficult measures, but
8 we've been doing that and the progress is
9 clearly there in going from, you know, 260 to
10 64 and having now less schools that continue
11 to be of high concern. And those schools
12 continue to make progress.

13 If we don't get that 34 million, it's
14 like the rock of Sisyphus. Right? You keep
15 pushing up to try to get out of the
16 structural deficit. And when you're getting
17 closer, the rock comes back down. Right?

18 The reason why we have a structural
19 deficit is because for years those mandatory
20 costs were not covered. Right? At some
21 point they were covered with tuition
22 increases. We have not increased tuition in
23 our four-year schools in five years. We have
24 not increased tuition at the community

1 colleges in nine years. Right? So that
2 funding has to come from somewhere.

3 The Assembly and the Senate have been
4 very supportive of that historically.
5 Governor Hochul has been historic in
6 supporting that work. But if we don't get
7 that, we go back to the reason why we had
8 structural deficits to begin with. Right?
9 So for us to be able to have our house in
10 order, we need that base of support. So I
11 really appreciate your question.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN WEPRIN: Good. Thank you,
13 Chancellor, both of you.

14 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Jackson.

17 SENATOR JACKSON: Good afternoon,
18 everyone. And Chancellors, welcome.

19 I'm curious, Chancellor King, to the
20 commitment that's made to Downstate Medical
21 Center. As you know, our colleague Zellnor
22 Myrie has been at the front, as far as I'm
23 concerned, dealing with that. I am hoping
24 that you will fulfill your promise. When I

1 say "you," the government, as far as your
2 office and the Governor, Kathy Hochul, of
3 Downstate Medical Center, which is a huge
4 center especially in the Downtown Brooklyn
5 area. And many people of color are the ones
6 that go there. And so I'm curious about your
7 response to that matter.

8 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: You know, look,
9 I'm very appreciative of the Legislature and
10 the Governor coming forward with this nearly
11 billion dollars in additional investment in
12 Downstate. It has put us, I think, on the
13 trajectory to creating a financially
14 sustainable plan for Downstate, in
15 partnership with the other hospitals that are
16 located nearby in Central Brooklyn.

17 But, you know, we're going to have to
18 watch closely the federal changes. If there
19 were to be significant federal cuts to
20 Medicaid, that would be a tremendous threat
21 to our plans for a sustainable future for
22 Downstate.

23 SENATOR JACKSON: Chancellor
24 Rodríguez, I'm curious as to the whole

1 situation with the unions not having enough,
2 when they settle a contract, that they can't
3 fulfill the contract.

4 Are you sure that you as the
5 chancellor for CUNY feel that you can pull
6 the resources together in order to agree with
7 PSC on this agreement that they've put in
8 place?

9 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So I
10 mean, first, we're delighted that we were
11 able to reach an agreement with our friends
12 from the PSC in December. We have been
13 really encouraged by the trend in this
14 Executive Budget and in the budget that you
15 all approved last year, which began to
16 correct a long-term trend of not fully
17 funding the contracts for both CUNY and SUNY.

18 Doing that, as I said, the starting
19 point of the Governor by putting 96 million
20 in this budget for us is a step in the right
21 direction, and we hope that the ongoing
22 support and conversations with this body will
23 bring in the additional 34 that we have to be
24 able to have no issues there.

1 And we also want to be appreciative of
2 the 192 million that is also included in the
3 Executive Budget that goes to cover the
4 retroactive pay and the ratification bonus.

5 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

6 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman
9 Seawright.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you,
11 Chairs Krueger and Pretlow. And thank you to
12 the SUNY and CUNY chancellors for your
13 testimony today. As a proud parent of two
14 children who graduated from SUNY and one
15 that's completing his advanced degree at
16 SUNY, I'm especially appreciative of your
17 devotion and all that you do in higher
18 education.

19 I have a question for Chancellor Matos
20 Rodríguez. As the new chair of the Aging
21 Committee, I'm interested to know about
22 classes at your campuses that senior citizens
23 can audit. And also if a senior chooses to
24 return to college, what programs exist? Is

1 there any senior citizen discounts if a
2 senior returns to complete an unfinished
3 degree or wants to start a degree program?

4 And then also I wanted to mention I
5 attended a CUNY-wide adaptive sports
6 basketball game at Queens College. It was
7 absolutely fabulous.

8 And for Chancellor King, do you have a
9 a SUNY adaptive sports program that exists?

10 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So
11 thank you for your question and for your
12 support. And 959 constituents in your
13 district attend CUNY. And hopefully we can
14 get a lot more of those aging ones also to
15 attend.

16 Many of our campuses are open to
17 seniors and others to come and audit classes.
18 I think that those policies tend to vary by
19 campus. And we've had -- through CUNY
20 Reconnect, we have brought in some older
21 adults to come back to our campuses. That at
22 times requires a little work because if
23 somebody's coming back after being gone for
24 five, six years, probably the assigned

1 courses, the curriculum was the same.

2 Sometimes you have someone who's been away
3 for a very long time, and creating the kind
4 of equivalency that is appropriate takes
5 additional time and, at times, creativity.

6 So that's something that we're trying
7 to work with at campuses to do. But we're
8 clearly open to what they bring to the
9 campus.

10 And I want to leave time for
11 Chancellor King to answer about adaptive
12 sports.

13 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah, and I
14 would say our community colleges especially
15 have a variety of programs for seniors, which
16 are very valuable, including some
17 microcredential programs that seniors will
18 take advantage of.

19 We do have adaptive sports activities.
20 I don't know that we have a league, but we
21 have adaptive sports activities and I can get
22 you more detail on some of the ones that take
23 place on campus.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Last week

1 the Foundation for Senior Citizens of
2 New York testified about a home-sharing
3 program that they have in a partnership with
4 NYU.

5 Would CUNY and SUNY be interested in
6 possibly doing that, where you match students
7 that don't have housing up with a senior
8 citizen for the home sharing program to help
9 keep seniors in their home?

10 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:
11 Sounds like a win/win.

12 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah. Love to
13 hear more about it.

14 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Yup.
15 Yup.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator?

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

19 Senator Murray.

20 SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you,
21 Chairwoman. And thank you, Chancellors, for
22 being here.

23 A couple of questions. First, the
24 easy one I think is Governor Hochul's

1 New York State Opportunity Promise, so the
2 free tuition to those 25 to 55.

3 Is there any provision -- many times
4 we give great education, great training, the
5 students graduate and take it to other
6 states. Is there any provision in there that
7 requires them to at least stay or work
8 in-state for any length of time?

9 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: I don't believe
10 there's a requirement there for staying
11 in-state. But I will say the vast majority
12 of SUNY community college graduates not only
13 stay in-state, they stay in the region where
14 they attended community college.

15 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And
16 even higher for community college students.
17 I mean, it's very high for CUNY. I think
18 over 90 percent over time.

19 And I also think when you consider
20 these are going to be mostly adults that are
21 probably established in a community, have
22 families, I think the chance of that is a lot
23 less.

24 SENATOR MURRAY: Okay. I'd like to

1 see that tracked once that's in place.

2 But switching -- and I'm glad we're in
3 Higher Education, and forgive my ignorance,
4 but hopefully you can educate me a little.
5 On Long Island recently, over the past couple
6 of years, there's been some questions about
7 school districts and their reserve funds, how
8 much they're holding in reserves, how many
9 reserve funds they have.

10 On the college and university level I
11 would equate that to the endowments. You
12 hear about Harvard with \$50 billion. I
13 believe the University of Michigan,
14 19 billion. So I got curious; I looked up
15 Stony Brook University. And as of the last
16 fiscal year, it was just under \$600 million.

17 But I wanted to know how it's being
18 spent, so the latest report I found
19 unfortunately was about five years ago. It
20 was the fiscal year 2021. And it said they
21 brought in -- they were sitting at about
22 463 million at the time. They brought in
23 18.1, but the endowment distributed
24 8.46 million for impact purposes. How do I

1 sell to the public when you're coming asking
2 for more tax money and more tax money while
3 you're sitting on endowments with that much
4 money and spending what appears to be a small
5 fraction of that -- what do I say to them?

6 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: You know, our
7 goal is to grow our endowments at the
8 University Centers because they are often a
9 particularly valuable lever for research and
10 supporting research activities, recruiting
11 new research faculty, investing in new areas
12 of research like, as you know, Stony Brook is
13 an incredible leader in quantum. As a
14 cutting-edge area, you want to be able to
15 provide additional support.

16 So we're fortunate that through the
17 endowment match that Governor Hochul and the
18 Legislature created two years ago, we've been
19 able to get some endowment commitments,
20 including the incredible \$500 million from
21 the Simons to Stony Brook.

22 SENATOR MURRAY: Right.

23 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: And we look
24 forward to that helping us lead in these

1 important research areas.

2 SENATOR MURRAY: Thank you.

3 CHAIR PRETLOW: Thank you.

4 Assemblyman Stirpe.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: Good morning to
6 both of you.

7 Real quickly, I want to get back on
8 community colleges. You know, it's nice that
9 they continue to have a base throughout the
10 years. Unfortunately, that base was
11 established with 2020 funding, which was not
12 the greatest ever, so they already started at
13 sort of a structural imbalance on that. And
14 the fact that we're still funding them on
15 full-time equivalents while so many more of
16 them are coming in for certificates, you
17 know, microcredentialing and things like
18 that, makes it even harder to get proper
19 funding.

20 And I do agree we should at least
21 provide another \$30 million in order to help
22 them take care of things. Because now with
23 this new program, 25 to 55, you have people
24 who have not been in school for a long time.

1 So as far as support services, I've got a
2 feeling it's going to be more than what they
3 had before when they're taking high school
4 graduates in who have been in classes,
5 et cetera.

6 So I'm just hoping that you'll
7 continue to advocate, as we will, for some
8 additional funding.

9 The other thing is about the
10 hospitals. I don't begrudge Downstate
11 Hospital receiving almost a billion dollars.
12 If that's what they need, that's what they
13 need. But I think only giving
14 Upstate Hospital 200 out of 450 million that
15 they say they need is probably -- doesn't
16 look good to anybody. And I'm hoping that
17 you'll stand with us.

18 And I know Upstate is very grateful
19 for the 200 million. And if we can promise
20 them that next year they'll get the other
21 250 million they need, that would be great.
22 The fear I have is what's happening over here
23 in Washington may greatly affect what happens
24 next year, and all of a sudden they say,

1 Well, we don't have the funding for it. So
2 that would be a really terrible outcome.

3 So, you know, I'm hoping that you
4 continue to push, as we will continue to
5 push.

6 And also I want to thank you for
7 partnering with Syracuse University and their
8 InclusiveU program, and helping to bring
9 that, you know, throughout the SUNY system.
10 Because I think, you know, we'll have lots of
11 great benefits from that.

12 Thank you.

13 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you for
14 your support on all three of those areas, and
15 we'll continue to work together on them.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: Okay.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Fahy.

18 SENATOR FAHY: Thank you. And thank
19 you to both chancellors for being here. I
20 really appreciate it.

21 Chancellor Rodríguez, if I could just
22 quickly start with a question about your
23 Career Success model, which I know you've
24 been launching. And both of you mentioned

1 the importance of internships, and thank you
2 for supporting a bill that I pushed over the
3 last few years and we got it across the
4 finish line to do a plan on internships,
5 because the stats are so overwhelming.

6 When we get a student an internship,
7 we get them a job and largely we end up
8 keeping them here in New York, which is an
9 added huge bonus.

10 So the Career Success model, can you
11 just please quickly mention that, and the
12 costs on what it might take to implement it
13 and why it's so unique.

14 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: So
15 thank you. Our request in the budget was
16 7 million to begin a pilot with six schools
17 and then sort of build that up.

18 We're also building private support
19 for the initiative so we're not just knocking
20 on the door of the state and the city for
21 that. Because we know that to be able to do
22 this at scale and in a comprehensive way is
23 going to cost a dime, but we think that is
24 exactly what students are demanding, what

1 their parents are demanding in terms of the
2 kind of embedding thinking about careers from
3 the moment the student gets to the campus in
4 orientation, in the work that we do with
5 them.

6 Even in some of the Early College,
7 they combine advising, right, so you get
8 advising not just on the courses but on the
9 mapping of the things that you're going to be
10 thinking about in your career, working with
11 employers. Adding, for example, paid
12 internships into the curriculum, right, so
13 it's not something that you do separately and
14 on your own, that it's more embedded in what
15 the students do.

16 We have seen this working all across
17 our campuses. We think it's time now to take
18 it to scale. And that's why I'm very
19 supportive and interested in that initiative.
20 So thank you for asking me. And obviously
21 happy to talk more to your team about it and
22 present the model to you.

23 SENATOR FAHY: Well, thanks to both of
24 you for prioritizing this. I think it's so

1 critical. Again, it's a win/win -- win for
2 the student and win for the state, on both
3 fronts.

4 With regard to the community colleges,
5 also so pleased with the Governor's
6 initiative. Thank you to both of you for
7 embracing that. And I do support more
8 initiatives -- or more operating dollars for
9 community colleges, as my colleague
10 mentioned.

11 Chancellor King, in addition to the
12 community colleges, we know we need capital
13 dollars, right? We know we need these
14 innovation funds at all the colleges, but in
15 particular the University Centers. I'm a
16 little biased because I have one right here
17 in my backyard with UAlbany.

18 And can you talk about that
19 importance? And if you would, while
20 answering, please mention this -- what we're
21 all looking at, at the federal level.
22 There's a huge fear with cuts right now, and
23 there's so much on hold. I'm hearing it from
24 UAlbany and others. Please.

1 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yeah. Thank
2 you for your leadership on TAP and
3 internships. Really appreciate that.

4 We had hoped that we would have
5 800 million in the Innovation Labs Fund so
6 that we could dedicate at least 200 million
7 to each of the four University Centers to
8 create research-focused labs that will help
9 us secure research dollars and lead at those
10 institutions.

11 SENATOR FAHY: Thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

14 Assemblywoman Kelles.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: Hi, thank you.
16 Thank you to you both.

17 I'm going to direct my questions to
18 Dr. King. A couple of things. One, I wanted
19 to add my voice to yours as well for
20 restoring the EOP. I absolutely agree.

21 And you have started a pilot program
22 and I'd love to hear you talk about it
23 briefly. We've talked, you know, throughout
24 many of our hearings of a huge lack of

1 workforce on mental health workers in every
2 sector, and you started a mental health EOP
3 pilot program. Could you talk briefly about
4 the interest in that program and what it
5 would provide if we expanded it and made it a
6 real program?

7 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Sure. So we
8 modeled the EOP Mental Health Program after
9 our EOP Premed Program, where we bring
10 students together and help them make that
11 transition into a career that they're
12 passionate about.

13 I think we have five campuses now that
14 have committed to participate in the EOP
15 Mental Health. If we had additional
16 resources to put towards that program I think
17 there'd be --

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: What would you
19 need?

20 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Well, look,
21 ideally we'd have funding both to run summer
22 programming and to create internships that
23 would be at least in the summer and ideally
24 year-round. We desperately need a more

1 diverse mental health workforce, and the EOP
2 program can help contribute to that.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: Okay. And
4 switching gears to the SUNY capital that was
5 talked about, just briefly disagreeing with
6 one of my former colleagues. You know, brief
7 studies that I'm reading online, a small,
8 tiny, tiny liberal arts college in New York
9 City is saying \$2.4 million per year savings
10 in operating expenses with their geothermal
11 system.

12 You have 2800 buildings, 62 campuses.
13 Have you estimated what the actual cost
14 savings would be if you could put the
15 geothermal -- and I understand that your
16 sustainability director did a study
17 estimating the capital cost would be about
18 \$12 billion, which is essentially the
19 upstate's MTA, right? It's our
20 infrastructure. We should think about it
21 that way. We do need a multiyear capital
22 plan.

23 But what savings would that give us if
24 we're looking at 2800 buildings?

1 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: We can get you
2 a more precise estimate. But it's certainly
3 on the order of hundreds of millions of
4 dollars in energy savings over time across
5 all of our campuses.

6 We are also very well positioned to
7 make progress here. Each of our
8 state-operated campuses has a clean energy
9 plan that would take them as close as
10 possible to net zero. We just need the
11 up-front capital to get there.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: I think that we
13 should look at this, because we talk a lot
14 about the need for operating expenses to
15 increase. We do need more funding to the
16 community colleges, absolutely operating
17 expenses. They absolutely need more for
18 faculty, for administrative, for
19 cybersecurity, for all different things.

20 That money could come from this. We
21 need more funding for faculty, we need more
22 funding for the really at-need colleges. You
23 know, we need more funding I think for the
24 two campuses that we have that are the direct

1 campuses, senior campuses. All of that could
2 be redirected, and it would be zero cost to
3 the state. Right? So I think it's a smart
4 move.

5 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

8 Senator Salazar.

9 SENATOR SALAZAR: Thank you.

10 Thank you both for your testimony
11 today. Good to see you.

12 I have first a question for
13 Chancellor King regarding higher education in
14 prisons. As you know, higher education in
15 prison has many benefits: Reduces
16 recidivism, increases employment
17 opportunities for people upon their release.
18 And SUNY has many degree programs in our
19 state prisons. Thank you for your support
20 for them.

21 What support can we provide in the
22 state budget this year to expand SUNY's
23 degree programs that are offered, expanding
24 to more facilities, potentially, or/and

1 expanding the existing programs that are
2 already offered in facilities in terms of the
3 degrees or courses offered?

4 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thanks so much
5 for that question and for your leadership on
6 this issue.

7 You know, we are the largest provider
8 today in prisons in New York State, but we
9 only have programs in just over half of the
10 correctional facilities. So we would like to
11 expand to every prison in the state because
12 these programs do reduce recidivism, they
13 improve the climate in the facility, and the
14 students are more successful when they come
15 home.

16 We also would like to offer more
17 programs in each facility. Oftentimes the
18 options around majors are quite limited. We
19 need to be able to invest in equipment at the
20 correctional site so that students can take a
21 broader array of subject areas.

22 I know there's a Senate letter that
23 has been circulated that proposes \$9 million
24 that would support the expansion of higher ed

1 in prison as well as reentry support, so that
2 we make sure we help people enroll in school
3 when they come home and complete their
4 degrees. That would be incredibly helpful.

5 We are grateful for the restoration of
6 TAP a few years ago, and certainly the
7 federal restoration of Pell. But a small
8 additional investment could produce big
9 savings in terms of folks who are successful
10 when they return home and don't end up back
11 in prison.

12 SENATOR SALAZAR: Excellent. Thank
13 you.

14 One quick question for either or both
15 of you. I'm hearing concerns from
16 constituents about proposed cuts to STEP and
17 CSTEP programs, which increase access to
18 STEM, health and license fields to students
19 from underrepresented backgrounds.

20 Could you weigh in about any
21 justification for those cuts or,
22 alternatively, what plans exist to ensure
23 that students from those backgrounds,
24 underrepresented in these fields, are

1 entering careers in STEM-related fields?

2 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

3 Well, I mean, I haven't heard about the cuts,
4 although I'd love to hear more from your team
5 about them to be able to be responsive.

6 But I've been talking about careers a
7 couple of times here, so we're very, very
8 committed to that, very committed to making
9 sure that in STEM fields, right, particularly
10 with their growing and good-paying jobs, that
11 you have a lot more representation of
12 underrepresented groups -- women, folks of
13 color.

14 We've been building on that pipeline,
15 so anything that we can work with your office
16 to make sure that those programs maintain,
17 we'll be supportive of that.

18 SENATOR SALAZAR: Thank you,
19 Chancellor.

20 CHAIR PRETLOW: Thank you.
21 Assemblyman Gray.

22 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY: Thank you,
23 Chairman.

24 Chancellors, great to see you today.

1 Thank you for being here. Chancellor King,
2 thank you for your aggressive and active
3 schedule to get out and visit all the
4 campuses. That is very much appreciated.

5 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY: So I just want to
7 talk -- the Executive Budget continues the
8 workforce development, the emphasis on that,
9 the apprenticeship program, the
10 microcredentials, specifically with the
11 Opportunity Promise program, right.

12 And are we better off -- so community
13 colleges, and I know some of my colleagues
14 have mentioned that today -- community
15 colleges are traditionally underfunded by the
16 state. They're running at about 24 percent,
17 where statutorily it's a third, a third, a
18 third. So what that ends up being is that's
19 more pressure on tuition.

20 Are we better off funding community
21 colleges fully and relieving some of the
22 pressure on tuition?

23 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Look, we'd love
24 to build on the Governor's Opportunity

1 Promise program with additional operating
2 support for the community colleges to support
3 those very high demand workforce fields where
4 employers, as you know, are desperate for
5 well-trained folks.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY: And what about --
7 so technology colleges, they're not included
8 in the opportunity programs, and they have a
9 desire because they do some of the same
10 education and training that the community
11 colleges do and the preparation for the
12 workforce.

13 Is there a reason that they were not
14 included in that program? And are you
15 looking for -- would you support them being
16 put into that program?

17 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: You know, I
18 think the Governor's focus was on community
19 colleges for the overall initiative.

20 But, you know, a place like SUNY
21 Canton is functionally the community college
22 for their immediate region, providing the
23 path to an associate's degree.

24 So it would be about another one to

1 \$3 million added onto the cost to include the
2 tech colleges. But they'll be able to
3 deliver high-quality programs for sure.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY: Okay. Thank you
5 very much.

6 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Sayegh.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN SAYEGH: Thank you very
8 much, Mr. Chair.

9 And, Chancellors, always a pleasure to
10 see you here in Albany.

11 Three areas of concern that involve
12 higher education. We recently passed the
13 "Grow Your Own" initiative that promotes more
14 diversification in the hiring of faculty and
15 staff.

16 And, secondly, the need for more
17 full-time professors. As a product of both
18 SUNY and CUNY over the years, I've noticed
19 over the years and decades there's been a
20 decrease in full-time professors. And I know
21 that with funding and legislation, there's
22 been an interest in increasing that.

23 And the third area, the availability
24 of seats for premed and medical school, as

1 with the shortages that exist we're looking
2 to increase those.

3 If you can give me your comments on
4 the three areas.

5 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Sure. Let me
6 start with the full-time faculty.

7 You know, it's been very helpful to
8 have the \$53 million in recurring funding
9 that was committed to grow our faculty across
10 our institutions. We've been able to do
11 that. Our split is, I think, roughly 55/45
12 full-time/part-time. Particularly at the
13 community colleges there's a greater reliance
14 on part-time faculty.

15 But we want to continue to grow the
16 number of full-time faculty because they can
17 contribute so much to the campuses. So the
18 support of the state is critical to being
19 able to do that.

20 In terms of the healthcare workforce,
21 we are eager to grow, particularly in the
22 need for nursing where we know we're going to
23 see a 40,000-nurse shortage in a short amount
24 of time. And we hope the Governor's

1 Opportunity Promise program helps to
2 contribute to that.

3 I'll leave you some time to --

4 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

5 Thank you.

6 And great to see a CUNY alum, and
7 300 students in your district.

8 Clearly we are committed to finding
9 more full-time faculty to be in front of our
10 students, and we all know that that is
11 beneficial for them. I think also as we move
12 forward -- we've been talking a lot today
13 about increasing our capacity to teach areas
14 of high-demand and areas in STEM. And I
15 think that we might need, moving forward, to
16 be more sophisticated in how we track.
17 Because for some of those areas we might want
18 to have a large number of adjuncts that have
19 very particular expertise in areas. Right?
20 And they come from industry to help us to
21 teach, right?

22 So we wouldn't want to be saying that
23 we don't want that talent. We've had great
24 success in the last year in bringing those

1 practitioners to our campuses, so we want to
2 do that. So I think in the future we need to
3 begin to dissect that a bit more.

4 CHAIR PRETLOW: Thank you.

5 Assemblywoman Simon.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Hi. Thank you
7 very much. I have lots of questions for both
8 of you. I'm sure you're really excited to
9 know that.

10 (Laughter.)

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: So I want to
12 thank you for your testimony and for all the
13 work that you've been doing to really keep
14 New Yorkers educated.

15 So I have a question that -- you're
16 going to be surprised, for both of you --
17 that -- and as you know, I'm now chairing
18 Mental Health. And so one of the things that
19 we know really sets kids on the path to
20 mental health is being taught to read.
21 Because they have good self-esteem, they feel
22 confident, et cetera.

23 And we've been working together on
24 creating a state action plan, which is now

1 created, with you folks as well as the
2 Governor's office and State Ed. But it's
3 not -- the funding needed to get that
4 critical element off the ground in assessing
5 education prep programs is not in the
6 Governor's budget. I'm concerned that we may
7 have a case of arrested development of our
8 plan.

9 And so I would like to know if you
10 could comment on how important this is to
11 move forward with.

12 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: As we've talked
13 about many times, I am a passionate supporter
14 of implementing the science of reading.
15 We've got our microcredential program at SUNY
16 New Paltz in the science of reading that has
17 now been completed by more than 6,000
18 teachers.

19 So we're excited to pursue that work.
20 And I think the state's continued support for
21 the science of reading and giving feedback to
22 our higher ed institutions about where their
23 programs are is crucial to that effort.

24 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And

1 I echo what Chancellor King says. I mean, in
2 our case you're very familiar, Brooklyn
3 college being our main campus on that space,
4 and I know that that's very dear to your
5 heart and to your advocacy. I know that it
6 is a high priority for the Governor and her
7 team.

8 And I think also Chancellor King and I
9 have been on the record that we are more than
10 willing to be knocking on some doors
11 about philanthropic dollars to also support
12 that work too, so it's not just dependent on
13 what the state might provide in terms of
14 {unintelligible} -- how important that is for
15 all the reasons that you say about the impact
16 that it has on so many things in higher ed
17 and in employment and mental health.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you very
19 much. I appreciate it.

20 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIR PRETLOW: Assemblywoman
23 Buttenschon.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Thank you.

1 And Chancellor, thank you for being
2 here today. As you know, clearly I represent
3 the Utica-Rome area and the concerns of many
4 of the great institutions. But want to draw
5 the attention to Upstate and the concerns
6 that we have there. And clearly they have a
7 plan that has been put forward that needs to
8 be supported.

9 My question to you is in regards to
10 that plan, have you seen it? And has your
11 team worked in a manner to move forward with
12 how to implement that?

13 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Yes, thank you,
14 Assemblywoman for the question. Thanks for
15 your partnership on Poly and many other
16 efforts in your district.

17 On Upstate, we work together with
18 Upstate leadership on their plan for the
19 \$450 million new annex that will provide
20 emergency room, additional operating room
21 capacity and a new burn unit. It's the right
22 plan. We're grateful that the Governor
23 included \$200 million in her budget that will
24 move us forward on that project. And we look

1 forward to ultimately getting the full 450
2 that we need to complete that project.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN BUTTENSCHON: Thank you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: All right,
5 follow-up for Chair Toby Stavisky,
6 three minutes.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

8 First, Chancellor Matos Rodríguez, we
9 thank you for your annual Gold Sheet. It's
10 a -- I carry it with me so I can answer the
11 questions in the district.

12 Following up on some of the questions
13 that were asked earlier, I thank you for your
14 accessibility and your willingness to meet
15 with so many legislators on a personal basis,
16 including yesterday's meeting, which I
17 thought was helpful. Concerning the hate
18 crimes, particularly as outlined in
19 Judge Lippman's report, there were, I think,
20 15 or so recommendations. Can you provide us
21 with the response of each one in just a
22 couple of sentences, such as accomplished by
23 such-and-such? It's sort of hard to figure
24 out from what you gave us yesterday the final

1 results of your responses to the Lippman
2 report. And if we could have it within --

3 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: We'd
4 be delighted to provide that to you, Senator,
5 and to the members of the committee.

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: I'm sorry, what?

7 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: That
8 we'll be delighted to provide that --

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

10 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: --
11 to the members of the committee.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Can we have it,
13 let's say, by May 1st or some such date?

14 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: No
15 problem, yes. Whatever date is -- works for
16 you.

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

18 Just a brief chart so that we can see
19 where -- what you've done and what still has
20 to be done.

21 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: And
22 a lot of the work, I think I shared with the
23 group yesterday, will launch the center who's
24 going to be the main hub for the

1 centralization for the work on supporting
2 victims, which is something that is mentioned
3 in the Lippman report, the training that is
4 done, the working with the faculty.

5 So I'll be more than happy to go
6 through the 13 and provide you that.

7 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, thank you.

8 And Chancellor King, following up on
9 your responses on the financial stability of
10 SUNY, a couple of years ago you had a list of
11 19 distressed colleges. Are they still in
12 financial potentially precarious positions?
13 In 20 seconds.

14 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: So we think
15 it's those five that I mentioned that are --
16 that had the real structural deficit issues.
17 Year to year there can be variation in levels
18 of deficit spending on a particular campus
19 using their reserves.

20 But it's those five that we're most
21 concerned about.

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. And
23 congratulations on your fiscal report that
24 came out last week.

1 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Chair Hyndman, for
2 your three-minute follow-up.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,
4 Chair Pretlow.

5 Like Senator Stavisky said, the
6 Gold Sheet, I think everyone I've met with
7 pulled out a Gold Sheet. So your college --

8 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:
9 Happy to hear that.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Your college
11 presidents are doing the work.

12 As I said, I've met with Dean Green of
13 the medical school, and glad that has been
14 separated into standalone and -- I know
15 you're grateful for the \$4 million. But when
16 I met with the dean, she asked for more. So
17 I just wanted to know what additional avenues
18 or what would that additional money be used
19 for?

20 And also to Chancellor King, if we
21 were able to fund the Innovation Fund,
22 increase it, what would you build?

23 So I only have a few minutes.

24 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: Let

1 me just say that I am shocked that you met
2 with one of my college presidents or deans
3 and they were asking for more money for their
4 school.

5 (Laughter.)

6 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: I
7 find that to be highly irregular.

8 But listen, the medical school is a
9 gem. And the model that we have there of
10 taking students who begin at City College as
11 freshmen and go through, has proven that it
12 breaks a lot of barriers in having probably
13 the most diverse medical school that we have
14 in the state, and one producing a record
15 number of physicians of color to work in
16 underserved communities with all the issues
17 that we have there, and also many students
18 who are dedicated to primary care.

19 Before the allocation last year of
20 4 million that was provided in the budget,
21 there was no support from the state for
22 medical school. And we think that that is
23 something that needs to continue to be built
24 over time. We believe being secure in the

1 base of 4 million is a way to begin and move
2 forward.

3 We're also working on advancing
4 philanthropic partners, which are very
5 interested in the mission of the school. So
6 we think that all those things will build up
7 the kind of support that the medical schools
8 need, and we're fully committed to that.

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

10 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: You know, if we
11 were able to get 800 million in that
12 Innovation Lab Fund, we've identified
13 projects at each of the four University
14 Centers that would help with our leadership
15 in health sciences and biotech.

16 So for example, at UAlbany they have a
17 new Health Innovation and Research Building
18 that would allow them to build on their
19 partnership with Wadsworth and their
20 leadership in leveraging artificial
21 intelligence to address issues of disease
22 treatment and cures.

23 So we think it will be an investment,
24 because that \$800 million in labs would help

1 us then produce research that would draw
2 federal research dollars as well as corporate
3 research dollars, and hopefully develop new
4 ideas, new patents that could drive economic
5 development for the state.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I want to thank
8 both of the chancellors, and we're going to
9 close this section of the hearing. But I
10 just have two comments.

11 To Chancellor King, I think you have
12 to make better deals with the real estate on
13 your campuses. We had the discussion --
14 because I know there is excess property on a
15 lot of campuses and it's being used for
16 senior housing. But I think you got a raw
17 deal in that one.

18 And Chancellor Rodríguez, I'm on a
19 quest --

20 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ: --
21 for the clock.

22 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: The Queensborough
23 clock.

24 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

1 We're on it. That was reported to me in the
2 conversation, and we have a full team looking
3 for answers for you.

4 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I appreciate that.

5 Thank you very much, gentlemen.

6 (Laughter.)

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And also I didn't
8 ask questions because I've had opportunities
9 to talk to you both. And I've been texting
10 some of your staff behind you with questions
11 all during your testimony.

12 So thank you for being here today.

13 CUNY CHANCELLOR MATOS RODRÍGUEZ:

14 Thank you.

15 SUNY CHANCELLOR KING: Thank you both.

16 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Dr. Guillermo
17 Linares.

18 (Off the record.)

19 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Hi, if everyone
20 could take their conversations outside and
21 then regain your seats if you are staying
22 with us.

23 And legislators, bother the
24 chancellors out of this room, not in the

1 room, so that we can continue the hearing.

2 (Off the record.)

3 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Ready.

4 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Good morning,
5 Chairs Krueger, Pretlow, Stavisky, Hyndman,
6 and esteemed members of the Senate and
7 Assembly. I am Dr. Guillermo Linares,
8 president of the Higher Education Services
9 Corporation, HESC, joined by our HESC
10 executive vice president, Doris González.

11 Today we are pleased to discuss the
12 2025-'26 Executive Budget recommendations and
13 our collective commitment to ensuring all
14 New York State students have access to
15 education. Through financial support and
16 diverse opportunities, the commitment of
17 Governor Hochul and this Legislature to
18 students' success remains steadfast and
19 visionary. As HESC president, I'm proud to
20 work alongside Governor Hochul and the
21 Legislature to empower students across New
22 York State.

23 At HESC, we make education affordable
24 by administering over 30 grant, scholarship,

1 and loan forgiveness programs, supporting
2 nearly 300,000 students annually. Key
3 initiatives like the Tuition Assistance
4 Program, TAP, and the Excelsior Scholarship
5 enable over 182,000 New Yorkers -- 58 percent
6 of full-time resident undergraduate
7 students -- to attend SUNY and CUNY
8 tuition-free. This includes 53 percent at
9 SUNY state-operated campuses and 66 percent
10 at CUNY senior colleges.

11 Governor Hochul's 2025-'26 Executive
12 Budget continues to strengthen our state's
13 higher education system with 1.03 billion for
14 HESC financial aid programs, including over
15 850 million for TAP.

16 The expansion of TAP over the past two
17 years is remarkable. The adjustment last
18 year to increase TAP's eligibility thresholds
19 opens the door to education funding for
20 approximately 93,000 more students, including
21 48,000 students newly eligible for TAP.
22 Added to that are previous expansions that
23 made students in non-degree programs at SUNY
24 and CUNY community colleges, and part-time

1 students taking at least six credits,
2 eligible for TAP.

3 In this budget, Governor Hochul is
4 simplifying access to college aid by
5 consolidating the state's three financial aid
6 programs for part-time students and expanding
7 part-time TAP eligibility to those taking as
8 few as three credits per semester.

9 While these new investments aim to
10 open doors for more students, it's also vital
11 to reflect on the lasting impact of TAP. Our
12 May 2024 TAP Difference Report highlights
13 that TAP recipients are more likely to enroll
14 in four-year institutions, complete their
15 degrees quicker, and graduate, compared to
16 those who did not receive TAP.

17 We are seeing firsthand its impact.
18 Joshua, a recent graduate of SUNY Albany who
19 now works as a SUNY admissions recruitment
20 advisor, refers to his TAP award as "a
21 lifeline." Joshua comes from a low-income
22 background and said that without this vital
23 grant he wouldn't have been able to go away
24 to college. He said that his college

1 education isn't just about a degree, but
2 rather a gateway towards empowerment.

3 His success represents the kind of
4 outcomes we want to replicate thousands of
5 times over.

6 Building on the success of expanding
7 access to higher education through TAP, the
8 Executive Budget takes another significant
9 step forward by investing in free community
10 college programs tailored to meet the needs
11 of both students and New York's future
12 workforce.

13 The Executive Budget includes
14 \$47 million to offer free community college
15 at SUNY and CUNY, covering tuition, fees, and
16 books, for students ages 25 to 55 who are
17 pursuing first-time associate's degrees in
18 high-demand fields like nursing, teaching,
19 technology, and engineering, sectors vital to
20 New York's future workforce needs.

21 To elevate educational access and
22 workforce readiness, we also must address
23 another critical component of higher
24 education success: Ensuring that families

1 can access the financial aid they need. By
2 investing in initiatives like Universal FAFSA
3 completion, we aim to bridge the financial
4 gap for thousands of students across
5 New York, ensuring that no opportunity is
6 left untapped due to unclaimed aid.

7 In 2024, HESC led statewide outreach
8 through initiatives like FAFSA Ready; hosted
9 65 FAFSA-related events and 211 financial aid
10 workshops with 10,700 attendees, and
11 introduced the first-of-its-kind New York
12 State FAFSA Ready Training Program, equipping
13 counselors and community-based partners like
14 the Boys and Girls Club and the New York
15 State Library Association with the skills to
16 help students with FAFSA and TAP
17 applications.

18 Our strategy is working. As of
19 February 7th, New York State ranked fourth
20 nationally for the percent of the Class of
21 2025 high school students who submitted their
22 FAFSA applications. Over the last 15 years,
23 New York has never ranked higher than eighth
24 in this category.

1 We have also expanded our
2 communication efforts with more than
3 52,000 students who are now receiving text
4 messages reminding them about financial aid
5 deadlines. In the past year alone,
6 3.2 million users have visited our website.

7 Kellie, mother of Binghamton
8 University student Emma, shared the
9 importance of those messages: "Getting text
10 reminders about important deadlines has been
11 a game-changer for our family. With Emma's
12 busy schedule at Binghamton and everything
13 else going on, those timely texts have made
14 sure we never miss her renewal application.
15 It's such a relief!"

16 Expanding outreach is crucial in
17 reaching our students, but we recognize the
18 need for a more modern, efficient system to
19 better serve our students, families,
20 counselors, and financial aid professionals.
21 With chamber support, HESC remains focused on
22 modernizing our financial aid application
23 system. We redefined our approach to award
24 work in a more incremental, segmented way,

1 rather than issuing a large, multiyear
2 contract to one vendor.

3 This will allow HESC to meet the
4 evolving needs of students, parents, and
5 educational partners. We look forward to
6 keeping you updated on this work.

7 Thanks again to Governor Hochul for
8 her commitment to New York State students and
9 State Operations Director Kathryn Garcia,
10 Deputy Secretary of Education Maria
11 Fernandez, and New York State Budget
12 Director Blake Washington for their support.

13 With continued support from the
14 Governor and Legislature, New York leads in
15 equitable access to higher education,
16 building a stronger and more inclusive state
17 one student at a time.

18 Thank you, and I'd be happy to answer
19 any questions you may have.

20 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you,
21 Dr. Linares.

22 Assemblywoman Hyndman, 10 minutes.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,
24 Dr. Linares. Always good to see you.

1 I have two questions for you. HESC
2 administers several scholarships and loan
3 forgiveness programs that incentivize
4 professionals to study or work in New York.
5 How does HESC promote these programs so that
6 the general public knows about them?

7 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, we're
8 fortunate to have a redesigned
9 state-of-the-art website that, as I said in
10 the testimony, allows for millions of
11 contacts from students, families and
12 New Yorkers at large.

13 We also have strong partnerships with
14 both university systems, public university
15 systems. We work closely with CICU and APC.
16 We also have a strong connection with lower
17 education, the commissioner of education,
18 because they are the conduit for not just
19 high schools but through the superintendents
20 and particularly the guidance counselors.

21 So we engage aggressively in spreading
22 the word. We shifted our agency from being a
23 processing agency in the last few years to
24 focusing primarily on reaching out to

1 students and families and, by extension,
2 communities. We work very closely with
3 nonprofit organizations serving communities
4 and families.

5 So our strength is really in that
6 collaboration but also in leveraging all the
7 contacts that we have and the approach that
8 we have, with the very strong committed team
9 that we have at HESC.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: So no social
11 media yet.

12 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: No, we have
13 social media.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: You have
15 social media?

16 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes. Yes, we
17 do. We do have -- we have text messages. We
18 receive about fifty -- we receive about
19 52,000 --

20 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: Fifty-two
21 thousand students.

22 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: -- students
23 contacting. We reach out to students and we
24 ask them to provide their contact

1 information, their phone or their email, to
2 inform them, be updated -- update them on any
3 changes that we have.

4 So that has been a game-changer when
5 it comes to reaching out to students and, by
6 extension, families.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay.

8 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We are on all
9 social medias that you have.

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I've gotta
11 make sure I follow you.

12 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Which is
13 very, very important, because all students
14 are connected to the little tablet.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: As are we,
16 right?

17 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: And my last
19 question is being that the federal government
20 is in constant change and sending out memos
21 and so forth of what changes they'd like to
22 see immediately, and the talk has been around
23 the -- dissolving the Department of
24 Education. Even though we know it was an act

1 of Congress, there has been talk of an
2 executive order.

3 What if the FAFSA was done away with,
4 students weren't able to fill out the FAFSA
5 form? How would HESC be ready for the State
6 of New York to make sure that students on the
7 state level could have access to all of the
8 scholarships, particularly TAP?

9 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Let me -- let
10 me respond in this way. In the past years
11 there's been an effort to simplify the FAFSA,
12 and that has brought many, many challenges
13 nationally, but including our state.

14 It required for us to go to a
15 different level of engagement with students
16 and families and with our partners in making
17 sure that students would engage in filling
18 out the FAFSA, and with the changes that we
19 have. Improvements have been made, but I
20 must say that one of the things that we --
21 that has helped is the Universal FAFSA
22 effort, with taking such an effort that, as
23 my testimony indicated, with being so
24 successful in filling out the FAFSA.

1 In 2023 we lost \$225 million with
2 money left on the table because the FAFSA was
3 not completed. So I'm highlighting that
4 because right now if you want to get TAP or
5 if you want to get any other federal help,
6 through loans but especially the
7 Pell program, you need to fill out the FAFSA.

8 So I would say right now we are
9 prepared, with the experience we have, with
10 the changes to FAFSA, to really leverage our
11 experience. But I'm very proud of the work
12 that not just my agency, but across the
13 board, and with the help of the Legislature
14 and the Governor's office -- with being able
15 to leverage, to bring that money back.

16 I think what's important is the
17 federal funding that we get is critical for
18 education, especially higher education. So I
19 am confident that we will continue to see
20 that funding coming our way. In the
21 meantime, we are leveraging every single
22 dollar that we get from the Legislature and
23 the Governor to get students to take
24 advantage of it, as we open wider the doors

1 of higher education through the TAP program
2 and also through the expansion of TAP and all
3 the other programs we have.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay, thank
5 you.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

7 Chair Toby Stavisky.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. And
9 thank you, Dr. Linares, for your service. I
10 know you sat on the other side of the
11 microphone as an Assemblymember and had a
12 distinguished career as a City Councilman and
13 with the mayor's office. So we thank you for
14 what you're doing at HESC to help our
15 students.

16 A couple of questions. I think you
17 said that there were 93,000 new applicants or
18 applicants in that group of family income
19 between 80 and 125,000.

20 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: All of the
21 increases with the threshold and with 93,000
22 students benefiting from the threshold,
23 including 48,000 that are newly eligible
24 students because of the threshold increase.

1 SENATOR STAVISKY: Right. Right. No,
2 I think that justifies the increase and the
3 potential that these students have.

4 And Chancellor King testified
5 that -- to a certain number.

6 There are additional CUNY, I guess the
7 independents and the proprietary. Could you
8 at a later date just provide me with the
9 numbers in that category?

10 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes, we'll be
11 happy to provide you with a breakdown.

12 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, I just think
13 it justifies the investment, money comes back
14 many times over.

15 A couple of other questions. Oh,
16 yeah. How long does it take -- once the
17 application is complete, how long does it
18 take you to process and notify the student of
19 the acceptance or rejection of their
20 application for TAP?

21 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well --

22 SENATOR STAVISKY: Approximately.

23 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah. Once
24 an application is submitted, we engage with

1 the college that has admitted the student and
2 the college then needs to certify that the
3 student has fulfilled all the requirements of
4 the college level, and they would give us
5 then a sense of whether the student has been
6 admitted.

7 Obviously there is -- there are
8 requirements that the students must meet in
9 order for them to be admitted, and once that
10 is done, their college certifies, then we
11 proceed then with our commitment to fund the
12 students once admitted.

13 I'm going to have --

14 SENATOR STAVISKY: Just roughly.

15 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: I just wanted
16 to add, Senator, that there's a lot of
17 variables. HESC provides estimated awards,
18 so it's not a final number. Because
19 obviously students, you know, come in and say
20 at the -- you know, they'll file an
21 application in October but it's not until
22 like March that then the student decides
23 where they will be attending school.

24 Also there are variables that even

1 once an application is submitted and
2 completed, as Dr. Linares says, that there
3 are -- colleges need to certify the student's
4 enrollment, that they decide to go to the
5 school that they initially said they would,
6 and they may need to make changes to that.

7 And also the certification is done
8 after, you know, the last drop date for those
9 classes. So there are a lot of variables
10 that go into -- from the beginning of an
11 application to when the student gets the
12 ultimate award.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

14 Real quick, the Opportunity Programs.
15 I know you administer some, SED administers
16 others, et cetera. But the Governor proposed
17 I think it's a \$9 million cut to the
18 Opportunity Programs. What do you think will
19 be the result on the number of students who
20 are able to attend college as a result if
21 this funding is not restored?

22 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah, happy
23 to look into that and give you a response.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.
2 Assembly.

3 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblymember
4 Clark.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Thank you,
6 Chair Pretlow. And thank you, Dr. Linares,
7 for being here.

8 A couple of quick questions based on
9 sort of the Governor's proposed budget.

10 The first is there is a big cut in the
11 Excelsior Scholarship proposed in her budget.
12 Is that due to just lack of people trying to
13 apply for it or use it?

14 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, I can
15 say that the Excelsior Scholarship has been a
16 tremendous success in so many ways. We now
17 have close to 27,000 students participating
18 to help cause the -- you know, it's a
19 last-dollar program, so the cost is
20 \$121 million. I think it's --

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Are you seeing a
22 drop in people applying for it, though, at
23 this point?

24 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I will have

1 to look and see. But it's been, on average,
2 27. It was a little higher before, but right
3 now it is up there, it's a robust and very
4 successful program --

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: I just think it
6 would be good to know what enrollment numbers
7 are looking like, given the fact that there
8 was a proposal to cut it.

9 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah, we can
10 provide that to you.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: That would be
12 fantastic.

13 Do you work -- do you ensure all
14 colleges have a plan in place to ensure TAP
15 students stay on course in terms of making
16 sure they, you know, meet the demands of what
17 the TAP parameters are so that they stay in
18 and receive their money every year and then
19 end up graduating? Do you work with colleges
20 to ensure that they have a plan to stay on
21 TAP students to complete their degrees?

22 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, we have
23 a seamless process of engaging colleges with
24 the process of the payments due to them --

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: But also making
2 sure those students stay in the right major
3 classes, that they're matriculating what they
4 need to do to continue --

5 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We're very
6 focused on the commitment that we have to
7 help them fulfill their financial obligations
8 and also to comply with a mandate to help pay
9 for college with the funding that each
10 student qualifies for.

11 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Are you hearing
12 more from students as we've raised TAP
13 eligibility income and awards but there's
14 still now this group that's not
15 Pell-eligible, that is going to maybe receive
16 some TAP money, that things like room and
17 board and others have just gotten so
18 supportive that it's been harder to, you
19 know, make college work for them?

20 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: All that we
21 have received is really positive news --

22 (Time clock sounds.)

23 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: -- about the
24 increment, you know, into the funds.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: I know they're
2 going to yell. Thank you.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

4 Senator Robert Jackson.

5 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

6 And Dr. Linares, thank you for being
7 here, along with your vice president. Good
8 to have you both in front of us.

9 And it seems like you're doing a lot,
10 based on the statistics that you've put in
11 your statement, and I appreciate that. But
12 how can we increase it even more? With
13 respect to many of my colleagues who put out
14 a weekly update electronically about things
15 that we have done for the week and things
16 that are coming up in the near future, how
17 can you get involved in that process or are
18 you involved in that process so more people
19 are aware of what's available through the New
20 York State Higher Education Services Corp.?

21 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, the
22 main platform that we have to raise awareness
23 of the existence of the over 30 programs that
24 we have is the completely renovated website

1 that we have.

2 We also have aggressive outreach
3 connecting with colleges and universities,
4 both public and private. But we also
5 interact very closely with lower education to
6 help inform families and also students in
7 trying to prepare to enter the halls of
8 college. We do that working closely with the
9 commissioner of Education.

10 We have one program that is highly
11 successful, the GEAR UP program, which goes
12 to students in the seventh grade, about 7,000
13 students prepare to engage in entering
14 college. And we take those 7,000 students
15 through their first year of college.

16 We engage in that fashion with the
17 stakeholders in communities and nonprofit
18 institutions as well. The guidance
19 counselors are key, the social workers, if we
20 could have more, even more important.

21 But our partnership with
22 superintendents through the Department of
23 Education but also with our partners in
24 higher education, we're taking that to new

1 heights. Because, you know, unless we have a
2 seamless process of preparing students from
3 early years in schools, we're not going to
4 see that pipeline reach college.

5 The other thing we're doing is it's
6 not enough to get a student, with the support
7 of the family, to enter college. We want to
8 see them finish and get their degree.

9 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

10 SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Ra,
12 five minutes.

13 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

14 Good afternoon. Dr. Linares, I want
15 to ask you about a program -- we've had
16 conversations about this many times in the
17 past -- the Child Welfare Worker Incentive
18 Scholarship and the Child Welfare Worker Loan
19 Forgiveness Program.

20 But before I ask the question, in the
21 past your office has provided us with some
22 numbers in terms of the number of
23 applications that are coming into these
24 programs. So if you're able to, after the

1 hearing, follow up and give us up-to-date
2 numbers on that, that would be appreciated.

3 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I'd be glad
4 to share with you all the specifics with your
5 question.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Great.

7 As you know, in the past they were
8 funded at \$50,000 each. Last year the Child
9 Welfare Worker Incentive Scholarship was
10 funded at \$150,000, which was \$100,000 more
11 than the Governor's proposal. So that
12 information I think would be helpful to us
13 when looking at, you know, what a proper
14 amount is so that we are meeting the need and
15 the demand for those places. Because these
16 are individuals, obviously, that we are
17 trying to recruit into a field that certainly
18 needs workers.

19 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: The other issue that
21 has come up is with regard to constituents
22 trying to contact your agency.

23 My understanding is that you book
24 appointments in advance over the phone to

1 assist students, but I was told as of
2 February 20th the online system had no
3 availabilities till March 6th. Does the
4 agency -- is it staffing? Is it
5 technological? What can we do to make sure
6 students are able to contact the agency in a
7 timely manner to get assistance?

8 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, I thank
9 you for the question. We are currently
10 working with the OCFS, the Office of Children
11 and Family Services, to bring online once
12 again the first-level call center. This
13 would allow us to double the type of response
14 that we have. We get about 130,000 contacts
15 on an annual basis. This would bring, with a
16 call center, that level to 260,000 contacts.

17 And so we're working now to really
18 have this established shortly.

19 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: Can I add --

20 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Please.

21 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: -- to that?

22 Yes, that we are -- our goal is to this year,
23 with the support of the OCFS contract, the
24 Level 1 support, is that we will once again

1 be an agency that will accept incoming calls.
2 So that will greatly reduce the frustration
3 that I think a lot of students felt last
4 year.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Great. That's great
6 to hear. You know, obviously we've made I
7 think great strides in the state in terms of
8 a lot of our aid programs, and I just want to
9 make sure we can help those students sign up,
10 so.

11 Excelsior Scholarship. The Governor
12 has a proposal to combine the
13 Excelsior Scholarship and the Excelsior
14 Tuition Tax Credit payments to SUNY and CUNY
15 to simplify and streamline the award payment.

16 Do you know, are there any eligibility
17 requirements that are changing, or is it just
18 basically streamlining these programs
19 together?

20 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: It's
21 simplifying. Right now I believe we do two
22 payments and we want to simplify it to make
23 it one payment. There is no budgetary impact
24 of this, it is simply making it easier for

1 schools.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. And as you
3 know, you know, the Excelsior Scholarship,
4 while it was sold as, you know, something
5 that was going to benefit -- you know, and it
6 benefits a good number of students. But it
7 really is TAP, at the end of the day, that is
8 what is providing essentially, you know, a
9 free tuition experience for our students.

10 So do you know at this point, though,
11 what -- I believe it used to be somewhere
12 around 200,000 students were going to SUNY
13 basically tuition-free under TAP, and maybe
14 10 percent of that number under Excelsior.
15 Do you know what those numbers are at this
16 point?

17 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I had
18 mentioned 27,000 students benefit currently
19 from the program.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: I've run out of time,
21 but thank you.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

23 Senator Webb, are you here? She sent
24 me a note saying she wanted to ask; I guess

1 she hasn't gotten back in the room.

2 Then I'm going to take my time now.

3 Thank you.

4 So do we track what the rate of
5 default on loans is now and how we are doing
6 in comparison to previous years?

7 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Are you
8 referring to -- I didn't hear the --

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: The default rate
10 on student loans.

11 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Oh. We
12 shifted, as a guaranty agency, to our
13 portfolio. So that's being closed out as of
14 March 31st. So that was transferred, all the
15 portfolio was transferred to Trellis through
16 the Department of Education, so we're no
17 longer engaged with -- we're focusing
18 primarily, our main emphasis is on the
19 administration of the grants and scholarships
20 loan focusing program.

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So you don't have
22 an ability to track the data on whether the
23 default rate is going up or down or on what
24 kinds of colleges? You think that would be

1 the Department of Education?

2 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: As we
3 transition we can look into -- we can look
4 into that to share any information that we
5 have. But we're no longer, at this point,
6 engaged as a --

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I knew you were
8 no longer the structured entity --

9 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah. Yeah.
10 But we can look -- we can look and see --

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And you're
12 suggesting the State Education Department
13 would know that? Is that what I heard you
14 say?

15 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: No, I'm
16 saying -- no, the Department of Education at
17 the federal level.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: The federal
19 level, okay.

20 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes. Yes.
21 Yes.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And in the same
23 vein, do we know what the debt rate of the
24 students graduating colleges in New York are,

1 and whether that's going up or down?

2 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We don't have
3 that, but we can look and get back to you.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And would that in
5 theory also be federally tracked only, not
6 tracked here in the state?

7 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We -- we --
8 when we were a guaranty agency, that was
9 something that we would handle because it was
10 with a default service contract that we had,
11 as a guaranty agency.

12 But we no longer engage --

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: That's why I'm
14 asking, because I remember from years ago we
15 used to be able to get that kind of data.
16 And then I was listening to my colleagues
17 asking you questions, and we met the other
18 day, and I was thinking, Oh, we never see
19 data like that anymore.

20 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We're no
21 longer a revenue-generating agency at this
22 point.

23 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: Yeah, and we
24 are scheduled as Dr. Linares said, to finish

1 the transition by the end of March,
2 March 31st. And like what we're doing right
3 now, I know it sounds like why aren't you
4 done yet, but there were a lot of materials
5 that had to be reviewed so that we had the
6 accurate information to transfer over to the
7 agency that's going to, you know, take over
8 this part of it.

9 So we're right now just doing cleanup.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And that's
11 supposed to be the federal Department of
12 Education.

13 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Except we might
15 be losing the federal Department of
16 Education.

17 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: No, the
18 Department of Education at the federal level
19 has been engaged with -- we had the, you
20 know, the contract and that was transferred
21 completely through them.

22 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: And it's the
23 Guaranty Agency Financial Report that we're
24 going to be submitting to USD OE by the end of

1 March. So they'll have all the information.

2 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And again, not a
3 fair question for you, but if I read the
4 papers right, we might not even have said
5 federal agency to accept a report or track
6 any of this data going forward, which I think
7 should be a bit of a concern for all of us.

8 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes.

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And I guess I
10 will ask similar questions of the chancellor
11 when she comes up next, because God knows
12 what's happening at the federal level. But I
13 think that those are reasonable questions for
14 us here in New York to want to know, right --

15 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes. Agreed.

16 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- are students
17 facing larger or smaller default rates on
18 student loans, as it might get harder and
19 harder to get them, and are we seeing our
20 students graduating with larger or smaller
21 debt levels than in comparison to the past?
22 Because we know that that is a huge burden on
23 college students, affects whether or not they
24 decide to go to college, stay in college,

1 choose different career paths based on how
2 large a debt they face.

3 So I think it's really important data
4 for us all to have and be able to use --

5 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I agree.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: -- in thinking
7 through policy for the future.

8 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I agree a
9 hundred percent.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you for
13 your work.

14 Assembly.

15 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

16 We've been joined by Assemblywoman
17 Chandler-Waterman and Assemblywoman Griffin.

18 And the next person is Jo Anne Simon.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

20 Thank you for your testimony. And
21 it's always good to see you -- classmates, as
22 it were.

23 So I have a question for you along the
24 lines of some others. But as you know, the

1 U.S. Department of Education used to have all
2 these different loan servicers and now
3 they've consolidated many more of them. But
4 on February 14th the acting deputy secretary
5 for civil rights sent out a not so love
6 letter to institutions really kind of turning
7 the 14th Amendment on its head and applying
8 the Harvard admissions case to all manner of
9 claims.

10 I'm very concerned that this will
11 impact the availability of money in the
12 system and repayment terms in the servicing
13 of those loans. Can you tell me what you
14 think might be in store?

15 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Any reduction
16 of funding from the federal level is bound to
17 have an impact on our mission collectively to
18 really help educate our students.
19 notwithstanding all the efforts on your
20 behalf and on the Governor's to increase
21 funding, particularly with TAP.

22 But, you know, when I highlighted all
23 the efforts that we took to make sure that we
24 bring to New York the 225 million that we

1 lost in 2023 simply because the FAFSA was not
2 being filled out, it goes to respond in how
3 critical every penny, every cent is to really
4 get a student that enters college to the
5 finish line without having to borrow. Which
6 is, you know, the biggest challenge that we
7 still have because, you know, the money that
8 we have available can only take you so far
9 based on your family income.

10 So anything that will diminish what
11 we're getting from the federal level will
12 have a big impact on our efforts.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Because the
14 banks make the loans, the guaranteed student
15 loans. So my question is I guess whether you
16 think the banks will start reducing the
17 amount of loans that they give because of
18 their concerns.

19 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: That's --
20 that's quite a question. That's a question
21 that is hard to respond to. But still it
22 will be detrimental, because at the end of
23 the day if the only thing standing between a
24 student is a small loan that they will make,

1 it will be impacted. They won't get the
2 degree unless they get it.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator?

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Webb.

6 SENATOR WEBB: Well, now it's
7 afternoon. Good afternoon.

8 So I just wanted to -- and thank you
9 for all of your work. I wanted to lean in --
10 I know we've been spending a lot of time in
11 the Legislature most certainly trying to
12 expand access for workforce development,
13 especially in the area of healthcare and of
14 course agriculture. In the Governor's budget
15 there's a proposal to decrease funding for
16 the nursing faculty scholarship program, and
17 then also with 50,000 for the New York Young
18 Farmers Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program.

19 Given how critical those two service
20 areas are, can you talk about what the
21 impacts of those decreases would be?

22 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, if I
23 understand your question, the faculty --

24 SENATOR WEBB: The nursing faculty --

1 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: The nursing
2 faculty. We have 90 students receiving
3 funding for -- through that scholarship, and
4 they upon graduation will become faculty in
5 the school. So that is set to proceed based
6 on what the scholarship provides.

7 Do you want to add anything?

8 SENATOR WEBB: But the decrease, what
9 will that effect look like with the decrease
10 in funding for that program?

11 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Well, right
12 now we proceed with the allocated funding
13 that was designated by the Legislature and
14 the Governor. So we implement the program.
15 And it involves 90 students.

16 SENATOR WEBB: So at the most, 90?

17 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Students,
18 yeah.

19 SENATOR WEBB: And for the New York
20 Young Farmer Loan Forgiveness Program, how
21 many students would that decrease of \$50,000
22 in funding -- how many students would be
23 impacted by that proposed cut?

24 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: I will get back

1 to you with the number of students currently
2 participating. But it is a very small --
3 very small number.

4 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: It's very
5 small. It's limited to \$50,000.

6 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: It's a tiny
7 amount.

8 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah. That's
9 limiting as it is.

10 SENATOR WEBB: But I would say just
11 given, you know, most certainly some of the
12 federal cuts that we've been seeing,
13 especially in the area of agriculture and
14 most certainly in healthcare, any investments
15 that we can make that move us in an increase
16 is always appreciated.

17 In my area I have a number of farms in
18 my district, not exclusively, but I
19 definitely wanted to lift that up. So if you
20 could get those numbers to me, that would be
21 great. I'd appreciate it.

22 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: Yeah.

23 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I would say
24 also that's where the expansion of the

1 part-time program and the emphasis on the
2 Opportunity Scholarship comes in, in
3 responding to that concern that you share.

4 SENATOR WEBB: Okay. Thank you both.

5 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman
6 Griffin.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Thank you,
8 Chair. And thank you to you both for being
9 here.

10 I have a couple of questions. On the
11 Excelsior Scholarship, did you say that only
12 27,000 students are in that program in the
13 state? Is it only 27,000?

14 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: I'm sorry?

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Did you,
16 before -- Assemblyman Ra asked. And was that
17 correct, did I understand it correctly that
18 only 27,000 students are on the Excelsior
19 Scholarship in the state?

20 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: For '23-'24
21 yes.

22 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yes, the
23 '23-'24 academic year we had 27,000. Which
24 is consistent with how the program began.

1 It's been maintaining itself at that level,
2 yes.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: And is
4 there -- I have never met a student in my
5 district who is part of the Excelsior
6 program. Can we get any information like on
7 the amount of students who are in that
8 scholarship program in our district?

9 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Sure. We can
10 look into that and provide you information on
11 it.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay,
13 terrific.

14 And then my other question is with
15 the -- you know, the changes in TAP, which
16 were welcome, you know, the TAP increases, I
17 just wondered, do families and students know
18 about all of the options they may have, like
19 Excelsior, TAP, like all the different
20 options?

21 And does Higher Ed ever come to any of
22 the school districts or sometimes it's
23 regional, sometimes like I'm -- I represent
24 8021 on the South Shore of Nassau County.

1 Sometimes there's a countywide College Day,
2 or sometimes there's a College Day for both
3 counties on Long Island. And I wondered,
4 does Higher Ed -- I have four kids, we went
5 to those. I don't remember if Higher Ed was
6 there. Do you ever go to those and you're
7 there to provide information to families?

8 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We do.

9 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: Yes.

10 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We engage in
11 offering training. We also engage in
12 attending events, particularly large events.
13 We're a smaller agency, but we have a big
14 heart and big outreach. That's why we rely a
15 lot on our collaboration, especially with the
16 State Department of Education, because they
17 have the large network and the
18 superintendents and so forth.

19 So we also engage with digital
20 meetings and connecting. We have different
21 types of ways of approaching directly
22 students and families. And we also engage
23 with guidance counselors and college
24 administrators at the same time.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay. Thank
2 you very much.

3 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Sure.

4 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

5 Assemblywoman Seawright.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

7 It's great to see both of you today.

8 I have a question for Dr. Linares.

9 How is your agency helping senior citizens?

10 Is there assistance with them applying for
11 aid? And does TAP apply?

12 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: On your
13 second question, definitely they qualify for
14 TAP, as most New Yorkers, as long as they
15 meet the criteria.

16 We engage particularly with the
17 vulnerable populations, which, you know,
18 seniors are. Whenever we see a senior get
19 back into the classroom in higher ed, I think
20 that's celebrated like by everybody.

21 So we do take note of this,
22 particularly working closely with our
23 partners, to make sure that they receive not
24 just the information that they need but also

1 they're aware of the options available to
2 them.

3 We do that also with those who have
4 disabilities, and also with those who have
5 limitations with language as well. So we're
6 sensitive to vulnerable populations.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: That was my
8 next question, people with disabilities.

9 Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

11 Assemblywoman Kelles.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: Thank you so
13 much.

14 I have a handful of questions; I'll
15 try to get through them quickly.

16 My understanding is that HESC uses an
17 applicant's income from two years prior to
18 the school year in determining TAP. Is that
19 right?

20 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: Yes.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: So is there a
22 mechanism in place to adjust TAP funding when
23 their income changes, a family member loses a
24 job or, you know, some unforeseen issue

1 happens?

2 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: There is a way
3 to do that, but it depends where they are in
4 the process. So, you know, it's hard to say
5 exactly when it would happen --

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: But not for
7 eligibility.

8 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: Excuse me?

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: Not for
10 eligibility? Like if that happens within
11 that two-year period, they are --

12 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: There are
13 changes that can be made, but it will depend
14 on where that application -- you know, where
15 it is in the process.

16 So if it's at the end of the school
17 year and the student has been certified by
18 the college or the university, then, you
19 know, that's their final -- that's going to
20 be their final --

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: So we don't
22 really have a mechanism. Okay, thank you.

23 And in 2023 we made the part-time TAP
24 eligible for microcredentials. I'm curious

1 to hear how that's going, if we have seen an
2 increase in participation in
3 microcredentials.

4 You don't have to answer that all
5 here, but I'd love to see some data on usage
6 of TAP for microcredentials.

7 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: The
8 part-time, the part-time students?

9 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: Correct.

10 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: The non-degree.

11 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: The
12 non-degree? I believe we had 4,200 students
13 receiving --

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: We can
15 follow-up. Three minutes go by really fast.

16 Another question. What happens to
17 someone's TAP or Excelsior funding if they
18 take a leave of absence? My understanding is
19 that they have a set number of -- period of
20 time and we assess whether there's like,
21 progressing. But we've seen a significant
22 amount of increase of mental health issues,
23 physical health issues.

24 So do we adjust? Do we allow for time

1 for them to take a leave of absence? Or do
2 they get penalized because they're still
3 within a restricted period of time to be
4 eligible for Excelsior?

5 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: It would be
6 reviewed with the college on a case-by-case
7 basis, I would say.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: But we do
9 actually allow for room for adjustment for
10 that? Or is there a set number of semesters
11 that --

12 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: If there are
13 extenuating circumstances impacting the
14 students?

15 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: Yeah.

16 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Yeah.

17 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: I will confirm
18 with you.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: We can follow
20 up on that. Thank you so much.

21 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: Sure.

22 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman
23 Chandler-Waterman.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN:

1 Thank you, Chair.

2 And thank you to the panelists today.

3 I just wanted to know, like with --
4 because I have four kids, two in college, one
5 graduated from college, and there's always
6 some challenge where it's very stressful for
7 the students to go through the process of
8 TAP, FAFSA, these grant applications.

9 What coordinated efforts between you,
10 the school, and your jurisdiction do you have
11 to make to simplify, you know, certain things
12 that's happening more readily than others
13 that can make it more easier for a student
14 going through this process?

15 Because these are wonderful grant
16 programs, but if you don't -- if you're
17 having problems navigating or, you know, how
18 you putting things forward may not be
19 presented in the best way for -- to get these
20 applications, how do you support or recommend
21 support in these areas?

22 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We place a
23 lot of emphasis in engaging on an ongoing
24 basis with school counselors and also when

1 the students are in college, also connecting
2 with the college advisors as well.

3 We do that on an ongoing basis because
4 we understand how important it is to try to
5 inform students about the options that they
6 have, but also to make sure that they are
7 getting what they're entitled to in terms of
8 what we have available in terms of funding
9 for them.

10 But it is key that we continue to
11 engage with those who support -- or sometimes
12 it's not just the guidance counselors, it's
13 sometimes through the family, connecting with
14 the family as well. Because the family is a
15 tremendous support to those students with
16 whatever challenges they face. And with that
17 also, all the institutions that support in
18 the community, we -- we emphasize a lot in
19 connecting with the network of support,
20 nonprofit institutions that support families
21 within the neighborhoods or the regions where
22 those students are attending.

23 So it's an ongoing process. We also
24 work closely with social workers when there

1 is that connection made with them. But
2 again, we rely on the relationships and the
3 partnerships that we have with both systems,
4 the public and the private.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN:

6 Okay. Is there a catalog of services written
7 down to support families and students, like
8 something in writing? I know you're saying
9 that there's a lot of supportive systems. Is
10 that in one place?

11 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: We'll be glad
12 to provide to you the multiple trainings that
13 we have geared for students and families.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: All
15 right, thank you. I look forward to seeing
16 that.

17 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: I would add
18 that if students can sign up for text
19 messages, that's the best way.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN:

21 Okay, thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you. Thank
23 you both. This ends this section of the
24 hearing. And I want to thank you for all

1 that you do, Dr. Linares.

2 HESC PRESIDENT LINARES: Thank you.

3 HESC EX. VP GONZÁLEZ: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: And for her second
5 time, Dr. Betty Rosa.

6 (Laughter.)

7 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: The encore
8 performance.

9 (Pause; off the record.)

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Good morning.

11 No? No, good afternoon. No, it's not
12 evening, don't be ridiculous, although you
13 don't know in this room.

14 Hi, everyone. Thanks for being with
15 us. And Chancellor, do you want to introduce
16 everyone or do you just want to speak and
17 roll along? Whichever you like.

18 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I'm going to
19 do the introduction in the testimony -- I
20 mean in the (showing).

21 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I understand.

22 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay.

23 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Ten minutes for
24 the chancellor.

1 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay. So
2 first of all, thank you for the opportunity.
3 So I'm going to say good afternoon,
4 Chairs Krueger and Pretlow, Stavisky and
5 Hyndman. So good afternoon to all. I'm
6 Dr. Betty Rosa, New York State Commissioner
7 of Education -- I'm still called "chancellor"
8 a lot of times.

9 I'm pleased to be joined today by
10 Senior Deputy Commissioner of Educational
11 Policy Dr. Jeffrey Matteson, to my left;
12 Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Special
13 Education and Access Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, to
14 his left. It's important to note that
15 ACCES-VR at this time -- I just want to make
16 a comment -- and Office of Special Education
17 are now one unified office working to ensure
18 that school districts and transition
19 coordinators are knowledgeable about
20 vocational rehab services, so let me state
21 that right up-front.

22 Deputy Commissioner for the Office of
23 Higher Education Dr. William Murphy. And
24 Dr. David Hamilton, OP, assistant

1 commissioner for the Office of Professions.
2 And also Dr. Christina Coughlin, who will be
3 looking at some of the issues and questions
4 about our fiscal health.

5 The overarching goal of the Education
6 Department -- and I also want to
7 acknowledge -- I know that our Chancellor and
8 our Board of Regents are watching, so I do
9 want to acknowledge not only their support,
10 but the overarching goal of education and the
11 Board of Regents is to advance educational
12 equity, access and opportunity for all
13 New York State students. Our budget requests
14 are built to deliver on this urgent mission.

15 The Executive Budget proposal includes
16 the College in High School Opportunities
17 program, which expands dual-enrollment
18 programs that allow high school students to
19 take college courses, saving time and money.
20 The proposed budget allocates 14 million to
21 create a new College in High School
22 Opportunity Fund, significantly expanding
23 these programs statewide. New programs will
24 require partnerships between districts and

1 higher education institutions, offering
2 students a chance to earn at least 12 credits
3 aligned with degrees and careers with
4 high-quality academic support.

5 Currently the state funds three
6 dual-enrollment programs but fewer, and I
7 want to state this, fewer than 2 percent of
8 New York high school students participate in
9 Smart Scholars, Smart Transfer and P-TECH.

10 The Executive Budget proposes to
11 transfer -- I just want to state right
12 upfront -- the oversight of licensing of
13 certain health-related professions from the
14 department's Office of the Professions to the
15 State Department of Health. We strongly urge
16 you to reject this proposal and stand with us
17 as we work to uphold our commitment to
18 safeguarding public health and safety. We
19 have been absolutely working with our
20 commissioner partner Department of Health,
21 Jim McDonald. And we will continue to do
22 such.

23 Now we move to the proposals we are
24 advocating for that were not included in the

1 Executive Budget.

2 We requested permission for the Office
3 of the Professions to allocate 1.6 million in
4 additional revenue from existing fees. This
5 funding will support the success of the
6 modernization program, which also enables the
7 office to continue its core responsibilities
8 in licensure, registration and discipline,
9 ensuring public protection.

10 We're also requesting a 16.9 million
11 increase for additional Opportunity Programs,
12 which provide critical pathways and support
13 for our students. This includes the Science
14 and Technology Entry Program for high school
15 students and the Collegiate Science and
16 Technology Entry Program, both designed to
17 increase the number of economically
18 disadvantaged students prepared for college
19 and careers in math, science, technology,
20 health and licensed professions.

21 The Liberty Partnership Programs, LPP,
22 offer comprehensive pre-college and dropout
23 prevention services to youth in urban, rural
24 and suburban communities across New York

1 State. The Higher Education Opportunity
2 Program, HEOP, supports students who would
3 otherwise be unable to attend a postsecondary
4 educational institution due to their
5 educational and economic circumstances.

6 We are also requesting an additional
7 2 million to enhance support and services for
8 students with disabilities in postsecondary
9 education. This investment will not only
10 ensure their academic success but also help
11 create greater employment opportunities for
12 them. We stress this because a lot of times
13 our students with educational needs need to
14 transition from high school, which a lot of
15 them have IEPs, to being in college but need
16 the kind of support in order to be
17 successful.

18 The State Education Department, in
19 addition, requires adequate funding for
20 maintenance, enhancement and repairs. Our
21 building has been in tremendous need. We
22 recently had a serious situation in terms of
23 water damage, and we are still living with
24 that and had to relocate staff. While we

1 appreciate the 20 million allocated in the
2 Executive Budget for these repairs, a more
3 accurate estimate of the necessary work is
4 closer to 40 million.

5 Moving on to the Bureau of Proprietary
6 School Supervision, the department needs
7 additional staff to effectively oversee these
8 schools and ensure the quality of education
9 and safety of the students who are enrolled
10 in these programs. SED is requesting
11 authorization to transfer funding from the
12 Tuition Reimbursement Account to the Bureau
13 of Proprietary School Supervision Account, at
14 a maximum of 750,000 per year. This funding
15 would pay for seven staff that would increase
16 our ability to identify schools that are in
17 danger of closing due to financial deficit,
18 and also to ensure the quality and compliance
19 of direct health training and meet the
20 Department of Health program requirements.

21 IT. In order to support all areas of
22 the department's work, including higher
23 education, we are requesting funding for the
24 next phase of the department's IT

1 transformation, including upgrades to our
2 state aid and data systems and funding for
3 staffing that will enable us to serve
4 schools, institutions of higher education,
5 and licensed professionals more efficiently
6 and effectively.

7 Finally, the New York State Museum and
8 the Office of Cultural Ed are making
9 significant strides to advance critical
10 projects even in the face of the serious
11 challenges posed by an outdated and
12 unpredictable funding model. This financial
13 instability has led to a persistent
14 multi-million-dollar deficit projected to
15 exceed 7 million by March 2026.

16 We have proposed alternative
17 sustainable funding methods to safeguard the
18 State Museum, Library and Archives. We urge
19 you to consider adopting either one of these
20 options.

21 Higher education has a significant
22 impact on the cultural landscape. We are
23 actively exploring opportunities within our
24 own Museum to expand research and teacher

1 preparation programs, drawing inspiration
2 from a successful model at the American
3 Museum of Natural History, which we met with
4 the president yesterday. And we have been
5 continuing to work with him and the staff to
6 ensure that the teacher residency program is
7 one of those that is part of our
8 conversations. With our public programming
9 thriving, we look forward to building on
10 their success and leveraging our unique
11 resources to create additional new and
12 innovative programs.

13 I also would like to say that in the
14 last two weeks, especially last week
15 during -- when schools were closed, our
16 students had opportunities, and our families
17 and our communities, to really get to the
18 Museum, and we have some displays and
19 obviously a brochure to share with you of how
20 our children's focus is an active, exciting
21 part of this conversation. So more than glad
22 to share, at the end of this presentation,
23 how we are turning this into a community, an
24 active focus for children, parents and this

1 community.

2 I thank you for this opportunity.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you very
4 much.

5 And in the absence of Chair Pretlow,
6 we will be starting with the Assembly
7 Education chair for 10 minutes.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,
9 Chair Krueger. Thank you, Dr. Rosa, to you
10 and your team. I feel like my colleague
11 who's not here, Khaleel Anderson: I have a
12 bill --

13 (Laughter.)

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: -- regarding
15 the transfer to funding for the Tuition
16 Reimbursement Account. I know everyone knows
17 my history regarding BPSS and the work that
18 they do, and so I've been told by staff that
19 the "no" that we received previously from the
20 Governor, I think we may have a workaround.
21 So we'll work on that to increase additional
22 staffing in that department.

23 Because of the work that they do and
24 because of the audit that they received, I

1 think when you work with not enough staff, as
2 SED has been doing for years, the output is
3 only as good as those employees that do the
4 heavy lifting. And I thank the entire SED
5 for the work that they do and all the
6 unfunded mandates and bills that we pass in
7 our houses.

8 In regards to the -- I was able to
9 meet with students with disabilities last
10 week. And understanding that the executive
11 proposal would cut \$2 million, what are your
12 most recent estimates of the number of
13 students that the funding currently serves?
14 And has that need grown, and if so, by how
15 much?

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah, so let
17 me say this. Our -- we're going to give you
18 the exact number, and it really works out to
19 be about \$40 per student, even if we were
20 able to get the money that we had last year,
21 which was four -- we had 4 million last year,
22 and that was as a result of certain of our
23 legislators who really committed to this.

24 And we have to think about not

1 retrofit, but fit, that our higher ed
2 institutions have to be open and have the
3 kinds of resources and have the kind of
4 support in order for all -- all means all --
5 all of our students to succeed.

6 So we have been asking for --
7 actually, we would like it to be more than
8 the 6 million because we know that there's a
9 tremendous need for the number of students
10 that participate. But we also understand
11 that in many cases we also have to do a great
12 deal of work in professional development and
13 support and staff that really work with our
14 students to make sure that they have a sense
15 of identifying their needs, but also
16 benefiting from these resources. So --

17 DEPUTY CMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: So the
18 current number of students with disabilities
19 that have self-identified is 10,000. That
20 number is growing every year, 10,000
21 students -- I'm sorry, it's 100,000. I
22 apologize. It's 100,000 students.

23 (Overtalk; mic out.)

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MURPHY: -- grown

1 about 15 to 20 percent in recent years from
2 like the high 70,000s. We're now up to like
3 92,000 plus.

4 And as you know, like the
5 suballocations actually go to SUNY, CUNY and
6 the independents so they're able to work with
7 whether they want to do training or bring in
8 technology supports. But I will say like if
9 you look at like between 40 and 60 dollars
10 per postsecondary student with disabilities,
11 obviously it doesn't go, you know, as far as
12 we would want it to go, yeah.

13 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Especially
14 with equipment. You know, Assemblywoman,
15 when you think about the technology that's
16 out there today and the kind of equipment
17 that really can support students benefiting
18 and being successful and going to the centers
19 and making sure that they truly feel that
20 this equipment and the staffing and the sense
21 of belonging and welcoming and being part of
22 the higher ed institution needs to really
23 become part of the fabric, not an add-on.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I know it's

1 not in your report, but can you tell me what
2 is the budget for VR, ACCES-VR?

3 DEPUTY CMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: It's around
4 126 million for VR.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: And how many
6 students do you serve annually?

7 DEPUTY CMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: The
8 percentage grows every year. We're a little
9 over 50 percent of the customers are
10 students, and we're defining students between
11 the ages of 14 to 21.

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And the
13 reason for the 14 is the transition.

14 DEPUTY CMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: Yes. Yes.
15 In our state -- in the state plan that's
16 submitted to the Rehabilitation Services
17 Administration, every state has to define
18 their starting age. And so because the
19 Commission for the Blind starts at 14, we
20 agreed that we would start at 14 as well.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: And what is
22 the time frame between an institution, you
23 know, accessing or applying and actually
24 receiving money from VR?

1 DEPUTY CMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: So when you
2 say an institution, are you talking about
3 customers or are you talking about the
4 enhancing supports and services initiative?

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: The customers.

6 DEPUTY CMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: Okay. So
7 it -- we -- according to federal regulations,
8 there are some very specific timelines: 60
9 days to make a person eligible for services.
10 And then after a person is eligible, 90 days
11 to create their employment plan.

12 We are -- we've done a lot of work,
13 we're averaging around 30 to 45 days per
14 application to make you eligible, and then
15 we're around 60 days for developing your IPE.
16 A lot of that has to do with providing the
17 documents in a timely manner, getting
18 assessments and psychologicals from
19 psychologists. So there are a lot of
20 factors, but on average we are definitely
21 within the federal requirements.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I'm thinking
23 about all of the -- you talk about there's a
24 lot of students graduating from high school

1 with an IEP and not knowing the course,
2 parents not knowing the options they have
3 because it's not a GED task, it's not a high
4 school diploma, and sometimes they find VR,
5 you know --

6 DEPUTY CMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: And
7 sometimes they don't.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: -- a rather
9 roundabout way. So, you know, hopefully they
10 do. And then the additional documentation
11 again that's required for families, which is
12 why I asked the questions, because sometimes
13 even if they don't find our offices, a lot --
14 not every high school counselor is always
15 well versed in the programs that the state --
16 as we were just talking about, that the state
17 offers.

18 And so how do you, with the -- is
19 there outreach --

20 DEPUTY CMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: Yes.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Is there a
22 budget for that to make sure?

23 DEPUTY CMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: Yes. But
24 this gets back to the commissioner's comments

1 in her testimony. This is the reason why we
2 unified the Office of Special Ed with
3 ACCES-VR. The vision is a seamless
4 transition from secondary high school into
5 adult career services.

6 The truth of the matter is that
7 transition really starts at Early
8 Intervention, through the transition to
9 pre-K, special ed, into K-12 and into adult
10 services. All along the way at these various
11 transition points families need information
12 about what is the future for their child and
13 how do they connect to services. Then we
14 have a package of services in what we call
15 pre-employment transition services that are
16 really meant to allow students to explore
17 career options -- what are you interested in,
18 what might you like, work opportunities, work
19 experiences.

20 So by having these two offices within
21 State Ed working more closely together and
22 providing joint guidance to the field, we can
23 get more information to families. We do, at
24 the voc-rehab level, have counselors assigned

1 to schools and they go into schools and they
2 meet with families and staff. But we
3 recognize that everyone doesn't get the
4 information.

5 And so the work that we're now doing
6 as a combined office is to address that very
7 issue.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: And language
9 access within VR, how is that?

10 DEPUTY CMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: So we are
11 using actually some assistive technology to
12 help with translation services. We've had
13 some success with that.

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay, thank
15 you.

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And
17 Assemblywoman, to emphasize, at the
18 foundational level. Meaning that for a long
19 time we had the Office of Special Ed on one
20 side, even in the department.

21 So when you had these babies starting
22 zero to 3, 3 to 5, in -- some of them not
23 even in inclusive types of settings -- this
24 is an incredible opportunity to start at that

1 point, to start working with families to
2 really do the journey with, alongside of
3 families that need to understand that the
4 early stages, in the middle school, when they
5 enter high school with transition and all the
6 way through, as a P-20 process. So that's
7 what we have advanced.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay, I'll
9 come back with my other questions when I have
10 enough time. Thank you, Chair.

11 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

12 Next up is our chair, Toby Stavisky.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

14 Thank you, Commissioner, and to your
15 deputies, particularly Dr. Hamilton for being
16 so accessible when I have some questions.

17 The Governor, as you know, proposed
18 transferring some of your professions to the
19 Department of Health. In your opinion, are
20 they better qualified to assess both the
21 applications for licensure, the program
22 approvals, et cetera?

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, let me
24 start with -- Senator, we've been doing --

1 obviously, you know, the fact that we've been
2 doing this for 134 years is a start.

3 But we have really been -- you know,
4 when you think about expertise and when you
5 think about not trying to fragment, you know,
6 the professions and not trying to necessarily
7 engage in a situation that we have been
8 working so hard at improving not only the
9 safety and the quality of response to the
10 field, we really, truly believe that this
11 suggestion, recommendation, decision is not
12 one that's in the best interests of the
13 public.

14 So with that, Dr. Hamilton?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMILTON: Thank
16 you, Commissioner. Thank you, Senator.

17 We have highly qualified, well-trained
18 and very experienced staff who evaluate
19 education from international programs and
20 from domestic programs to determine if people
21 meet the requirements. We have board offices
22 that help guide the practice of the
23 professions in terms of working with our
24 counsel and others to make sure that there

1 are practice alerts and guidelines. We have
2 professional discipline that takes care of
3 the public safety.

4 So we have an entire team. And to
5 start trying to figure out how we break part
6 of that team apart to send some people to the
7 Department of Health to deal with medicine --
8 which is an important profession, but it's
9 one that we've been doing well and doing for
10 a long time.

11 So we don't see the need for this type
12 of change.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

14 How long does it take to process,
15 let's say, an application for licensure once
16 all of the credentials are submitted?
17 Approximately.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMILTON: Once
19 all the credentials are submitted, we get
20 those individuals licensed within two weeks.
21 And last year we licensed about 97,000
22 people, compared to 50,000 just in 2019.

23 So our volume's gone up, but thanks to
24 the investments from the Legislature letting

1 us spend money to add staff, we've been able
2 to improve our services as well as working on
3 the modernization, which will help the entire
4 system move even better.

5 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. And
6 thank you for what you're doing.

7 The commissioner mentioned some of the
8 Opportunity Programs in response to the
9 Assemblywoman's questions. The Governor has
10 proposed a cut to all of the Opportunity --
11 or many of -- some of the Opportunity
12 Programs administered by SED, others by HESC.

13 What would be the effect -- I asked
14 this question of Dr. Linares before. What
15 would be the effect on the student population
16 of such cuts to CSTEP and HEOP and Liberty,
17 all of the Opportunity Programs?

18 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So let me
19 start by saying, Senator, that in a time when
20 we are looking to increase the footprint in
21 higher education, at a time when we're
22 looking not only just to increase the
23 footprint but also increase the footprint of
24 many types of individuals who have not had

1 the opportunity to be part of the landscape
2 of higher education.

3 I think that this kind of a decision
4 really in many ways impedes having the kind
5 of increase of not only the diversity of
6 students but also supporting higher
7 education. As we're talking about -- earlier
8 today we talked about the increase of having
9 individuals be part of higher education. And
10 then when you diminish any population, you're
11 going to obviously see that in terms of these
12 programs, because these programs support,
13 financially support individuals who would
14 have a challenging time paying -- paying and
15 having the support system and resources.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MURPHY: Yeah, and
17 just to add a little bit to that, for HEOP,
18 Liberty Partnerships, CSTEP and STEP, all of
19 them, you know, to -- if we're cutting them
20 not only could we serve less students, but we
21 would have less resources for staff. These
22 are usually network-of-support programs.
23 They make us a leader in opportunity programs
24 across the country where they're, you know,

1 decades old.

2 But a particularly urgent area relates
3 to our CSTEP and STEP programs, because they
4 are in a new funding cycle year and the
5 cuts -- even maintaining the level right now
6 could result in a smaller footprint of
7 programs for our CSTEP and STEP programs.
8 Even just maintaining the current level, let
9 alone if you don't get the increases, because
10 of the sensitivity with the new cycle. And
11 you'll hear more about that, obviously, from
12 the panels coming up, with APACS.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And Senator,
15 it would helpful to give you a total number.
16 We're talking about 45,000 students. So
17 that's a huge footprint.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: It's a large
19 number.

20 Getting back to the Article VIIIs in
21 the Governor's budget that affect the various
22 professions, I think it's being done in
23 response to underserved areas where there's a
24 need for additional healthcare providers.

1 There are shortages in some areas.

2 How would you address the shortfalls,
3 the changes in experience, et cetera, that --
4 how do we resolve the issue of areas not
5 having certain healthcare providers? Rural
6 areas, for example. Urban areas.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMILTON: Well,
8 thank you, Senator. There are a number of
9 ways that can be approached and is being
10 approached. In some areas they've expanded
11 the scope of practice for a profession. Like
12 pharmacy -- pharmacists 20 years ago couldn't
13 administer an immunization, now they can.

14 In other areas, the Legislature has
15 provided collaborative relationships.
16 There's been a proposal for several years to
17 allow dental hygienists who collaborate with
18 a dentist to be able to provide advanced
19 services that really help the patient, and
20 that that would be one way to get into
21 especially those rural areas. We have
22 counties where we have just a handful of
23 dentists, and getting the dental hygienists
24 there would be a big improvement.

1 That also requires that we invest in
2 education to train the individuals to get
3 into these professions where there's a high
4 demand for services.

5 The other option that is suggested in
6 the Article VIIs, with Commissioner Rosa and
7 Commissioner McDonald from the Department of
8 Health we have been working to identify
9 pathways and there's legislation introduced
10 that would allow medical assistants to
11 administer immunizations that are prepared by
12 a physician in the physician's office or --
13 again, to take some of the burden off the
14 professional nurse because there are so few
15 nurses in offices.

16 So there are many creative ways, and
17 we are really trying to work to find those
18 creative ways while still continuing to
19 protect the public.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you. And
21 we've discussed the changes in scope of
22 practice for the medical assistants.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMILTON: Yes.

24 SENATOR STAVISKY: And I think we're

1 making progress on that issue.

2 Commissioner Rosa, you spoke about
3 high school students and the work, the
4 college work that they do. How can we
5 improve the -- let me give you an example. I
6 used to represent Townsend Harris
7 High School, which is on the campus of
8 Queens College, and paying for this became
9 very difficult. There are other areas where
10 high school students are taking college
11 credits in the high school -- advanced
12 placement, for example.

13 How can we provide a more seamless
14 pathway to college for the high school
15 seniors or juniors?

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So I think
17 this whole idea of the high school and
18 college, the 12 credits, is obviously a good
19 commitment. But I do think, you know, the
20 whole notion of dual-credit programs,
21 expanding those, really gives an opportunity
22 for students to even experience, to have
23 that -- to your point, that taste of knowing
24 that they can take college credits that

1 obviously are going to advance their
2 interests, are going to give them an
3 opportunity to not only experience but
4 experiment --

5 (Time clock sounds.)

6 SENATOR STAVISKY: Hold that thought.
7 It's like the bell at 3 o'clock in the
8 school.

9 (Laughter.)

10 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Having been
11 a principal, I --

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: You understand
13 the bell.

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Exactly.

15 SENATOR STAVISKY: Spoken as a former
16 high school teacher.

17 (Laughter.)

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assemblymember
19 Clark.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Thank you.
21 Thank you, Chair.

22 And thank you, Dr. Rosa, and to your
23 entire team, both for being here but also
24 your commitment to our next generation. The

1 most important thing I think as a state that
2 we do is honoring our commitment to them and
3 ensuring they are educated and ready for
4 leading us next. And as the mom of three
5 teenagers, very, very, very dedicated to
6 this.

7 I have a couple of questions, one on
8 Bundy Aid. I understand going after sort of
9 colleges with large endowments has been --
10 you know, it's an easy thing to look at. But
11 when you look at University of Rochester in
12 Rochester, the reason it has a large
13 endowment is because of the medical center,
14 which is very, very -- they are very
15 restricted as to what they can and can't do
16 with it. And so not giving them access to
17 Bundy Aid gives me pause in the sense that we
18 may be taking children -- or taking students
19 who have the opportunity to go to these
20 schools from getting access to a premier
21 university.

22 Do you see that as a challenge in
23 terms of ensuring that kids have access to
24 some of our premier schools, understanding

1 that endowments are sort of locked up in
2 terms of what they can and can't use money
3 for?

4 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I do -- I'm
5 going to ask my senior deputy, but I do see
6 any investment -- you know, when we think
7 about all of our institutions at -- every
8 single opportunity that we can commit to in
9 terms of investing is an investment that we
10 know ultimately will pay off. So I think
11 cutting back any kind of investment is going
12 to definitely have an impact.

13 And, you know, the Bundy Aid obviously
14 will have an impact. So I think that a lot
15 of times when we think about, you know, kind
16 of taking from A to, you know, make sure that
17 it's B, we have to think about education
18 being the kind of investment that should be
19 across the board and not necessarily thinking
20 about taking it from one place to
21 supporting --

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: Well, I have
23 another quick question, but we can talk about
24 that more.

1 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: And I want to
3 talk about the professions for a thing, and
4 taking another -- a different side of it.
5 Which is obviously we have in our rural areas
6 some real issues with the ability to get
7 people there to do healthcare efficiency, to
8 ensure we're doing that.

9 But one of my biggest fears is that we
10 are educating some amazing people in our
11 state and they're leaving for other states to
12 operate at a higher level. And so as we look
13 at scopes, and hoping that we can partner
14 with SED in a more meaningful way to really
15 understand that that's only going to add to
16 our brain-drain issue. And if we're
17 educating people in our top schools in these
18 professions, we really need to be a better
19 convener and have better conversations about
20 how we look at scopes to make sure they stay
21 here, while also protecting the safety of our
22 residents.

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I totally
24 agree. I agree. That commitment has to be

1 a two-way commitment in order to --

2 (Time clock sounds.)

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CLARK: And I look
4 forward to working with you on it.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Webb.

6 SENATOR WEBB: Thank you,
7 Commissioner Rosa and your entire team, for
8 being here.

9 I know I've had several conversations
10 with you in the past about most certainly
11 expanding resources for our students. I
12 wanted to ask a more specific question
13 pertaining to access to mental health
14 services for our students in college.

15 And so I know as a state we've made a
16 lot of investments in expanding mental health
17 services. So right now we have students that
18 when they leave their home state for college
19 they have to discontinue therapy with their
20 hometown therapist. And so this also is true
21 for New Yorkers who are going to schools in
22 another state.

23 And so my question is, how do we
24 address this? Because this is leading to a

1 disruption in existing treatment which
2 exposes them to risk of setting back on their
3 progress -- falling back on their progress,
4 rather. And I know there are several other
5 states, up to 41 states, I believe, that I
6 believe have signed on to the Psych Pact,
7 which is the interstate therapist compact.
8 And so I was curious if you could elaborate
9 as to where we stand in New York with regards
10 to that and if we are looking signing on,
11 just out of curiosity.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMILTON: Thank
13 you, Senator.

14 Right now New York does not
15 participate in any of the licensing compacts,
16 even though there have been some proposed --
17 the budget includes a nursing compact,
18 earlier legislation has addressed the
19 Psych Pact for doctoral-level psychologists,
20 and there's compacts for other professions.

21 All of those require that the state
22 cede all its authority about licensing,
23 establishing standards, and defining practice
24 to a private body that's made up of one

1 representative from each of the participating
2 states. So if we were the 42nd state to
3 join, we'd have one vote that may or may not
4 be the same as the other 41 in something like
5 Psy Pact. That could really affect your
6 authority as legislators to oversee the
7 practice of the professions, make sure people
8 are getting access to qualified practitioners
9 and safe services.

10 SENATOR WEBB: I know there's a lot of
11 benefits. I know in New York, especially in
12 the Department of Education, we set very high
13 standards, so that's not where I'm coming
14 from. But I just don't quite understand how
15 our potential participation would lead to us
16 losing our authority when there are other
17 states that I would imagine still have the
18 ability to have regulation, oversight, you
19 know, just given the nature of this
20 particular issue.

21 I'm just curious -- and we can talk
22 further offline about it too.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMILTON: We can
24 meet with you, because it is very

1 complicated.

2 But compacts not only allow people to
3 come into New York, they allow people to
4 leave New York, which gets back to the
5 question about brain drain, whether people
6 are going directly or practicing
7 electronically.

8 SENATOR WEBB: Okay, I'll definitely
9 follow-up with you. Thank you.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HAMILTON: Thank
11 you, Senator.

12 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

13 Next we have Assemblywoman Jo Anne
14 Simon.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: How exciting.

16 So thank you all for your testimony
17 and for always being so accessible.

18 And just combining the Office of
19 Special Education and ACCES-VR, brilliant
20 move. I don't know why we didn't do it
21 20 years ago, although ACCES-VR was not
22 called ACCES-VR 20 years ago, but you get my
23 point. So thank you, I think that's great.

24 I do want to raise an issue which is

1 kind of two hats that I wear that I know you
2 share concerns about, and that is, you know,
3 I'm chairing Mental Health now, and of course
4 mental health and loneliness and lack of
5 self-esteem are big issues in our students.
6 Obviously COVID has had an impact on that.
7 But it also goes to this issue about our
8 children reading and how when our children
9 can read, they have better self-esteem and
10 feel better about themselves.

11 I'm a little concerned that the
12 Governor's budget didn't include funding for
13 enough staffing for State Ed to do an
14 assessment of the education prep programs
15 that were called for under our state action
16 plan that we all worked on and the Governor's
17 office supported, et cetera. I'm concerned
18 that we may end up having a little arrested
19 development there.

20 Can you talk about how important it is
21 to be able to start doing that very important
22 work?

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So I'm going
24 to start by saying that, you know, the notion

1 of mental health obviously is one that we
2 have been struggling with for a while, even
3 before the pandemic. The pandemic
4 exacerbated it, and we know that.

5 And to look at, you know, having
6 fiscal support to assess, to have the data is
7 so critical, because not only does that help
8 us to then put together an action plan to
9 support that, it's something that we know,
10 given our modernization and the kinds of
11 things we're trying to do to wrap our arms
12 around that.

13 We do work -- just so you know,
14 Commissioner Sullivan, that's another great
15 partner. And in our -- some of our monthly
16 meetings that we have with commissioner --
17 you know, we have them monthly with
18 Chancellor King, we do have conversations
19 about how we can support, at the higher ed
20 level, both in OP, looking at OP and looking
21 at higher ed, what are the kinds of things
22 that we can do, not only assessing but also
23 developing responses to -- you know, to the
24 needs of our students as they even make those

1 transitions from, you know, high school into
2 college or in some cases through career
3 education as well.

4 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

5 Senator Griffo, five-minute ranker.

6 SENATOR GRIFFO: Good afternoon.

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Good
8 afternoon.

9 SENATOR GRIFFO: So to follow up on
10 the Governor's Executive Budget, just curious
11 to get your perspective, when we talk about
12 rejecting the proposals relative to the
13 Office of Professions. And you do believe
14 that you have the adequate infrastructure in
15 place to deal with these issues, correct?

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes, without
17 a doubt.

18 SENATOR GRIFFO: So as a result of
19 that, what do you think the impetus and the
20 motivation was behind such a proposal? And
21 if you can, maybe address maybe some of the
22 criticisms of the past relative to length of
23 time or staff inadequacies, things of that
24 nature.

NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah, I do think we are your house -- I said that earlier -- and so I think what sometimes happens is, you know, we work very closely with a lot of our commissioners. And there's an understanding of that interagency work in terms of the work.

That doesn't necessarily -- you know, my humble opinion, it doesn't necessarily sometimes make its way to -- you know, I'm not part of the conversations at the Governor's cabinet, so we're pretty dependent on messaging the kind of work we're doing through our collaboration with -- whether it's Labor or, you know, in this particular -- DOH, and so forth and so on.

So I do think that sometimes there is this desire to think that things can be done better if in fact, you know, you move it from A to B. In our particular case, we had internal conversations with some of the members like Commissioner McDonald -- who, by the way, did this work in his previous life in Rhode Island. And, you know, again, I

1 can't speak for him, but we know that it is
2 a -- there is a commitment that it should
3 stay with us and not move.

4 SENATOR GRIFFO: Was there any
5 conversation or discussion with you relative
6 to this proposal before it was made, or were
7 you blindsided?

8 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Oh, no,
9 these are -- I think for the last couple of
10 years since I've testified, these come -- you
11 know, I think that the Legislature has asked
12 that some of these not be part of the
13 proposal, because these are policy. Or, you
14 know, I think they become sometimes
15 negotiating points. And so sometimes I feel
16 like we're part of the negotiating points and
17 not necessarily that they're done with the
18 intent to necessarily move these.

19 I know I've spoken to some of you
20 about, you know, the issue of having a
21 movement, whether it's the Museum or OP, I
22 think we ran through nutrition once upon a
23 time. These are movements that sometimes
24 people want to make, but other times they're

1 good negotiating points.

2 SENATOR GRIFFO: But you do believe
3 that any issues of any deficiencies or
4 criticisms that you may have experienced in
5 the past, that you've been able to address
6 and rectify as a result of your structure --

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I think that
8 we stand as a department, as an agency, with
9 our numbers of the kind of work that we do
10 despite the fact that we don't necessarily --
11 you know, it's like the Museum having a
12 \$7 million deficit. Despite that, we still
13 continue to innovate and we continue to do
14 quality work on behalf of this state and our
15 communities.

16 SENATOR GRIFFO: Would you just touch
17 on quickly -- at the end, you talked about an
18 additional need for an additional 20 million,
19 maybe, for improvements at the SED Building.
20 What's the nature of the work that would
21 require that?

22 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.
23 Christina?

24 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Thank you,

1 Senator -- (mic issue.)

2 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Great
3 question.

4 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: That is a good
5 question. Thank you very much, Senator.

6 It's a historic building and they --
7 all buildings need upkeep. And this one has
8 suffered from years of underinvestment. And
9 what's happening right now, at the top and
10 exterior of the building, is that water is
11 intruding, it's coming in through the
12 skylights. We need to replace them. They're
13 not historical.

14 We have water coming in through pipes
15 on the roof. And on that historic facade we
16 have water coming down through the inside of
17 the columns; it freezes; parts are cracking
18 and breaking off. The skin on the exterior
19 of the building has water in it.

20 So it's a lot of work, and
21 unfortunately it's very expensive work. But
22 it's what you need to do to maintain a
23 historical building like that.

24 SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman
2 Kelles.

3 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: Thank you so
4 much for your patience with all of us and
5 still being here.

6 So a bunch of questions, we'll
7 probably not get to all of them, so hopefully
8 I'll follow up with you.

9 The first, the Liberty Partnership
10 Program is set to receive 3.8 million to
11 enhance college access and mental health
12 support. And I wanted to get a sense from
13 you how you feel that these new funds will be
14 allocated specifically to ensure that
15 students from underserved communities have
16 equal access to these funds.

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: You know
18 what, I really had a tough time hearing the
19 question.

20 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: No, no, no,
21 that's okay. This is better.

22 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: This is
24 specifically related to the Liberty

1 Partnership Program. And it's set to receive
2 the additional \$3.8 million funding, and I
3 wanted to know if you could give me a sense
4 of how you are going to ensure the
5 allocation -- there's sufficient allocation
6 to underserved communities with those funds.

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Sure.

8 Bill?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MURPHY: I
10 apologize, which partnership program?

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Liberty.
12 Liberty.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MURPHY: Oh, the
14 Liberty Partnerships, I'm sorry.

15 Yes. So yeah, again, this is one
16 where we're asking for a 15 percent increase.
17 And the footprint of this has grown to -- I
18 think it's around 17,000 students right now.
19 And, you know, this is really one of those
20 vital programs that not only works on a lot
21 of academic interventions but interventions
22 to make sure that students are now getting
23 ready to get into like some of the more
24 advanced careers they're thinking about, like

1 college and career pathways.

2 So we know that unless the funding
3 keeps up for that amount of students, they're
4 not able to do a lot of like summer
5 orientation sessions with students, working
6 with them --

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: Do you have a
8 plan of doing the outreach into the most
9 rural underserved areas to make sure that
10 they have access to these additional funds?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MURPHY: Oh, yes.
12 Yeah. And I know that like when we -- when
13 we're working with the programs and we're at
14 the conferences, you know, that they're going
15 to be discussing different ways and different
16 avenues to make sure that they have the right
17 outreach to reach those, yeah.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: I would love to
19 hear about those, follow up, and then I can
20 show those in my communities as well.

21 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yeah, we
22 have been spending, right, an enormous amount
23 of time in North Country and recently just
24 looking at the kinds of services. Because

1 there is mentoring for this, and the skill
2 development, as you know, mentoring process,
3 knowledge base, all of that is critical.

4 And so what we --

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: You have to get
6 to them early.

7 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Absolutely.
8 So I will definitely make sure that we
9 share --

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: Thank you so
11 much.

12 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: -- and where
13 the programs --

14 ASSEMBLYWOMAN KELLES: -- the
15 breakdown is. That would be great.

16 And then the other question you might
17 not -- we might have to follow up. But
18 regarding the Office of Cultural Education,
19 and you've requested the increase in the fee
20 from the -- the transaction fee, \$10 to \$15.
21 That's 12 million, I think.

22 How are you going to balance the
23 potential impact of these increases on
24 low-income individuals? That's what my

1 question is. And we can follow up offline.
2 But that's always my concern, is that we
3 don't -- that we balance, you know,
4 advantages and --

5 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman
6 Chandler-Waterman.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN:
8 Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

9 Thank you, Commissioner and your team,
10 for your work especially around enhanced
11 supports for students with disabilities, as
12 we discussed, ensuring funds are restored and
13 fully funded to properly increase and expand
14 the faculty and training. Mental health is a
15 big deal. Mental health literacy and
16 identifying students with disabilities and
17 mental health conditions is really big for me
18 and my constituency.

19 I just want to change the conversation
20 a little bit. As we know, we depend heavily
21 on our vital services from our local
22 nonprofits, organizations, to bolster the
23 work, right, in our community -- wraparound
24 services, after-school programs, et cetera.

1 Oftentimes there's challenges with the
2 procurement process that's not really on
3 them, it's really on the agency.

4 So what is the procurement process and
5 timelines allocated? Is there any challenges
6 that we're having? Because I have some
7 reports of nonprofits that from 2014, they
8 haven't received the funds for after-school.

9 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So we're
10 going to go through -- the procurement
11 process usually in most situations, we're
12 talking about from the development of an RFP
13 to execution, we're talking about -- and of
14 course we work with DOB -- this is about
15 10 months to get this done. So it -- it
16 is --

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: --
18 member allocated funds to CBOs, to our
19 community-based organizations.

20 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: It's a little
21 different for member funds. But -- because
22 there's not an RFP process. But there is a
23 process.

24 So if you have a particular group in

1 your constituency that is having a challenge,
2 I would urge them to just call us and we'll
3 try to work it out. There is a process
4 that's defined by state law where we have to
5 get them registered as a vendor, and that can
6 be burdensome for smaller nonprofits. And we
7 recognize that. We try to provide
8 assistance. But it's not really our system;
9 we're just the front agency for that.

10 But we do try to help. So I would
11 hope that your nonprofits would reach out,
12 and we'll do our best.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN: And
14 I'm sure there's other members that have this
15 challenge, so I'm interested in what
16 supportive services for the community-based
17 organizations that we depend so heavily on to
18 provide such vital services.

19 So maybe it's a conversation we could
20 have about what support is needed and how can
21 we get to that level so they wouldn't have
22 these challenges with procurement.

23 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: You know, I think
24 my staff would love to have that conversation

1 with you.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN:

3 Okay, thank you so much. I appreciate it.

4 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman
6 Griffin.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Thank you very
8 much, Chair.

9 And good to see you all here today.

10 I have a couple of questions. With
11 the -- you've asked for an increase for
12 students with disabilities, which I
13 wholeheartedly agree with. I just was
14 curious, what level of funding is it now? We
15 asked for a 2 million increase. What funding
16 level are you at now?

17 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Okay, we
18 asked for 6 in total.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay.

20 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Last year we
21 had 4.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay. So you
23 had 4, you're looking for 6 in total.

24 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Correct.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: So an increase
2 of 2, obviously.

3 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Correct.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: And with that,
5 I wonder are your disability services for
6 students commensurate throughout SUNY/CUNY,
7 or are you focused at some schools providing
8 more services? Like, you know, putting more
9 resources at certain schools, there could be
10 an argument to make for that. I just
11 wondered what do you do at the schools?

12 DEPUTY CMMR. MEYERS-RUFF: Yes, so
13 I'll start and then I'll hand it over to
14 Bill.

15 So first I want to say that even at
16 the 6 million which we're hoping to get, it's
17 not enough. The original ask was 15 million.
18 And we asked for it for years, and it hasn't
19 quite happened. And we've had a lot of
20 legislative support to get to where we're at
21 now. So I just want to lay that foundation.

22 There's a formula that's part of the
23 original legislation, with SUNY and CUNY
24 admin getting a significant amount of

1 funds -- it's based on the number of enrolled
2 students with disabilities. So I had
3 referenced the 100,000 number, and my
4 colleague referenced 90,000. It's because
5 there is a delay in when the data gets
6 reported.

7 So students self-report, the colleges
8 and universities report that data to State
9 Ed. And so the most recent official number
10 is what Bill shared. However, what we're
11 hearing from the colleges and universities is
12 that every year those numbers are going up
13 and we're at 100,000 now.

14 Bill can talk a little bit more about
15 the formula that's utilized. Because it's
16 SUNY/CUNY, private and independent colleges
17 that can apply and have been applying and
18 receiving the funds.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: Okay, thank
20 you.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MURPHY: Yeah, and
22 I don't have a lot to add. I think you kind
23 of covered it comprehensively. But basically
24 that's what the formula is. They calculate

1 the number of students at SUNY, CUNY and then
2 the independents and allocate that according
3 to the number, and then they kind of use it
4 creatively to the ways that that fits into
5 what they're doing to serve the postsecondary
6 students with disabilities.

7 Like in other words, CUNY may already
8 have certain initiatives and they say, well,
9 we don't need to really beef up our -- you
10 know, universal design training for our
11 faculty, we need to do more with our, you
12 know, technology, you know, with
13 transcribing, et cetera.

14 So that's ultimately what happens, is
15 it's kind of just connected to the number of
16 postsecondary students with disabilities, and
17 that's how they allocate the funding. And
18 then they kind of use it creatively for the
19 ways to supplement what they've already been
20 using for those services.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN GRIFFIN: So -- thank
22 you. So if you're a family prospectively
23 looking at colleges, you want a college that
24 will address the special ed issues, there's

1 not a way to choose that, a school based on
2 that. Because it's based on -- I'm way over.
3 I'll follow up. Yeah, okay, thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Eachus.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you,
6 Chair Pretlow.

7 First of all, Commissioner Rosa, I
8 want to commend you on your testimony today.
9 Instead of telling all of us everything's
10 beautiful with the Governor's proposed
11 budget, you need money in a lot of places --
12 a lot of places. And I do appreciate you
13 being truthful and honest about that.

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Just a quick
16 statement for the preservation of the
17 Education Building. I commend you because
18 you've already started this, but I would
19 recommend it more, have more legislative
20 meetings and visits to that building. That's
21 what brings us to reality when we actually
22 can take a look at it.

23 What I would like to talk to you
24 about, though, is college and high school

1 opportunities. As a teacher for 40 years, I
2 taught both dual enrollment with a college
3 and the high school, but I also taught AP at
4 the high school. The difference is that when
5 you teach college courses, those college
6 courses don't necessarily transfer. Okay?
7 Sometimes not even to the college that you're
8 giving them in, because they just don't have
9 faith in us as high school teachers and so on
10 like that.

11 So I would make a recommendation that
12 we push on advanced placement courses, which
13 generally are accepted I think more widely.
14 You know, provided they can set the scores.
15 Like if you're going to an Ivy League school
16 you need a 5 on an AP exam and so on like
17 that. And they can set, the colleges can set
18 their own requirements.

19 But I think the AP courses would
20 actually be better accepted across the nation
21 as we offer them here in New York State. And
22 you're shaking your head yes, so I assume the
23 answer --

24 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I'm going to

1 say yes, the APs have a definite role. But
2 what I want to share with you is that with
3 the dual enrollment, the curriculum comes
4 from the college. The teachers are trained
5 to teach the core requirements and the
6 coursework.

7 So we're getting closer and closer to
8 the fact that it is the actual course,
9 because there's a lot of investments that
10 have been made. We have been able to observe
11 not only the curriculum, the teacher being
12 trained to do that, and some of those
13 teachers are -- guess what, they're adjuncts
14 in those.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: I know. I know.
16 But the schools do get beat up with the
17 textbook situation. Okay? In every college
18 course you go to, every year they want a new
19 textbook, it's the same thing they're
20 demanding of the high schools. Which is
21 sometimes very difficult to meet.

22 The final thing I just want to comment
23 on is that we know that in the past the
24 Governor has made a statement about mental

1 health clinics in each school building. I
2 immediately got calls about not having enough
3 room in the school buildings, and of course I
4 knew right off the bat with my experience in
5 mental health that there wasn't the staff
6 there.

7 So I hope we take kind of a realistic
8 approach to this. I would love to have a
9 mental health clinic in every building, but I
10 don't think it's very realistic.

11 And also the Governor's office said:
12 Oh, the money for that was already in their
13 budgets, even though the school districts
14 didn't know it.

15 Thank you.

16 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

18 Senator Stavisky for a three-minute
19 follow-up.

20 SENATOR STAVISKY: (Pause.) Sorry.
21 One quick question, and that concerns the
22 New York State Museum. Because a lot of
23 money has gone into it, and it's very hard to
24 see the result of that investment. And the

1 Governor obviously proposed transferring it
2 out of SED.

3 Can you explain to us why it has
4 deteriorated over the years to such an
5 extent, despite quite a bit of an investment?
6 Maybe I'm wrong about the investment. But
7 nevertheless, I think that issue ought to be
8 addressed.

9 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: So, Senator,
10 I'm going to start, because a lot of times
11 there's also -- the building itself, the
12 building as it sits, it's an OGS building.

13 We -- we hold -- it's like a
14 container, computer and software. We have
15 the -- we have the, you know, what I would
16 call the treasures of the institution. So
17 that's one issue.

18 The other issue is that we have been
19 running -- you know, even though your comment
20 about the funding, we have not been
21 receiving -- you know, we have asked for
22 the -- you know, for the \$10, \$12 which will
23 go very quickly into -- and we have done this
24 before, talked about the \$10, \$12 that's

1 attached to sales of homes. Or asking for
2 the 12 million appropriation. None of that
3 has happened, which is why we're at a
4 \$7 million deficit.

5 So funding has not been funding that
6 has been given in terms of support for the
7 museum.

8 NYSED CFO COUGHLIN: Thank you,
9 Commissioner. Thank you, Senator.

10 I think the distinction the
11 commissioner's making between the interior of
12 the building and the exterior is really
13 important. The Legislature has put some
14 money toward the exterior and for storage
15 spaces and for gallery renovation.

16 One of our challenges is with that fee
17 that was set in 2003 and has never been
18 adjusted for inflation, so it's worth
19 40 percent less than it was then. We have
20 struggled to operate that museum, and our
21 capacity in the museum -- we've reduced
22 staff, we've reduced staff, we haven't been
23 able to keep things up. You know, over time,
24 you just can't do what you want to.

1 So the commissioner has new management
2 there. They're working really hard with the
3 limited resources they have. But we need
4 that fee to get back where it was where you
5 were comfortable with in 2003 in terms of
6 purchasing power. With that, we'll have
7 the -- I don't know how to say it -- oomph to
8 keep moving forward on those capital
9 investments that you've made, so that we can
10 really present to the public of New York a
11 great facility. That's what we are
12 completely on board to do.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: In the remaining --
14 can we come up with some plan for
15 restructuring? That's all I'm asking.

16 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman
17 Seawright.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you
20 all for your testimony.

21 Commissioner Rosa, I have a piece of
22 legislation, it's an LGBT curriculum and
23 anti-discrimination bill. It passed in the
24 State of New Jersey, and they're teaching it

1 around the state.

2 Is this something that you would
3 support?

4 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: A hundred
5 percent.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: I think
7 given what we're seeing, it's such a
8 tumultuous time coming out of Washington,
9 that I would greatly appreciate it. Thank
10 you.

11 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Well, let me
12 add that we did, along with the AG, we signed
13 the guidance, as you saw, to make sure that
14 all of our students are supported.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Great.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman
18 Hyndman for her three-minute follow-up.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you.

20 So you had mentioned the Smart
21 Scholars program. How many schools in the
22 State of New York currently -- because it's a
23 grant, you have to apply for that, right?
24 It's a grant program. And I know the

1 Executive Budget wants to do more around
2 credits while in high school.

3 So how many students are you currently
4 serving with Smart Scholars?

5 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I think we
6 have 64 Smart Scholar projects, and about
7 8400 students.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Eighty to a
9 hundred?

10 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: I'm sorry,
11 8,400. Sorry. Eight thousand four hundred
12 students. And a total --

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: A big
14 difference.

15 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Yes. And a
16 total of, in our scholars, 64 Smart Scholars
17 projects, yes.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: And so with
19 those students, are you keeping track of how
20 many of them actually receive the college
21 credits, how many of them are actually
22 transferable?

23 You know, I do like the executive
24 proposal for that because of the costs

1 that -- we know that college is not getting
2 any cheaper, just more and more expensive.

3 Do you keep those numbers?

4 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER MATTESON: Yeah,
5 data is a real issue with the early college.

6 And that is why when we have
7 conversations with the chamber about putting
8 together a proposal like this, we want to
9 make data an integral part so that in
10 realtime we can produce data such as that:
11 Where are they at any given time? How are
12 they on the journey while they're in the
13 Early College High School or Smart Scholars
14 program as far as attainment of credits? And
15 what happens five years down the road?

16 Some of these are very young programs,
17 and we add more every year, but data
18 collection is very important. And in that
19 proposal any new ones moving forward, that is
20 going to be a requirement for receiving the
21 funding.

22 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I know student
23 data collection is something that you all
24 hold highly. I've had some bills that didn't

1 move because, you know, it took my student
2 collection.

3 How will you secure that information?

4 SR. DEP. COMMISSIONER MATTESON: Yeah,
5 for educational programs that are coming
6 right back to us, it's not a problem sharing
7 the information with the people who are
8 administering the program.

9 If it was going to be data that was
10 requested by an outside party or a non-public
11 entity, then there's a process for gathering
12 that data.

13 But for a school district to report
14 data, most of this is already in their
15 student data systems. They report a ton of
16 it to us. And the additional stuff that we
17 would need then to report going forward as
18 far as like what are the programs they're
19 actually engaging in and what's their
20 curriculum they've chosen, their pathway,
21 that would be done through a template that
22 we'll put into our regular data reporting
23 mechanism.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay, thank

1 you.

2 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And
3 Assemblywoman, we also wrote a grant and we
4 have been working with the Governor's office
5 on a statewide longitudinal data system in
6 order to create that P-20 process.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. Thank
8 you.

9 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman {sic}
10 John C. Liu.

11 SENATOR LIU: Thank you,
12 Chair Pretlow.

13 Hello, Commissioner.

14 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Hi, how are
15 you?

16 SENATOR LIU: Always good to see you.
17 I apologize, I had to attend meetings across
18 the street, but I'm glad to be back. And I
19 wasn't going to ask any questions, but I was
20 intrigued by your response to Assemblymember
21 Seawright that you are in full support of her
22 curriculum bill on the --

23 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: The fact
24 that a curriculum bill exists at the local

1 level -- school districts, we always go back
2 to this, school districts will use those at
3 the local level. Absolutely. Remember,
4 curriculum is at the local level.

5 SENATOR LIU: Okay.

6 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: And I know,
7 Senator, we go into this. We have standards
8 that we absolutely, you know, support, and
9 school districts make decisions at the local
10 level about curricula and programs.

11 SENATOR LIU: Mr. Chairman, I didn't
12 even ask the question and the commissioner
13 answered my question.

14 (Laughter.)

15 SENATOR LIU: Something's not right
16 about that, Mr. Chairman.

17 (Laughter.)

18 SENATOR LIU: And I still have two
19 minutes left. I cede my time, thank you.

20 NYSED COMMISSIONER ROSA: Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

22 And thank you, Commissioner, this ends
23 this panel. Thank you all for your
24 participation.

1 And I'm going to call up Panel C:
2 Professional Staff Congress of CUNY Local
3 2334; United University Professions; New York
4 Community College Trustees; Faculty
5 Federation of Erie Community College; and the
6 Graduate Students Employees Union of the
7 Communications Workers Union 1104.

8 (Pause.)

9 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay, just for the
10 people in the audiovisual -- they still use
11 that term, audiovisual? -- in the AV room
12 upstairs, could you just, starting from my
13 left, your right, just who you are so when
14 they put your name up on the board they know
15 who we are?

16 DR. DAVIS: Good afternoon. I'm
17 James Davis. I'm the president of the
18 Professional Staff Congress, the
19 City University of New York faculty and staff
20 union.

21 MR. SAKO: I'm Andrew Sako, president
22 of the Faculty Federation of Erie Community
23 College.

24 MR. CUSHMAN: -- chair, NYCCT.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Turn your
microphone on when you speak, please.

MR. CUSHMAN: There we go. Thank you.
George Cushman, chair, NYCCT.

DR. KOWAL: Frederick Kowal,
president, United University Professions,
faculty/staff at the State University of
New York.

MR. HERSHENSON: Brad Hershenson,
business agent, Graduate Student Employees
Union, CWA Local 1104.

CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay, welcome one and all. You can start in any order you choose. You each have three minutes for testimony, so.

DR. DAVIS: I'll begin. Good afternoon, Senate Chairpersons Krueger and Stavisky, Assembly Chairpersons Pretlow and Hyndman, and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Thank you for this hearing and indeed for your support, continued support for public higher education. We are grateful that the Legislature has supported CUNY.

1 Especially during Governor Hochul's
2 administration, you have built on the
3 Governor's investments to accelerate funding
4 for the university after decades of
5 disinvestment.

6 In addition, recent TAP expansions,
7 including to part-time students, and the
8 minimum TAP award, have helped to open new
9 doors to students. Those advances lead us
10 closer to realizing our goal of a New Deal
11 for CUNY, and indeed for a New Deal for
12 public higher education.

13 We want to thank Senator Gounardes and
14 Assemblymember Reyes for their leadership on
15 the legislation for the New Deal for CUNY.
16 It deserves to be fully funded and passed.

17 We can't really talk about the CUNY
18 budget without talking about the effort in DC
19 to dismantle federal agencies and services,
20 including many of the programs on which our
21 members and our students rely. The Trump
22 administration is using higher education as a
23 wedge. Medical research is in jeopardy, and
24 universities are being targeted for cuts, as

1 you know. Please do work with us and with
2 your representatives -- with our
3 representatives in Congress to protect our
4 great public universities.

5 We are happy to report that last month
6 our members voted overwhelmingly to ratify a
7 new collective bargaining agreement. We are
8 grateful the Governor has included expenses
9 associated with that contract in her budget.
10 As you heard from the CUNY administration,
11 they're asking for an additional \$34 million
12 in operating aid to cover the full costs of
13 that agreement, and we certainly support that
14 proposal.

15 We're also excited about the
16 Governor's Opportunity Promise Scholarship to
17 provide free tuition for associate's degree
18 programs in high-demand fields for
19 New Yorkers ages 25 to 55. We see it as a
20 great foundation on which we can build toward
21 the New Deal for Higher Education in New York
22 State. We urge you to support that program
23 and also to join us in advocating to
24 eliminate the age restrictions that would

1 exclude students coming directly out of
2 high school; to permit students to complete
3 those 60 credits towards their degree at any
4 CUNY or SUNY college, not just at the
5 community colleges; and also to include those
6 who have already completed a degree and are
7 returning for a second degree.

8 As enrollment increases, Albany must
9 increase investment in the faculty and the
10 staff that CUNY needs to improve retention
11 and student success. And I'm glad to talk
12 more, because I know my time is up, about our
13 retention and graduation rates. I want to
14 cede the time to my colleagues here at the
15 table, and thank you again for your support.

16 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you,
17 Mr. Davis. Okay.

18 MR. SAKO: Good afternoon,
19 Chairpersons and honorable members of the
20 Legislature, distinguished staff. I'm
21 Andrew Sako, and I'm the president of the
22 Faculty Federation of Erie Community College.
23 And I'd like to thank you for the opportunity
24 to testify today on the '25-'26 Executive

1 Budget.

2 My testimony will focus on issues
3 facing Erie Community College as well as the
4 29 other community colleges.

5 As you know, community colleges
6 educate and prepare all types of students for
7 our workforce as well as providing essential
8 foundations for those seeking to move to
9 four-year institutions. We also collaborate
10 with regional employers in developing and
11 providing flexible training to meet the local
12 needs.

13 While we appreciate the modest
14 increase in the operating aid in the
15 Executive Budget, we are disappointed that
16 our community colleges are slated to receive
17 the same level of base-aid funding that was
18 in last year's enacted budget. We need more
19 support, more financial support to teach at
20 the highest level we can possibly do for our
21 students.

22 Under state education law, as you all
23 know, you're supposed to give us 40 percent.
24 I've said this a million times and, you know,

1 I know you're probably tired of hearing it.
2 But if you look at the last 10 years, in
3 '08-'09 and '18-'19, the contribution has
4 decreased from about 31 percent to 25 percent
5 for community colleges. And it forced our
6 students to pay higher tuitions.

7 We are requesting -- through NYSUT, we
8 are requesting 429 million in base aid, and
9 we're also calling on the state to provide
10 another 95 million, which would bring us to
11 the 33 percent of what is statutorily
12 required. It is short of the 40 percent
13 obligation, but it would be a good step.

14 We'd welcome the opportunity as well
15 to participate in the process of designing a
16 new funding model for community colleges. We
17 must start working to insulate our campuses
18 from the short-term enrollment fluctuations
19 and prepare them for long-term growth and
20 stability.

21 We're also happy to see the SUNY ASAP
22 program. We are disappointed that only 13 of
23 the 30 community colleges are included in
24 that.

1 We're also asking for -- our campuses
2 are in need of infrastructure improvements,
3 and we're seeking an additional 130 million
4 for state-appropriated capital, exclusive of
5 the county match. This long-overdue
6 investment will enable our community colleges
7 to stabilize and will help our students,
8 which is our most important thing.

9 And I want to thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

11 MR. CUSHMAN: Thank you, Chairs
12 Pretlow, Krueger, Stavisky and Hyndman, and
13 members of the Senate and Assembly here. I
14 appreciate you having me.

15 My name is George Cushman. I'm a
16 trustee at Finger Lakes Community College and
17 chair of the New York Community College
18 Trustees, representing institutions that
19 transform the lives of more than
20 145,000 New Yorkers a year.

21 While we've made significant progress
22 together in supporting SUNY community
23 colleges, we stand at a critical juncture
24 where increased investment will determine

1 whether we can meet the evolving educational
2 and workforce needs.

3 Regarding Governor Hochul's
4 Opportunity Promise, we fully endorse this
5 transformative initiative to provide
6 tuition-free access for an estimated 35,000
7 additional New Yorkers annually. This
8 initiative will directly contribute to the
9 workforce development and regional economic
10 activity across all 30 SUNY community college
11 service areas.

12 As one college president said to me
13 before I came before you, "The Governor hit
14 the ball out of the park with this, but I am
15 really concerned that we don't have
16 sufficient resources to realize her vision."

17 To fully realize this vision, we
18 require an additional 100 million in
19 operational funding. Let me break that down.
20 First, 30 million for faculty and staff.
21 Nursing faculty salaries lag hospital wages
22 by 32 percent. Similar gaps exist with
23 advanced manufacturing instructors. We must
24 compete with industry to retain talent.

1 Second, \$30 million for high-cost
2 programs. Each student in these high-cost
3 programs creates a \$7500 to \$10,000 a year
4 deficit. Healthcare requires a 1:8
5 faculty-to-student ratio. Contrast that with
6 liberal arts, which is about 1:30. Advanced
7 manufacturing needs similar specialized
8 ratios. Without support, we must either
9 limit enrollment or risk financial stability.

10 Third, 30 million for program
11 expansion. Again, for every one of these
12 students we bring on, that gap still exists.
13 We won't be able to make it up on volume.
14 There's also a significant upfront investment
15 needed, as the chancellor mentioned earlier
16 today.

17 Fourth, 10 million for student
18 support. Forty percent of our students have
19 increased demand for mental health services.
20 Thirty-five percent of our students face food
21 insecurity.

22 We strongly support maintaining the
23 funding floor of the 8 million in additional
24 operating aid and ask that you add this

1 \$100 million in your one-house bills.

2 Thank you.

3 DR. KOWAL: Good afternoon,
4 Chairpersons Krueger, Pretlow, Stavisky and
5 Hyndman, esteemed members of the fiscal and
6 higher education committees. My name is
7 Dr. Frederick Kowal, and I'm president of
8 United University Professions.

9 I want to thank you for this
10 opportunity to testify today and for being
11 steadfast supporters of public higher
12 education and the work that UUP members do
13 across SUNY.

14 As my colleague Dr. Davis mentioned
15 earlier, higher education is under assault
16 from the federal government. It is
17 imperative that together we support what we
18 do jointly to make the lives of New Yorkers
19 and indeed Americans across this
20 country better through public higher
21 education -- it's now more than ever.

22 Though the Governor's '25-'26
23 Executive Budget is a great first step, SUNY
24 still has numerous unmet needs that I will

1 highlight today.

2 First, regarding operating aid. I ask
3 for total operating aid to increase by
4 212.1 million, 102 million of which would be
5 used to be directly allocated to the
6 17 campuses with structural deficits.

7 I appreciate the additional funding
8 you provided the last two years, which would
9 have been more than enough to close these
10 deficits. Unfortunately, the SUNY chancellor
11 and the Board of Trustees allocated it
12 inequitably. That's why it is critical to
13 directly allocate restricted operating aid in
14 the budget this year. You can find a table
15 of the deficits on page 3 of my written
16 testimony.

17 My next priority is state support for
18 SUNY's public teaching hospitals. I urge you
19 to treat SUNY hospitals like every other
20 state agency and entity, covering the costs
21 of their employee fringe budgets and debt
22 service permanently.

23 I support SUNY's request for a down
24 payment on employee fringe benefits of

1 \$70 million this year, which would grow to
2 100 percent over time.

3 I also want to express my deep
4 appreciation to you and to your colleagues
5 for being key allies in preventing the
6 closure of SUNY Downstate this past year. I
7 ask you to take the next step in supporting
8 this important cause, which is meeting
9 Downstate's capital needs, which will come to
10 \$1 billion. As a member of the Downstate
11 Community Advisory Board, many concerns have
12 arisen concerning the process that I would be
13 happy to discuss with you during the
14 question-and-answer period.

15 Based solely on the first public
16 hearing, Downstate clearly needs an
17 additional \$250 million in capital funding on
18 top of the Executive Budget's 750 million, to
19 ensure services remain at SUNY Downstate's
20 current location and enhance core specialty
21 inpatient services, including prenatal care
22 and the hospital's prized kidney transplant
23 centers.

24 There are other areas that I need to

1 address as well; the clock has run out. And
2 I will be happy to discuss them with you as
3 time goes on.

4 MR. HERSHENSON: Good afternoon,
5 Assemblymembers, Senators, committee chairs.
6 Thank you very much for taking the time to
7 host a hearing on higher education.

8 My name is Brad Hershenson. I'm
9 business agent for the Graduate Student
10 Employees Union CWA Local 1104. I'm here
11 today on behalf of nearly 5,000 hardworking
12 union members that are professional educators
13 across SUNY. We teach almost 40 percent of
14 the classes at SUNY, and our members conduct
15 amazing research in a variety of fields --
16 such as humanities, science and technology --
17 that not only helps pave the way for New York
18 to have a better future for all, but enhances
19 our competitiveness on a national and global
20 scale.

21 We must address the important issues
22 surrounding our system, addressing the needs
23 of our students, our workers and their
24 families, and our campuses by enhancing

1 support for our programs, including mental
2 health services.

3 Now is the time to (1) fully fund
4 collective bargaining agreements for our
5 workers and campuses and (2) make expansions
6 and enhancements to our programs and
7 offerings so even more students and their
8 families can join the SUNY family and thrive
9 together.

10 We have to make expansions to programs
11 to allow for other costs to be covered -- for
12 example, textbooks, laptops and equipment,
13 other items that are not just tuition and
14 fees. These are the real costs for students.
15 These are the real costs of pursuing an
16 education.

17 Lastly, our graduate student workers
18 need support. We very much appreciate your
19 hard work and the funding made available to
20 alleviate the plight we face with respect to
21 our fees as workers, and hope you will
22 continue to address college affordability
23 this session. We need your help.

24 We need a commitment to include

1 language in the budget that would provide the
2 support we need to eliminate fees for
3 graduate student workers once and for all.

4 As we know, many of our SUNY campuses
5 are engines of economic opportunity, so these
6 kinds of enhancements -- for example, the TAP
7 program, aid to support our campuses such as
8 the University at Albany -- will help
9 skyrocket enrollment and act as an investment
10 in our students and investment in our state.

11 The onus is on all of us collectively
12 to support our universities, which includes
13 goals to leverage our teaching success, our
14 research success, and drive economic and
15 workforce development with more funded
16 graduate students and their families across
17 our system.

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

20 Ms. Chandler-Waterman.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN:

22 Thank you, Chair.

23 I want to thank you all for your work
24 in higher education. As you may know, I

1 represent in Brooklyn, so President Kowal,
2 you know everybody needs SUNY Downstate
3 Health and Sciences University and Hospital
4 to remain open and fully invested in -- about
5 1 billion, as you discuss. And as you
6 stated, in making sure that the community
7 input process is intentional and prioritized.

8 So how is the process for the
9 Downstate Community Advisory Board going?
10 And the same thing you said about an
11 extension, can you talk -- and you could talk
12 the whole time. Go ahead.

13 DR. KOWAL: Thank you very much,
14 Assemblymember.

15 It is a distinct privilege to serve on
16 the Downstate Community Advisory Board
17 representing all of the three unions that
18 work there and serve the community while at
19 the same time being cognizant of the
20 community's deep needs for the best
21 healthcare possible, and the role that
22 Downstate has played in that community over
23 the years in terms of providing healthcare
24 and providing the top services that can be

1 provided while at the same time in the depths
2 of COVID, being a COVID-only hospital, and
3 because of that suffering hundreds of
4 millions of dollars in losses, in lost
5 revenue that the state never compensated them
6 for. So already there was this financial
7 hit.

8 Last year the plan to close Downstate
9 was terrible. I thank the Legislature for
10 stopping that, for working with the community
11 to do so. The board that has been created
12 first took eight months to be named, which is
13 unconscionable. And then our first meeting
14 took place late in December. There has only
15 been one public hearing. I have called both
16 within the deliberations of the board, but
17 also we heard from the community in the one
18 public hearing we've had so far, that there's
19 been a demand for more public hearings, more
20 public access to information so that there is
21 full transparency. That's the only way that
22 you're going to get a thriving hospital, but
23 also a plan that the entire community can get
24 around and support.

1 It is imperative that those who are
2 within the community, that are within SUNY,
3 in the Governor's office and all of us here
4 today, understand that whether we are
5 thinking about the education of the next
6 generation of healthcare professionals, about
7 the healthcare in Central Brooklyn or the
8 research that takes place there, lifesaving
9 research -- all of that is going to demand
10 the highest possible investment by the state.

11 Whatever it takes, it needs to be
12 done, because to not do so means that the
13 institution, whether you're talking about the
14 hospital or the educational institution,
15 they're going to fail. And when that
16 happens, people are going to die. And the
17 healthcare crisis we face in this country
18 that's being exacerbated by actions
19 undertaken by the Trump administration, those
20 situations have to be confronted directly and
21 aggressively. That can take place with a
22 proper plan developed with the community.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN:

24 Thank you.

1 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

2 Senator Toby Stavisky.

3 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you,
4 gentlemen.

5 Dr. Kowal, following up on your
6 statement on Downstate, earlier today
7 Chancellor King said he expected the results
8 by April 1st. Is that realistic or
9 optimistic or something of both?

10 DR. KOWAL: I'm a born optimist, but
11 April 1st is going to be extremely
12 challenging. We are studying an institution
13 that has a wealth of services, dimensions,
14 and forces at work within it and the
15 community. This is a very complex operation.

16 And the way I look at it, Senator, is
17 that we basically have from when we really
18 started serious work in January, we've got
19 three months. It took eight months to put
20 this board together, and we got less than
21 half that amount of time. What we heard loud
22 and clear from the community was that they
23 wanted the time extended not indefinitely --
24 no one wants that. We want this plan

1 developed and progress made, and therefore
2 there are very loud, committed voices both on
3 the panel and in the public that would like
4 to see an extension. The Governor can do so
5 to get us to June 1st, give us a little more
6 time so that we can be confident of doing the
7 right thing.

8 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

9 Professor Davis, you heard the -- I
10 don't know if you heard Chancellor Matos
11 Rodríguez today. Can you comment -- if you
12 heard it, would you comment on some of his --
13 is there anything you would like to comment
14 on that he spoke about today?

15 DR. DAVIS: Anything at all?

16 SENATOR STAVISKY: Well, what he spoke
17 about, obviously.

18 DR. DAVIS: Sure, of course.

19 Look, I think one of the encouraging
20 developments that we've seen in the past
21 couple of years in our dynamic with the CUNY
22 administration is that the CUNY
23 administration is now eager to name their
24 needs from a budgetary point of view in ways

1 that they were reticent to do in prior
2 executive administrations.

3 So that is a challenging thing because
4 the needs are enormous. On the other hand,
5 it's encouraging because I think we're
6 pulling in the same direction, the labor
7 union and the university, when it comes to
8 resources. I think the chancellor recognizes
9 that we need an increased number of full-time
10 faculty, we need more mental health
11 counselors, and we need more academic
12 advisors.

13 So I'm pleased also that they're in
14 pursuit of that remaining \$34 million to
15 close the gap in the collective bargaining
16 agreement, and I'm hopeful we can get a pay
17 bill sooner than later to make that happen.

18 SENATOR STAVISKY: And congratulations
19 on the contract. And they had it on their
20 sheet also, so I think there's unanimity.

21 Thank you.

22 DR. DAVIS: Thank you for your
23 support.

24 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman

1 Seawright.

2 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

3 Professor Davis, congratulations, as
4 the Senator said, on your contract.

5 You've mentioned a lot of good things
6 today like removing the age restriction, but
7 what would you consider your very top budget
8 priority?

9 DR. DAVIS: Well, the university had
10 an overall what they characterized as a
11 structural deficit, over \$200 million as
12 recently as a couple of years ago. And they
13 described I think the efforts that they've
14 made to reduce that now to \$60 million.

15 We went through, therefore, a period
16 of a hiring freeze, a vacancy review board
17 that every hiring decision had to go through.
18 It's been a tough few years even despite the
19 investment of the \$53 million for full-time
20 faculty on both the SUNY and the CUNY side.

21 So for us, again, in terms of being
22 able to fully staff all the classes with as
23 many full-time faculty as our students need,
24 and to give them the support that they need

1 to progress through to graduation, we really
2 place a high priority on the full-time
3 faculty and mental health counselors and
4 academic advisors. I think the Governor's
5 new program is a welcome development. We
6 would love to see free 60 credits at all the
7 campuses, as you know.

8 But even those programs in themselves
9 are going to require -- I mean, something
10 like a nursing program or an engineering
11 program, those are resource-intensive
12 programs.

13 So again, I think it's a great bar to
14 set, and our goal would be to make sure that
15 those students who come in, those new
16 students, are successful in those programs.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Liu.

19 SENATOR LIU: Thank you, Madam Chair.

20 Thank you, gentlemen, for testifying.

21 A quick question for Mr. Davis. How
22 you doing, James? So I heard your testimony,
23 and I guess you're pretty much aligned with
24 what the CUNY leadership is asking for.

1 DR. DAVIS: We are. I don't have
2 their Gold Sheet in front of me --

3 SENATOR LIU: The Gold Sheet, right?

4 DR. DAVIS: Yeah. We're seeking --
5 we're seeking \$198 million above the
6 Executive, inclusive of the 34 million in
7 complete collective bargaining costs. In
8 operating.

9 SENATOR LIU: So you're aligned on the
10 collective bargaining costs, the 34 million.
11 Okay, great.

12 And I guess a similar question.
13 Dr. Kowal, you're asking for more than what
14 the SUNY leadership has asked for.

15 DR. KOWAL: Yeah --

16 SENATOR LIU: And specifically for us
17 to designate legislatively the aid for the
18 distressed campuses?

19 DR. KOWAL: Correct, yes.

20 And I would add to that, which I
21 didn't get to in my oral testimony, we are
22 aligned with SUNY on the request for
23 Upstate Medical University for the full
24 450 million for their capital project.

1 Where we disagree strenuously is with
2 the Executive Budget's cuts to the
3 Educational Opportunity Programs. Terrible
4 move. Once again we thank the Legislature
5 for the strong support of these programs.

6 If the chancellor and the Governor are
7 concerned about attracting more students,
8 it's EOP that does it, bringing in students
9 who otherwise will not be in SUNY schools.
10 And so therefore that program should grow
11 aggressively. We're calling for an increase
12 of 20 million, let alone the reestablishment
13 of what you all put into the budget last
14 year.

15 SENATOR LIU: Does the SUNY
16 leadership -- are they going to be good with
17 that?

18 DR. KOWAL: It's confusing and
19 distressing that they don't seem to be more
20 enthusiastic. I'll leave it at that. And we
21 have had conversations about that.

22 But I think it's imperative that, yes,
23 ACE and ASAP are great at retention, but EOP
24 attracts and retains and graduates students

1 at higher rates than the general population
2 at SUNY.

3 SENATOR LIU: Okay. And are there any
4 precedents for us to legislatively earmark
5 funds for SUNY and tell them exactly where to
6 send it?

7 DR. KOWAL: Yes. Presently in the
8 budget there are items -- campuses are lined
9 out within the budget and those lines within
10 the budget have not changed in 15 years.
11 everything has been basically block-funded to
12 campuses where you can adjust those lines.
13 And that's how you would do it.

14 SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

15 And I especially want to thank
16 Mr. Hershenson. This is not the first time
17 he's spoken here before this committee,
18 although I think this is the first time in
19 this responsibility.

20 I just want to caution you that a
21 certain influential Assemblymember is about
22 to ask you questions, and anything goes.

23 (Laughter.)

24 SENATOR LIU: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Eachus.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you,
3 Chair Pretlow.

4 Dr. Davis, I want to totally agree
5 with you about we need to get rid of those
6 age restrictions on the Governor's
7 Opportunity Promise Program. This is going
8 to be another program -- and we have too many
9 of them -- where the finances will be there
10 but they won't be taken advantage of. I
11 truly believe that it's younger than 25 that
12 will be taking advantage of those programs
13 and all.

14 Mr. Cushman, you talked about the need
15 for a \$100 million investment. That's the
16 operating costs, as well as salaries and so
17 on like that, to support the Governor's
18 Opportunity Promise. Because if we don't
19 give that, we could be looking at a deficit
20 almost in that amount for the community
21 colleges and so on like that, because so many
22 of the programs that she has identified
23 cost -- as was mentioned in several of
24 these -- \$7500 to \$10,000 more.

1 Is that correct, we could be in
2 that debt --

3 MR. CUSHMAN: That's correct. And the
4 colleges won't have a deficit because we have
5 to adjust -- we have to balance every single
6 budget at every single college. That means
7 we're going to have to cut in other areas or
8 reduce the number of students that attend,
9 the number of seats.

10 And what's happened is that the
11 7500 -- the reason for that is that at one
12 time there was enough students coming into
13 the liberal arts mix with a higher ratio to
14 be able to offset the costs of those other
15 students. Now, with -- the students are
16 changing and there's more going to those
17 workforce programs. And now we are seeing
18 significant reductions, and it's really
19 putting the squeeze on the colleges.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Yeah, I'd like to
21 see a lot of the money that we put outside to
22 workforce training actually going to the
23 community colleges themselves.

24 The community colleges, in my opinion,

1 have the physical facilities already as well
2 as much of the staff. They can do the
3 reporting already. Why we're creating new
4 physical facilities to do this I don't know.

5 My final question is to Fred Kowal. I
6 understand that we can direct the money to
7 various different locations. So my question
8 is, did you hear Chancellor King this morning
9 respond to my question about where are these
10 fiscally-in-jeopardy places? And would you
11 agree with what his response was? He gave
12 like five different locations that he said
13 are just fine now, basically.

14 DR. KOWAL: Yeah, and I think -- well,
15 the numbers that we cite in my written
16 testimony, those are SUNY numbers as of fall
17 of last year. So there may be adjustments
18 because it's a snapshot; his numbers and mine
19 were different snapshots at different times.

20 I don't accept the idea that there are
21 only five distressed campuses. We have heard
22 from our representative who is here
23 advocating from Delhi, and he has said, yeah,
24 he heard the chancellor say there's no

1 deficit. He was at a labor-management
2 meeting yesterday and was told they have a
3 big deficit.

4 So questions remain as to what the
5 real situation is.

6 ASSEMBLYMAN EACHUS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

8 Senator Webb.

9 SENATOR WEBB: Good afternoon,
10 everyone. Thank you, all of you, for your
11 testimonies.

12 I just want to hone in on a couple of
13 things. One, I want to direct this to Fred.
14 with regards to the operational funding
15 proposal from the Governor, just in listening
16 to your response to one of my colleague's
17 questions about the deficits that some of our
18 campuses are running, can you just elaborate
19 on that a little bit more? Because I know
20 you said that there's discrepancies.

21 And most certainly I am a big advocate
22 of increasing funding. In fact the
23 Legislature for the last several years has
24 been increasing operational money. And I

1 think it would be important to kind of
2 provide some additional context there.

3 And then my second question is for the
4 community colleges piece. I raised this with
5 the chancellor. You know, we most certainly
6 support making community college even more
7 accessible for all. But, you know, I
8 continue to grow concerned that our community
9 colleges do not have -- not even just simply
10 adequate -- sustainable funding to continue
11 to grow in the ways that they need to,
12 especially as they play such a pivotal role
13 in workforce development, amongst many other
14 things.

15 So if you could speak to those issues.
16 Thank you. And I'm a proud UUP member, by
17 the way.

18 DR. KOWAL: Thank you for that,
19 Senator.

20 I would just add to what I had said
21 earlier to the Assemblyman's question. One
22 of the concerns that I have is such a heavy
23 emphasis is placed -- and we welcome the
24 increase in enrollment at SUNY campuses

1 across the board, but I place for your study
2 the example of Cortland, where enrollment has
3 risen consistently, their classrooms are
4 packed, and yet their financial challenges
5 remain.

6 The financial challenges -- the
7 deficit is what it is -- was created in the
8 Cuomo years with the flat budgets and the
9 poor financing, which you all have attempted
10 to, along with the Governor, to address. The
11 funding needs to increase directly to these
12 campuses. They're growing, but let's get
13 them out of their deficits now so that they
14 can grow and not worry about contracting
15 programs when there's more students coming
16 in.

17 (Inaudible; off the record.)

18 MR. SAKO: Yes, I think community
19 colleges in particular, one of our issues are
20 going to be the high-need programs. We're
21 going to need more faculty, more staff.

22 In nursing they're going to need more
23 placements for the students in the medical
24 areas. In the trade areas you can only have

1 so many people in a classroom. And now that
2 we're somewhat downsized in some of the
3 liberal arts areas, it is going to create a
4 financial difficulty, as our colleagues here
5 have said, so.

6 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Ra.

7 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Good afternoon.

8 On the community college funding, you
9 gave a number with regard to the -- getting
10 to the statutory level. Can you repeat that?

11 MR. SAKO: Yes. One second. Yes,
12 we're requesting 429 million and an
13 additional 95 million to get to the
14 33 percent. That's what I said in the
15 testimony.

16 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, thank you. As
17 many of us know, in the absence of that a
18 much higher percentage is falling on the
19 students than is supposed to be, and we're
20 supposed to have the dividing of
21 responsibilities, and the state really should
22 be at that percentage so that we're not
23 getting into, you know, the low 40s
24 percentage falling on the students in the

1 form of tuition.

2 But one of the things that, you know,
3 is really striking when you look at the
4 numbers is how we fund our community colleges
5 versus four-year institutions. And even when
6 you take the state's side of it, the county's
7 side of it, it's really like less than half
8 what we're looking at when we have a
9 four-year student.

10 So I guess my general question is, is
11 the FTE, the head count model outdated?
12 Should we be looking at a better way of
13 getting at making sure there is more parity
14 with regard to funding students in community
15 colleges?

16 MR. SAKO: (To Mr. Cushman) I'll
17 mention it from my side of the aisle, and I'm
18 sure you've got a comment.

19 I would say that it's an antiquated
20 system. I think we need to figure a way to
21 insulate the campuses, you know, from the
22 enrollment trends but also with some of these
23 initiatives of the free tuition, it's going
24 to strain our budgets further.

1 So, you know, we've got to come up
2 with some way of, you know, funding to a
3 level where we know and we can plan. That
4 would be my part.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And if anybody -- oh,
6 go ahead.

7 MR. CUSHMAN: I just concur that the
8 model is broken. You look at our students,
9 and most of them are -- a typical student
10 would be a 27-year-old single mom who's
11 working. They've got to go part-time. And
12 we've got more of them, they require more
13 support services. We can't give them a
14 quarter of a support service. So yes.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: And my colleague was
16 saying this earlier, that, you know, it's not
17 necessarily always somebody coming for a full
18 program, they may be coming for a
19 certificates, you know. And we -- a lot of
20 that gets lost in the way we're funding this.

21 So thank you. Thank you all for being
22 here.

23 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senate?

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Griffo.

1 SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you.

2 Dr. Kowal, for you, appreciate the
3 passion that you had on behalf of the efforts
4 and the investment in Downstate Medical.
5 Important. But you also represent the
6 Upstate community too, correct?

7 DR. KOWAL: That is correct.

8 SENATOR GRIFFO: And in my view, the
9 investment there at the university,
10 Upstate University, has been pretty frail.
11 And there are significant needs there right
12 now. And there's an effort to make an
13 appropriation this year, but I think it's
14 insufficient.

15 So what can or should you be doing or
16 will be doing to advocate for some parity
17 there to avoid the potential challenges and
18 problems that are foreseeable?

19 DR. KOWAL: Yeah, and I think,
20 Senator, when you talk about potential
21 foreseeable problems, they are serious should
22 the funding not occur.

23 That our union and the leadership at
24 Upstate have worked together very carefully

1 and very closely in developing the proposal,
2 the \$450 million proposal that SUNY, to its
3 credit, proposed and the Executive Budget put
4 in the 200 million.

5 We continue to advocate with all of
6 the unions with whom we work -- NYSUT,
7 AFL-CIO. We're all on board with the idea,
8 no, we want the full 450 million for that.
9 It has to be done. I live in Schoharie
10 County. Trauma I center, all the important
11 services that I may need at the biggest and
12 best hospital in upstate, it's Upstate. It's
13 in Syracuse. And it's not here in Albany --
14 with apologies to the folks from Albany -- it
15 is Upstate.

16 The burn center, the trauma center
17 serving, you know, 20, 30 counties -- it is
18 imperative that the investment be made. And
19 so we're going to fight very hard for that.
20 And we appreciate the support of upstate
21 legislators. In fact, I think this is a time
22 for upstate and downstate legislators to work
23 together to address this longstanding
24 healthcare issue in terms of healthcare

1 delivery both in Central Brooklyn but also in
2 upstate with that facility that's so vitally
3 important.

4 You have situation, Senator, and I'm
5 sure you're aware, where you've got people
6 who go into the emergency department and they
7 don't ever get a room, they get a spot in a
8 corridor and it's numbered. That's their,
9 quote unquote, room. That's how badly the
10 upgrades are necessary, and yet the services
11 are still topnotch.

12 And so this investment is very, very
13 vitally important and we're going to fight
14 for it very hard, and look forward to having
15 your support.

16 SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you.

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

18 Assembly.

19 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Otis.

20 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you,
21 gentlemen. And a question, I'll maybe start
22 with Mr. Hershenson but go down the line.

23 Any comment -- I chair the Assembly
24 Committee on Science and Technology, and so

1 certainly interested in your impressions on,
2 in your institutions that you work with, the
3 rollout of expanded use of AI for students or
4 otherwise. Any observations? And if we
5 don't have -- in three minutes, if we don't
6 get it all in, other comments offline, would
7 appreciate them.

8 MR. HERSHENSON: Sure. I will say
9 that our members across SUNY are involved in
10 the research, we're involved in analyzing the
11 tools and different areas in which we're
12 bringing forward some of these tools and
13 resources to students, and also for
14 university research. So we're at the
15 forefront of artificial intelligence as the
16 graduate students conducting research at
17 SUNY.

18 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: That's great.

19 DR. KOWAL: And obviously we're
20 working closely with the graduate students in
21 the research that our members do, but also
22 we're working with SUNY administration to
23 ensure that the work of our members is
24 protected and ultimately it is the human

1 element that has ultimate control over what
2 happens in the classroom and in the
3 workspace.

4 MR. CUSHMAN: From a community college
5 perspective, we're working together with CUNY
6 community colleges to actually start to
7 develop the curricula to educate the students
8 in the proper use of AI. There's a lot of
9 lessons to be learned from things that
10 happened with Twitter and X and Facebook that
11 we need to take advantage of.

12 And the community college systems are
13 uniquely positioned. We can reach every
14 single -- every single person in the State of
15 New York by commuting. And all the small
16 businesses in particular really need this
17 kind of support. They can't do this on their
18 own.

19 MR. SAKO: I think currently we're
20 more in an investigatory phase and we're
21 having conversations, also in negotiations
22 about it as well.

23 DR. DAVIS: Some of the most exciting
24 work in AI that's happening at CUNY right now

1 is around how AI can be used with integrity
2 and appropriately in the disciplines. And
3 that's really where our faculty are doing
4 interesting work within their expertise.

5 We're concerned, from the point of
6 view of the labor union, as Dr. Kowal said,
7 that robots don't replace it. We believe
8 that our members do good work with students,
9 and so of course in any environment of
10 intense efficiency seeking, there is going to
11 be an appeal to try to figure out ways to
12 have machines do the work that people do. We
13 see it across many industries. Higher
14 education is one where I think we need to
15 tread really carefully around that. Which is
16 not to say there's no place for AI, but one
17 needs to be really mindful of the impact of
18 real human beings.

19 ASSEMBLYMAN OTIS: Thank you all for
20 your comments. And if you want to send us
21 something in writing with more detail,
22 appreciate it.

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Tom

1 O'Mara.

2 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you.

3 Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you
4 for your testimony.

5 I think I'll start with Chair Cushman,
6 a community college question on the free
7 tuition Opportunity Promise Program. There's
8 been concerns raised about how that total
9 number was reached and whether the funding
10 attached to it in the Executive Budget is
11 going to be sufficient to cover that.

12 What perspective do you have, and what
13 was the involvement? And others can jump in
14 after Mr. Cushman on what was -- what input
15 were you given into this process and to these
16 high-demand areas and the overall funding
17 mechanism here?

18 MR. CUSHMAN: Well, the college has
19 been focused on these areas for years, and
20 we've been operating at a deficit in each of
21 them but managing to get by.

22 We had no input in it. It was a
23 surprise. I got a call the morning of the
24 announcement from the Governor that this is

1 going to be announced.

2 So I believe there's like a
3 \$28 million allocation. A million is going
4 towards promotion. I think 3 million is
5 going to get split between the 30 community
6 colleges to do something. You can do the
7 math on that.

8 SENATOR O'MARA: Have you had a chance
9 to look at the projections on what it's going
10 to do to enrollment and whether the funding
11 attached to it in this budget proposal is
12 going to be sufficient, in your opinion?

13 MR. CUSHMAN: I'm concerned that we
14 can expand even for five more students right
15 now, never mind -- yeah. So yeah, it's a
16 concern.

17 SENATOR O'MARA: Okay. Anyone else
18 want to --

19 MR. SAKO: Yeah, I'd like to just say
20 that I like the concept, I think it's a good
21 concept. I think they need to adjust the age
22 situation.

23 But I think we need to look closer
24 into additional funding for those programs

1 because, as has been said a couple of times
2 here, the monies aren't there to actually
3 expand it because we've got lesser students
4 and, you know, it's much harder to continue
5 those programs when you have limited
6 resources.

7 SENATOR O'MARA: Do you have any
8 thoughts on any -- maybe other high-demand
9 areas, in your opinions, that weren't
10 included in this proposal that potentially
11 should be? I mean, is it kind of different
12 in different regions what's in demand at that
13 point in time?

14 MR. CUSHMAN: It's clearly different
15 in each -- if you've been to one community
16 college, you've been to one community
17 college.

18 (Laughter.)

19 MR. CUSHMAN: They're so unique. Each
20 area has its own unique needs.

21 We run an LPN program that's a
22 high-demand program that won't be covered by
23 this at all. I think North Country also does
24 so. Some colleges don't even have a nursing

1 program; others have more robust. Some have
2 more -- if they've got manufacturing in their
3 area, they do manufacturing.

4 SENATOR O'MARA: Thank you all.

5 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

6 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman
7 Epstein.

8 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you,
9 Chair. And thank you all for being here and
10 all the work you do.

11 Brad, I'll start with you. So I
12 appreciate you trying to get the fees waived.
13 It's something that's really important for
14 us. I know we've taken small steps. I want
15 to ask you about TAP for grad school and
16 where your membership is on trying to expand
17 TAP for grad programs.

18 MR. HERSHENSON: Sure. And I'll
19 preface this by saying, you know, we need
20 direct --

21 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: You need to
22 speak in the mic and be quick.

23 MR. HERSHENSON: Sure. We need
24 support for our graduate workers. We need to

1 expand TAP, we need to make TAP available to
2 grad workers. And we need to make sure it's
3 ever-expansive -- not just tuition, but also
4 the actual real costs associated with
5 pursuing a degree. So textbooks, housing,
6 food, transportation -- these are the things
7 in which our members need support in order to
8 pursue their degrees.

9 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Okay. James,
10 just on 34 million, so is it -- we heard the
11 chancellor talk earlier about wanting the
12 money. Clearly this is something that's
13 imperative for you and your members. You
14 just did a contract.

15 What do we need -- what do we need to
16 be the message to send to the Governor on
17 this? Like how critical is this at this
18 point?

19 DR. DAVIS: Yeah, it's really
20 critical. Assemblymember, thank you for the
21 question. Look, when we look around the
22 state at the other public-sector labor
23 contracts that have been settled in the past
24 few years, they've been taken care of fully.

1 We really appreciate the fact that there's
2 \$192 million in to cover retro pay and a
3 ratification bonus.

4 But 34 million -- that's about a
5 1-1/3 percent raise for all of my members
6 altogether. So if it's a pay bill that needs
7 to happen, we would appreciate --

8 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Does it change
9 the 61 percent full-time versus adjunct
10 threshold with the actual money? The
11 chancellor mentioned 61 percent are full-time
12 staff, 39 adjuncts. Does this additional
13 34 million impact that at all?

14 DR. DAVIS: First of all, I would need
15 to see the data that drove those particular
16 numbers, because they don't make sense to me
17 on the face of it. But -- so I want to
18 follow up about that.

19 No, I think the key piece here is,
20 right, we would need additional operating
21 funding to try to move some of our part-time
22 faculty into full-time positions.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Beyond the
24 34 million, right?

1 DR. DAVIS: Yeah.

2 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Okay. And just
3 either for you or for Fred just on students
4 with disabilities. We see this being a
5 larger crisis that students with disabilities
6 aren't getting the support that you need.

7 What are your unions seeing on the
8 ground for students, and what should we be
9 doing to advance those issues?

10 DR. KOWAL: Yeah, once again I would
11 say that though there's a lot of verbiage
12 that's used, you know, expressing support
13 from the leadership of SUNY and campuses, you
14 know, individual administrations in support
15 of students with disabilities and so forth,
16 the funding isn't there. It needs to be
17 there.

18 We know that we've got allies in the
19 Legislature that push for it, and we stand
20 with you. There needs to be additional
21 funding for disability services across the
22 board.

23 ASSEMBLYMAN EPSTEIN: Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1 Other Senators? Me. Hi. I don't
2 have questions, I guess I have a statement
3 that you are welcome to respond to.

4 We're sitting here, we all know we're
5 committed to higher ed. We also know
6 elections have consequences, and right now
7 Washington is proposing to cut hundreds of
8 billions of dollars out of the most
9 fundamental programs in this state and the
10 other 49 states.

11 So I just want to be a realist. We're
12 not going to have more money for higher
13 education, we're going to have less money.
14 We're going to have less money for
15 healthcare. They're talking about cutting
16 \$800 billion out of Medicaid alone. We're
17 going to have less money for housing.
18 They've cut half the staff at HUD already.
19 We're going to have less money for
20 environmental things.

21 So we all here can want exactly what
22 you want. I've got to tell you, this isn't
23 the year you're going to have good news. And
24 I would urge you all to both think about what

1 are ways that we hold ourselves together
2 under more difficult circumstances than you
3 are already describing, and what do we do --
4 even though we don't do politics in this room
5 right now -- to make sure that the next set
6 of elections have different consequences,
7 because otherwise we'll be having much worse
8 conversations over the next few years.

9 And you can respond to me or just
10 think, Oh, we don't want to talk to Liz
11 Krueger, this is bad news. But I just want
12 to be as honest as I can about what I'm
13 seeing in the future. And I'm reading press
14 right now about the Congress deciding to cut
15 hundreds of billions of dollars out of our
16 national budget. And the things that they
17 are targeting absolutely hit New York State
18 harder than most other states in this
19 country, for a variety of reasons.

20 DR. KOWAL: Well, Senator, I welcome
21 your directness and bluntness. I think that
22 it's important for all of us to realize that
23 what's coming from Washington is Armageddon.

24 My response, two-part response -- and

1 I'll be brief so my colleagues can speak as
2 well. First, I would hope that this state,
3 which has a tradition of progressivism of
4 both Republicans and Democrats, that we will
5 offer this country a different way forward by
6 taxing those who have the most, as they're
7 going to be getting tax cuts, and using those
8 resources as best we can to improve public
9 services, healthcare, education and so forth.

10 And secondly, to do what we can to
11 ensure that those who represent us in
12 Washington know what really needs to be done
13 in defense of the best that our society does
14 and in defense of our democracy.

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

16 MR. CUSHMAN: I would agree with that
17 and just also add that I think we have
18 choices on a lot of things that we're
19 funding, and to the extent that we fund some
20 more and some less, I think education is the
21 one that will return on your investment.

22 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Does anyone else
23 want to respond to that? Because I'll give
24 you my three minutes.

1 MR. HERSHENSON: Sure. I'd just like
2 to say if we don't fund public higher
3 education, the campuses are going to be
4 forced to make decisions that impact graduate
5 student workers. They're going to be
6 impacting the hardworking union members of
7 our campus. We grade the papers, we teach
8 the classes, we give the exams.

9 If we do not fund public higher
10 education, the campuses are going to take the
11 money from somewhere. And that's going to go
12 from the food pantries to other places. It's
13 going to make it so that our
14 hardworking union members don't have the
15 critical services that my colleagues have
16 shared on each and every campus. It is so
17 critical to our members pursuing their
18 degrees and supporting their families.

19 So it is now more than ever the most
20 critical time to fund public higher
21 education.

22 MR. SAKO: I'd just like to say
23 education is the key to economic success.
24 And it is refreshing to hear you say

1 something that's not a lie. And I've been
2 saying that about Washington, so I may not
3 have said that appropriately.

4 But I understand, and it's refreshing
5 to hear that. However, it's not refreshing
6 to hear your idea that, you know, there's no
7 funding. And I understand. But what's going
8 on in Washington is just despicable and I'm
9 sorry that we have to be in this situation.
10 But I think that New York State is better
11 than this. And I think we can find ways to
12 educate our population and be the leader in
13 this country that it needs.

14 DR. DAVIS: I mean, we do something
15 really special in the city and the state
16 university systems. The return on investment
17 is tremendous. And in the CUNY system alone,
18 we have almost 300,000 students. A third of
19 our students were born in another country, 75
20 to 80 percent of our students are students of
21 color. Our faculty doesn't look all like
22 this table; diverse faculty as well.

23 We do something that is profoundly
24 important, not just economically but for the

1 society and the culture in higher education.
2 And so recognizing, Senator Krueger, the
3 realities coming out of DC right now, this is
4 also a question about the narrative that we
5 put out there, and it's a question of power.

6 And so I do think that we all, all of
7 us in this room, have an obligation to
8 pressure and work with our representatives in
9 DC to put a different public narrative out
10 there that talks about why it's so critical
11 that we do the work we do. Obviously
12 healthcare, right? Obviously housing. So
13 many needs are going to be on the chopping
14 block.

15 But higher education -- I mean, J.D.
16 Vance said that professors are the enemy for
17 a reason. He's trying to stoke a culture
18 war, but he knows that a highly educated
19 citizenry is an enemy of the agenda that that
20 administration is pursuing. I think we all
21 know that here. And I think we should be
22 proud of standing up for public higher
23 education for that reason.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you for

1 giving me your three minutes.

2 The Senate is done.

3 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: The Senate is done?

4 Then I will go to Assemblyman Stirpe.

5 ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: Hi, there.

6 And this is for George. Let's turn
7 this sort of upside down. If I told you that
8 community colleges are not going to get an
9 extra \$30 million of operating funds, they're
10 going to implement this new free community
11 college program with 28,000-whatever
12 students, can you imagine what things will
13 have to be cut in order to make that happen?

14 MR. CUSHMAN: Thanks, Judge Stirpe.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: (Laughing.)

16 MR. CUSHMAN: Good to see you again.

17 We're going to have to limit the
18 number of students coming into the programs.
19 It's wonderful that we've got TAP for the
20 low-income students, but it's almost cynical
21 to think that they wouldn't be able to get
22 into a seat at the college for a program like
23 that.

24 And the community colleges

1 unfortunately have had a couple of decades of
2 lack of investment, so we're used to
3 trimming. But we're kind of into bone at
4 this point, the muscle's gone. So it's going
5 to be very, very painful and it's going to be
6 a combination of services and faculty and
7 staff -- which is just the most painful thing
8 that we ever have to do -- along with raising
9 tuition. Again, we're the fourth-highest in
10 the country for tuition for community
11 colleges. And that hits maybe not the
12 low-income students that are getting TAP, but
13 certainly it hits the middle-class students.
14 (Inaudible.)

15 ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: Yeah. I mean,
16 what one community college president told me,
17 he said: The question is, do you want more
18 students or do you want more trained
19 employees coming out the other end? We can
20 do more students, we just can't provide all
21 the resources necessary to give them the
22 skills that are needed for all these jobs
23 that are out there.

24 And that's really the biggest problem,

1 and I hope everybody recognizes that.

2 MR. CUSHMAN: Yes, I -- one of our
3 trustees on our -- at Genesee had a
4 manufacturing company and she really couldn't
5 get -- she's on the board for Genesee and
6 still had trouble getting the qualified
7 people. And she's just one of many small
8 businesses that -- unfortunately, she had to
9 sell it to somebody out of state.

10 ASSEMBLYMAN STIRPE: Okay. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman
12 McMahon.

13 ASSEMBLYWOMAN MCMAHON: Thank you,
14 Chair. Hi, everyone.

15 I just -- I really appreciate Senator
16 Krueger's message of tough love and reality,
17 realism. There's so much uncertainty that's
18 been injected into this whole process this
19 year. And it's made unique challenges for
20 all of us. But I also appreciate all of your
21 remarks in response to that. I agree with
22 you that higher education is the best
23 investment in our workforce, in our
24 communities and in our future. So thank you

1 for that.

2 And I think we also have to -- I
3 agree, I think you said we have to share this
4 narrative with the people who can make a
5 difference at this point about it.

6 So moving on from that, I represent a
7 district in Western New York. I have
8 SUNY Buffalo in my district, and it's, you
9 know, a flagship university. It's doing
10 great. I'm a little more concerned about
11 places like Fredonia and Buff State and these
12 distressed schools.

13 So how do we -- I guess my question is
14 kind of for Fred, maybe Andy. We need to
15 increase enrollment at these places, but I've
16 heard -- and we've worked to address the TAP
17 gap, so we're working to make tuition
18 affordable. But then there's room and board
19 and those other expenses. And so we want
20 people to go to these communities upstate
21 because these schools are really the economic
22 drivers of these communities in many places.
23 But I don't know if we've really made it
24 reachable for a lot of downstate people who

1 might -- or like New York City students who
2 might just find it easier to stay in New York
3 City.

4 So any thoughts? I'm sorry, I took
5 two minutes out of the three.

6 DR. KOWAL: No, Assemblymember, thank
7 you. It's a central question, especially in
8 places like Fredonia, Buffalo State. And I
9 think what we have seen in terms of the
10 fall-off in enrollment at those places is a
11 direct result of underinvestment for over
12 10 years. So much money is needed in terms
13 of operations that recruit students and then
14 retain them and keep them at the institution
15 so they can succeed.

16 One of the indicators that I would
17 draw your attention to is on page 9 of my
18 written testimony where it shows the
19 incredible cost of room and board that far
20 outpaces tuition. We are missing -- we have
21 data, and it's national as well as New York
22 State. We have data that shows that SUNY is
23 not attracting students who are somewhat
24 interested in going to higher education but

1 they can't because they see it as totally out
2 of reach economically and financially.

3 The students are there, but we need to
4 make it affordable. And that's why the
5 Opportunity Program of tuition needs to be
6 expanded beyond community colleges.

7 ASSEMBLYWOMAN McMAHON: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: And thank you,
9 gentlemen. This ends this section of the
10 hearing.

11 DR. DAVIS: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I'll now call up
13 Panel D: The Empire State University Student
14 Government Association; CCNY Alumni
15 Association; University Student Senate of
16 CUNY; and the State University of New York
17 Student Assembly.

18 (Pause off the record.)

19 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Is someone missing?

20 MS. LERNER: Yeah, we're missing one
21 person.

22 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: So starting from
23 my right, just say who you are so they know
24 who you are in the booth, and then we'll

1 figure out who's not here.

2 MR. HARVEY: Gio Harvey, president of
3 the SUNY Student Assembly.

4 MS. LERNER: Gabrielle Lerner,
5 president of the Student Government
6 Association at Empire State University.

7 MR. REDEN: Daniel Reden, the CUNY
8 University Student Trustee and chairman of
9 the University Student Senate.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Okay, so the
11 Empire State University Student Government
12 Association is not here.

13 MS. LERNER: That's me.

14 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Oh, that is you,
15 I'm so sorry.

16 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: CUNY Alumni
17 Association is not here.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: The CUNY Alumni
19 Association is not here. Okay, fine.

20 Shall we start to the right and go
21 down?

22 MR. HARVEY: Well, good afternoon,
23 Chairs Krueger, Pretlow, Hyndman and Stavisky
24 and esteemed members of the Legislature.

1 Thank you for the opportunity to address you
2 today.

3 My name is Giovanni Harvey, and I have
4 the privilege of serving as the president of
5 the SUNY Student Assembly, representing over
6 1.3 million students across all 64 SUNY
7 campuses, and I also serve as the student
8 trustee while pursuing my master's degree at
9 the University at Albany.

10 First I want to express my sincere
11 gratitude to Governor Hochul and the
12 Legislature for your ongoing investments into
13 SUNY students. Your commitment has been
14 transformative, strengthening our campuses
15 and enhancing the student experience
16 statewide.

17 Governor Hochul's proposed increase in
18 operating aid for fiscal year '25-'26 is
19 critical to maintaining the quality of
20 education and essential student services here
21 at SUNY. We strongly urge the Legislature to
22 support this increase. Our campuses require
23 significant capital investments to address
24 aging infrastructure, and with this

1 investment we can create modern, accessible
2 and sustainable learning environments that
3 will enhance student success, foster
4 innovation, and ensure our campuses remain
5 competitive.

6 Affordability remains a top priority
7 for students and families. To improve the
8 Excelsior Scholarship, we propose reducing
9 the credit-hour requirement from 30 to 24
10 annually, eliminating the continuous
11 enrollment requirement, expanding the awards
12 to cover student fees, and also increasing
13 the income eligibility threshold to \$180,000.
14 These changes will ensure more students can
15 benefit from this program without barriers
16 that disproportionately impact part-time and
17 working students.

18 To promote equity and opportunity, we
19 advocate for an increase of \$20 million to
20 the Educational Opportunity Program. As a
21 proud EOP alum myself, I know firsthand the
22 life-changing impact of this program. The
23 support I received through EOP made both of
24 my SUNY degrees and my next degree possible,

1 and I stand here today because of that
2 investment made in students like myself.

3 So expanding EOP to all 64 campuses
4 will ensure that more New Yorkers can access
5 this invaluable opportunity.

6 Additionally, as the SUNY Student
7 Assembly we request a \$5 million investment
8 to strengthen diversity, equity and inclusion
9 efforts across our campuses, ensuring every
10 student, regardless of background, has the
11 support they need to thrive.

12 We also call for increased investment
13 in student well-being. Nearly a quarter of
14 college students face food insecurities, and
15 SUNY campus food pantries provide a safety
16 net. We propose an increased investment to
17 enhance and expand these efforts across our
18 system.

19 Additionally, as the demand for mental
20 health services continues to rise, we request
21 a \$10 million investment to increase staffing
22 and improve access to these critical
23 resources for our students.

24 So to close, these investments are

1 essential to maintaining SUNY's excellence
2 and ensuring that higher education in
3 New York remains affordable, accessible and
4 high-quality.

5 Thank you for your time and your
6 unwavering commitment to SUNY students. I
7 look forward to any questions you may have.

8 MS. LERNER: Good afternoon,
9 Chairperson Krueger, Chairperson Pretlow,
10 distinguished members of the Senate Finance
11 Committee and Assembly Ways and Means
12 Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to
13 testify today.

14 My name is Gabrielle Lerner, and I
15 serve as the Student Government Association
16 president at Empire State University. I'm
17 not just a student leader, I'm also a
18 graduate student, a parent to a
19 five-year-old, and an advocate for a large
20 and often overlooked group: non-traditional
21 and online students.

22 These students are the backbone of our
23 higher education system. They are working
24 parents, military-affiliated learners,

1 full-time employees, and individuals
2 returning to school after years, sometimes
3 decades away. They juggle jobs, families,
4 and coursework, often studying late at night
5 after putting their kids to bed or finishing
6 a long shift. Yet the system was not built
7 with them in mind.

8 One-third of all SUNY students fit the
9 definition of a non-traditional student. Yet
10 many policies and resources still assume a
11 traditional, full-time, on-campus experience.
12 Today I would like to address some of the
13 main issues that are plaguing online
14 students, including childcare, digital
15 accessibility, and housing.

16 The Government Accountability Office
17 estimates that one in five college students
18 are parents, and the biggest barrier to
19 returning to school for students who have
20 dropped out is family commitments. The good
21 news is that during the 2022-2023 academic
22 year, SUNY offered approximately 4,500
23 childcare slots across the 46 SUNY campuses
24 that have a childcare center on-site, which

1 served 795 student parents. The bad news is
2 that now we need to do some math. So if one
3 in five college students are parents and
4 there are approximately 468,000 students
5 enrolled at SUNY, minus the 795 parents who
6 benefited from on-campus childcare, that
7 would mean that there are about 92,805
8 parents left behind.

9 Affordable childcare is a necessity,
10 not a luxury. Without access to childcare or
11 subsidies for off-campus providers, many
12 student parents are forced to make an
13 impossible choice -- their education or their
14 children's care.

15 On the same trend of affordability,
16 COVID shined the brightest light on the
17 importance of access to a reliable and stable
18 internet connection. Imagine having to go to
19 Starbucks with your children for hours every
20 day to complete your coursework because you
21 don't have access to stable internet
22 connectivity at home. Well, that's the
23 reality for many students who can't afford to
24 pay \$100 per month on wifi. If it comes down

1 to a choice between paying for wifi or
2 groceries to feed their kids for a week, we
3 will always pick the latter.

4 But with your help, we can change
5 that. State-funded technology packages and
6 subsidies for internet services could level
7 the playing field and ensure online students
8 have the tools they need to succeed.

9 Now, if students can't afford wifi,
10 can you imagine how challenging it is to
11 afford housing? Housing insecurity is a
12 crisis for many non-traditional students,
13 especially those learning online. Unlike
14 traditional students, they cannot access
15 campus dorms and must navigate skyrocketing
16 rental costs while balancing school and work.
17 Expanding state-funded housing assistance and
18 expanding TAP to cover off-campus housing
19 would be a game-changer.

20 The truth is that non-traditional
21 students are not asking for special
22 treatment. We are asking for fairness. We
23 have an obligation and an opportunity to
24 shift the paradigm to an inclusive system

1 that recognizes the evolving landscape of
2 higher education and invests in diverse
3 opportunities to ensure that every student,
4 regardless of age, employment status, or
5 family responsibilities, has an opportunity
6 to succeed.

7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

9 MR. REDEN: Good afternoon,
10 Chairs Hyndman, Pretlow, Krueger, Stavisky,
11 and esteemed members of the New York State
12 Senate and Assembly Higher Education
13 Committee.

14 My name is Daniel Reden. I was born
15 and raised in Brooklyn to Nigerian
16 immigrants. I'm a former foster kid. But
17 today I'm before you as the chairperson of
18 the University Student Senate and a student
19 trustee of CUNY.

20 I represent over 390,000 CUNY students
21 across our 25 campuses who work tirelessly to
22 earn their degrees despite numerous
23 challenges.

24 I just want to thank you all for your

1 continued support and commitment to CUNY
2 students because, as you know and as has been
3 repeated, fully funding CUNY is an investment
4 in New York City's future.

5 Transportation is a major barrier to
6 student success. Many students struggle to
7 afford commuting, leading to missed classes
8 and lower graduation rates. The CUNY
9 University Student Senate student commuter
10 MetroCard pilot program included in the
11 fiscal year '26 CUNY budget request is
12 crucial. The 2025 People's Budget also
13 recommends extending free or reduced-cost
14 MetroCards to the amount of \$75.5 million for
15 all CUNY students, highlighting the critical
16 need for transportation equity.

17 A state-funded partnership between
18 CUNY and the MTA would reduce fare evasion,
19 which disproportionately impacts low-income
20 students -- who make up 54 percent of our
21 CUNY student body -- improve graduation rates
22 by ensuring students can attend class, and
23 strengthen the workforce by supporting
24 student retention, success and graduation.

1 CUNY students also face deteriorating
2 campuses conditions, including leaking
3 ceilings, mold, inaccessible facilities,
4 elevators not working, escalators not
5 working. These environments hinder academic
6 success, to say the least.

7 And with proper capital funding
8 outlined in the Executive Budget, CUNY can
9 provide safe and inspiring learning
10 environments and keep CUNY in a state of good
11 repair.

12 Many students also struggle with
13 housing, as my constituents also mention
14 housing insecurity. And so with adequate
15 capital funding, CUNY can repair and renovate
16 existing housing, fund new housing
17 construction, and develop targeted programs
18 to support homeless and at-risk students.
19 CUNY student housing is affordable housing.

20 Another issue, and I'll reiterate, is
21 hunger. It's a widespread issue among CUNY
22 students and students in general which
23 impacts academic performance. Funding CUNY
24 also means vendors to reopen campuses'

1 cafeterias, expanding food pantries, and
2 providing affordable and nutritious meal
3 options.

4 Lastly, outdated technology limits
5 student success. CUNY should be moving in
6 lockstep with technology and not lagging
7 behind. Community colleges in particular
8 need immediate help to upgrade their wifi,
9 computers, and learning tools to remain
10 competitive in this rapid technological age
11 that we're living in.

12 So -- thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assembly Education
14 Chairperson Hyndman.

15 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Hi. Thank
16 you, Chair Pretlow.

17 Daniel, it's good to see you again.

18 So you talked about the gaps between a
19 student and what services they need -- not so
20 much in the academic part. But because as
21 you know, the Assembly's always supportive of
22 not increasing tuition at all. We're very
23 strong on that. But what about -- I know a
24 lot of the CUNY colleges now have food

1 pantries. There is the Fair Fares
2 program that the city offers, as you talked
3 about transportation.

4 How -- a lot of what you're asking for
5 is like outside the classroom. What kind of
6 supports does CUNY give you for what other
7 programs the city offers for individuals?
8 Housing, like the FHEPS program, all of those
9 things that the city agencies offer. Is
10 there any kind of coordination of services?
11 And what office in CUNY does that?

12 MR. REDEN: Well, thank you for your
13 question, Alicia. And it is great to see you
14 again as well.

15 There is a lot of resources that are
16 available to CUNY students. But what I'm
17 noticing, and what I've noticed in my four
18 months in this position is that there isn't
19 a centralization or a singular place where
20 CUNY students can find that.

21 It shouldn't be where you have to look
22 high and low for a resource that you need.
23 And so in that, working closely with the
24 senior vice chancellor for technology and the

1 chancellor to upgrade and revamp the
2 CUNYFirst portal, in order to make the
3 resources that CUNY already does provide more
4 accessible and easier to find for our CUNY
5 students.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: So what campus
7 do you attend, and where do you go -- like
8 what CUNY institution is getting it right?

9 MR. REDEN: Yeah. I mean, I go to the
10 CUNY School of Professional Studies. It is
11 the only -- well, chief online institution at
12 CUNY. And they definitely do it right
13 because -- out of necessity, right? They
14 have something called OpenLabs.com, which is
15 a centralized place for the resources, the
16 SUNY government organizations, so on and so
17 forth, on our local campus.

18 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay.
19 Gabrielle, you attend Empire State. And
20 don't they offer a lot more online classes or
21 credits for education already attained?

22 MS. LERNER: If you're referring to
23 prior learning, I guess assessments, they are
24 available and a lot of students do utilize

1 them. And 98 percent of our students are
2 online. So it is a valuable resource that
3 our students can utilize to use some of their
4 experience to gain credit.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. All
6 right, thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.
8 Senate?

9 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

10 Senators? Senator Toby Stavisky.

11 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you,
12 Senator Krueger.

13 And thank you to the students. Thank
14 you for coming up. With all due respect, you
15 are our clients. And the reason we're asking
16 the questions today is because of the
17 students.

18 And Gio, great to see you again. I
19 have your Student Agenda. And it's
20 remarkable because it really reflects our
21 thinking as well. I'm not going to repeat
22 it, but these are great recommendations. And
23 I hope the students just keep their interest
24 in government, student government now, but

1 there are many people in the Legislature who
2 started just where you're starting now.

3 I don't know how many of you have been
4 listening to the commissioners and the
5 chancellors, et cetera, but would anyone like
6 to comment on any of the points that were
7 raised today?

8 MR. REDEN: I'll take it away. Félix
9 is, from my perspective -- and I have a very
10 good perspective -- he's doing everything
11 that he can with the tools that he has in
12 order to bring CUNY to a place that he knows
13 it should be and it will be, which he
14 outlined in his plan.

15 So everything he said today is
16 something that I stand by. I didn't feel
17 anything that made me feel a wrong way with
18 what he said earlier today. So I'll pass it
19 on.

20 MR. HARVEY: Always great to see you
21 as well, Senator Stavisky.

22 I would just echo the same sentiments
23 that Daniel shared. Chancellor King has
24 definitely engaged the students on many of

1 the issues that he's talked about in his
2 testimony, sought our advice, and we are very
3 much collaborative partners in this process.

4 And so we're very grateful for the
5 support that you all provided us in the
6 audience. You have also given us to share
7 some of these concerns and also express some
8 ideas that we have to in fact make SUNY the
9 institution that we all know it's on its way
10 to.

11 And just to echo what the chancellor
12 said, SUNY is on the move. And I would like
13 to add my own phrase: Our students are
14 leaders. SUNY students lead every day in the
15 classroom through the investments that you
16 all have provided and as well as the advocacy
17 that we have done in partnership with our
18 chancellor. We have seen some real results,
19 and our students are leading in and outside
20 of the classroom.

21 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman
23 Seawright.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SEAWRIGHT: Thank you to

1 each of you for your activism, your
2 leadership as student leaders.

3 In terms of internet access for online
4 students, I'll direct that question to Gio.

5 And for Gabrielle, do you think
6 there's a great demand for more mental health
7 counselors on campus?

8 And for Daniel, I wanted to just touch
9 base with you on the food pantries on the
10 CUNY campuses.

11 And if you could each just share about
12 each of those subjects.

13 MR. HARVEY: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

14 So I would agree, absolutely, we need
15 more investments into internet access for our
16 students, both online and students in rural
17 communities. Some of our campuses are in
18 some of the ruralest parts of the state. So
19 always increased investment in that area for
20 our students would go a long way.

21 And in terms of your question about
22 mental health, absolutely, we need more
23 investments into mental health to increase
24 staffing at some of our campuses so students

1 have access and they're not experiencing any
2 lag in services. And also expanding our
3 mental health programs to telehealth and
4 telemedicine is also very important and
5 critical for our students. And thank you for
6 your support and work on that.

7 MS. LERNER: Thank you.

8 So really quickly, I would also like
9 to address the internet issue. And there are
10 programs -- I guess were/are. So the federal
11 government used to have the Affordable
12 Connectivity Program, but that expired
13 June 1st. That was a pretty solid program
14 that was helping a lot of our students.

15 On January 23rd the Governor's
16 affordable broadband act came out, and it was
17 taken into effect. However, it's only for
18 like low-income populations, and a lot of
19 students kind of, you know, live paycheck to
20 paycheck even if they live above the median
21 on paper.

22 So for mental health counselors, we
23 actually have a telehealth kind of approach
24 at our school and we don't have any in-house

1 counselors. And I'll say that the telehealth
2 approach is perhaps not the most personal or
3 personable solution for students to be able
4 to make those connections. They spent a lot
5 of time just kind of reiterating what they
6 had already shared with the previous person
7 if they utilized that service.

8 So I'm a strong proponent for
9 on-campus counselors. Thank you.

10 MR. REDEN: Thank you,
11 Assemblywoman Seawright, for your question.

12 Yeah, food pantries are very, very
13 important. I've gone to a food pantry myself
14 and it's been a source of -- it's been a
15 safety net for me and a lot of other students
16 as well who don't have the money -- I mean,
17 look at the price of eggs, right? -- don't
18 have the money to afford food, who have to
19 choose between work and school.

20 And so these food pantries that we
21 have in our campuses sometimes don't have a
22 lot of food in them, but -- thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1 Senator Joe Griffo.

2 SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you all for
3 being here, for your presentation.

4 Gio, good to see you again.

5 If I were to ask you today -- because
6 there's a number of issues that have been
7 raised, right -- if you could identify what
8 you consider what is the top challenge,
9 concern and need, from your perspective.

10 MR. HARVEY: Great to see you as well,
11 Senator.

12 I would say the top challenge or, you
13 know, asset we have -- if that was your
14 question. I had a little hard time hearing
15 the first part -- is really increasing
16 operating and capital aid for our campuses.
17 Some of our campuses are experiencing
18 infrastructures that haven't been improved in
19 decades.

20 And so in order for our students to
21 remain competitive and receive -- continue to
22 receive the cutting-edge education that we're
23 receiving, we need an investment in the
24 facilities in which to do that.

1 And I also would just mention, really
2 quickly, just really investing in some of
3 these basic-need services as we outlined in
4 the Students' Agenda to support our students.
5 We're super-thankful for the Legislature not
6 increasing tuition and keeping that steady,
7 but students are still facing significant
8 challenges around basic needs.

9 So any support -- or more support to
10 increase our food pantry access on our
11 campuses, as well as mental health and
12 transportation services for students, would
13 be greatly appreciated.

14 MS. LERNER: Thank you for your
15 question.

16 So I'll say on my campus it's probably
17 food insecurity. And we have a really
18 interesting way of addressing that. We have
19 a virtual food pantry, which is I guess the
20 first of its kind. However, it's only
21 available to students once per semester and
22 they have a limit of \$76 per person. And
23 then they send their shipments through Amazon
24 or Walmart.

1 And it's a really I guess interesting
2 concept because going grocery shopping like
3 once in four months is not really
4 sustainable.

5 So with the student government we
6 invested a little bit to try and increase
7 that to four times a semester. But even
8 going food shopping like once a month, in
9 theory, is not enough. And I believe that
10 some increases with each additional person in
11 the household.

12 MR. REDEN: And for USS for CUNY, the
13 chief ask is probably one of the most easiest
14 ask to bring into reality. It's free
15 MetroCards for CUNY students through the USS
16 pilot program that we've included in the CUNY
17 state budget, after months and months of
18 research and involved work and diplomacy.

19 It's mental health as well. It's
20 providing slack, giving some mental real
21 estate, showing that the state, CUNY has
22 investment -- not only investment, but also
23 faith in them and gives them the opportunity
24 to have one less thing to worry about.

1 Right?

2 MetroCards are a pesky thing. If you
3 do the math, it's over \$9,000 that you're
4 spending every year just to get to and from.

5 Thank you.

6 SENATOR GRIFFO: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

8 Assemblywoman Simon.

9 (Pause; off the record.)

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: No, I was here,
11 I just wasn't able to press the button.

12 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: She's trying to
13 thaw out. It's freezing in here.

14 (Laughter.)

15 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Sorry.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: So thank you all
17 for your testimony.

18 And let me just say that I'm so glad
19 that you focused your testimony on childcare
20 and how critical that is and what a real --
21 how necessary it is for our students to be
22 successful.

23 And also I just want to say thank you,
24 Daniel. You know, the very few foster --

1 kids who are in foster care ever get to
2 college, let alone succeed. So that's
3 extremely important, and it's wonderful to
4 see you. We've done a lot of work trying to
5 help with transition and providing more
6 support for students. So thank you for being
7 a great example of that.

8 So, you know, I have a couple of sort
9 of very basic questions. You know, if
10 there's the sort of -- I think you may have
11 answered it a little bit with transportation,
12 but the one sort of barrier that either in
13 your own experience or in, you know, that of
14 your -- the folks that you represent, is the
15 biggest barrier to your being successful in
16 higher education?

17 MR. REDEN: Yeah, I'll be quick. It
18 is transportation. I live in Brownsville,
19 Brooklyn. I take the subway stop every day.
20 There was recently a high-profile situation
21 where someone hopped the turnstile and lost
22 his legs because of -- that could have been
23 me.

24 A lot of students go to school and

1 they commute from all over the city. And
2 that, like I said, is providing slack to
3 students who have -- they're up to their neck
4 with everything else that is going on.

5 I'll pass it on.

6 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay. Yes?

7 MR. HARVEY: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

8 So I would say the biggest barrier is
9 addressing some of those basic needs that I
10 mentioned for our students, whether that's
11 access to food on campuses for some of our
12 community colleges; access to transportation,
13 they're in some rural areas. And so really
14 addressing the basic needs that our students
15 are facing is one of the barriers.

16 And also just the affordability. So I
17 mentioned about the Excelsior Scholarship and
18 looking to change that credit requirement.
19 There are students who need that aid, right,
20 but because of the credit requirement and the
21 other stipulations they're not able to access
22 that. So addressing, you know, the
23 affordability aspect is important.

24 And also, you know, mental health is

1 very critical. We're thankful for your work
2 and your advocacy as the chairwoman of that
3 committee. But just addressing, you know,
4 some of those challenges related to staffing
5 on-campus providers, so on and so forth.

6 Thank you.

7 MS. LERNER: Thank you.

8 And I would also like to talk about
9 housing. So --

10 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Twenty seconds.

11 MS. LERNER: -- right now for
12 on-campus students, you know, they can pay
13 for dorms with Pell. However, that's --
14 well, funding for Pell doesn't seem to be
15 going in a great direction right now. So
16 expanding TAP to cover off-campus housing for
17 students would be really helpful for our
18 group.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Thank you.

20 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Senator Webb.

21 SENATOR WEBB: Thank you,
22 Senator Krueger.

23 And thank you all for being here. I
24 want to thank you for your, you know,

1 continued partnership, especially on
2 expanding more resources for students.

3 I was wondering, just going to your
4 legislative agenda, if you could go into a
5 little more detail with regards to the
6 climate that you're seeing on your respective
7 campuses now, and most certainly where
8 supports for expanding mental health
9 services, also reproductive health services
10 could be helpful, along with the Excelsior
11 program changes that you mentioned that need
12 to happen.

13 So whoever wants to jump in on that.

14 MR. HARVEY: Good to see you,
15 Senator Webb, and thank you for your work and
16 your championing SUNY.

17 I would say, you know, the climate
18 right now around those issues -- again,
19 students are looking for that increased
20 investment into these areas. You know, food
21 pantries and -- you know, food insecurity is
22 definitely top of mind for students.

23 Also you mentioned some of the work
24 around, you know, mental health. We're

1 grateful for that support. We're looking for
2 more increased support. My campus,
3 University at Albany, through the CAPS
4 program provides a really robust in-person
5 counseling apparatus as well as an online.
6 So if we can replicate that, right, across
7 the system, I think that will be helpful.

8 Also we really thank you for you
9 championing the Emergency Contraceptives Act.
10 Also the University at Albany just purchased
11 a vending machine that provides those
12 contraceptives to students, through the great
13 work of Jalen Rose, the president of the
14 student association there.

15 So like I said, SUNY students are
16 leaders, they're leading in and outside of
17 the classroom. And with your support, we're
18 going to be able to keep doing that. So
19 thank you.

20 SENATOR WEBB: Thank you.

21 Anyone else want to add?

22 MS. LERNER: Yes, thank you.

23 So as I mentioned earlier, having some
24 in-house counselors and psychologists would

1 be game-changing for us.

2 And as for the other items, because
3 we're like an online school and a lot of our
4 students are a little bit older, we don't
5 really see those issues specifically. But I
6 guess on a similar note, providing menstrual
7 products for students across SUNY would also
8 be a monumental thing to invest in. So just
9 a --

10 MR. REDEN: Let's go out.

11 (Laughter; overtalk.)

12 MS. LERNER: So "no" for that.

13 MR. REDEN: We've never been so
14 connected, yet so alone. This age, like I
15 think someone mentioned earlier, exacerbated
16 by the pandemic, we've been in silos,
17 absolutely. And when I travel across CUNY
18 and talk to students, they -- they don't even
19 stay at home. When they do their homework,
20 they stay on campus just to be around other
21 people. They need someone to talk to.

22 The ratio of counselors to students at
23 CUNY is -- there's nine counselors for
24 11,000 students at York College. You do the

1 math.

2 SENATOR WEBB: Thank you all.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly.

4 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: The Assembly is
5 finished.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: And the Senate is
7 finished. So I guess we thank you all for
8 your attendance today and your work on behalf
9 of all the students in the college system.

10 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you very much
11 for your testimony.

12 And I'll call Panel E: Literacy
13 Academy Collective; New York State Police
14 Benevolent Association; Association of
15 Private Colleges; Commission on Independent
16 Colleges and Universities; Catholic Charities
17 Tri-County Services; and Kaplan.

18 So just for the people in the booth,
19 everyone just state your name and
20 organization so they'll know what names to
21 put up on the screen when you do speak.

22 Okay, we're starting from -- it
23 doesn't matter, left or right. Someone take
24 the initiative.

1 MS. BRABHAM: Lola Brabham, Commission
2 on Independent Colleges and Universities.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: (Mic off;
4 inaudible.)

5 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Good afternoon.
6 I'm Donna Stelling-Gurnett, president of the
7 Association of Private Colleges.

8 MS. GENN: Hi, good afternoon. I'm
9 Ruth Genn, executive director of Literacy
10 Academy Collective.

11 MR. LACOSSE: Good afternoon. I'm
12 Chris Lacosse. I represent the University
13 Police Officers PBA in New York State.

14 MR. ADAMS: Good afternoon,
15 Senator Krueger, nice to see you again. I'm
16 David Adams from Kaplan Education.

17 MS. ESPINOSA: Hi, my name is
18 Elisabeth Espinosa. I'm the director of
19 outreach programs for Catholic Charities
20 Tri-County Services, and I'm here on behalf
21 of the Anti-Hunger Advocacy Day Coalition.

22 (Off the record.)

23 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Let's start from
24 the left -- that's our left, your right --

1 with Kaplan.

2 MR. ADAMS: Sure, thank you. And
3 thank you, Chairs Krueger, Pretlow, Stavisky
4 and Hyndman, and members of the Legislature.

5 My name is David Adams. I'm senior
6 vice president of Kaplan Education, and I'm
7 here today to talk about how New York can
8 open career opportunities in critical areas
9 like nursing, engineering, medicine and
10 teaching through a historic investment in a
11 transformative workforce development program,
12 and how we can help solve workforce shortages
13 across the state in these areas by ensuring
14 all students, regardless of background, have
15 access to critical resources necessary to
16 pass licensure and certification exams.

17 So as you know, understandably,
18 high-stakes testing for professional
19 licensures in these careers is a required
20 hurdle that students must pass. Yet due to
21 the cost of these exams, and the cost of the
22 preparation courses necessary to succeed -- a
23 cost not often considered in higher
24 education -- the hurdle is especially

1 daunting for underrepresented and
2 economically disadvantaged students.

3 Now, Kaplan is a New York company that
4 was started almost 90 years ago in a Brooklyn
5 basement, and we know from years of data that
6 students cannot pass or do well on such exams
7 without access to high-quality test
8 preparation programs. And students that
9 can't afford the cost of these preparation
10 programs for licensures are getting
11 shortchanged, they're getting left behind,
12 and the state is missing out on a critical
13 pipeline of talent.

14 So because of this, economically
15 advantaged students outperform lower-income
16 students on tests -- licensure tests,
17 certification tests -- accessing
18 significantly more scholarships for graduate
19 school, passing licenses at much higher rates
20 and entering the workforce with a meaningful
21 head start over their peers.

22 Instead of evening the playing field
23 based solely on merit, these high-stakes
24 exams are too often oversized obstacles on

1 the path to career success for
2 underprivileged, underrepresented and
3 economically disadvantaged students.

4 And the lack of a stronger and longer
5 talent pipeline is impacting millions of
6 New Yorkers. We see that in shortages in
7 areas like nursing, medicine, teaching,
8 engineering, who all need the critical
9 services of talented doctors, teachers and
10 nurses, among other professions. This is
11 felt across the state.

12 So over the last few years Kaplan's
13 university partners, including schools in the
14 CUNY system and in SUNY, have come to us
15 sounding the alarm and asking for help in
16 closing this opportunity gap. And some
17 states have already seized the initiative and
18 begun offering universal access to license
19 and test prep programs across their public
20 system, to address their broad workforce
21 priorities.

22 So as part of this state's ongoing
23 efforts to address demographic and economic
24 challenges, a universal workforce development

1 program focused on preparation for critical
2 license and admissions exams will be an
3 important and beneficial addition to the
4 state's workforce efforts.

5 (Time clock sounds.)

6 MR. ADAMS: A workforce readiness
7 program -- is that my time is up? Okay.
8 I'll close just by saying thank you and move
9 on to my peers. Thank you. I'm happy to
10 answer questions.

11 MS. ESPINOSA: Hi. I guess it's my
12 turn to talk.

13 So I'm here for the Anti-Hunger
14 Advocacy Day. And I know this may seem
15 unprecedented to come to this budget hearing,
16 but I have to be forthcoming about all our
17 college students that see our pantries. So I
18 oversee six food pantries, three soup
19 kitchens across Rensselaer and Albany County.
20 I also see college students coming in, ones
21 from Hudson Valley, SUNY Albany, RPI.

22 And this was my story 20 years ago.
23 Twenty years ago I was a single mother of a
24 five-year-old disabled child. I was

1 homeless. My friend snuck me into Empire so
2 that I could attend school. I ate out of
3 trash cans because there were no food
4 pantries at that time.

5 And I just want to be clear that with
6 the food pantries now that we have, it's only
7 three days' worth of food. It's not a lot of
8 food. And what the schools are asking for,
9 they need. Because they need that and what
10 I'm about to ask you for.

11 On the budget hearing I'm asking that
12 you guys fully fund both programs for
13 \$75 million for Nourish New York and the
14 HPNAP.

15 And that's my time. Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

17 MS. BRABHAM: Good afternoon. I'm
18 Lola Brabham, president of the Commission on
19 Independent Colleges and Universities, and I
20 appreciate the opportunity to testify today.

21 Independent-sector institutions
22 educate over 40 percent of New York's college
23 students. We share the same mission as
24 public institutions: To produce capable

1 graduates who drive the state's workforce,
2 economy and communities forward. As we
3 navigate the challenges facing higher
4 education today, we remain committed to the
5 principles of access, opportunity, choice,
6 and excellence.

7 Higher education is facing attacks at
8 the federal level that threaten student aid,
9 research funding, and our efforts to maintain
10 diversity on campus. With that in mind, we
11 ask the Legislature to reject harmful,
12 shortsighted state budget proposals that
13 diminish supports for student aid and make it
14 harder for families to afford college.

15 We are thankful for last year's
16 historic expansion of TAP and for the
17 continued expansion of part-time TAP in this
18 year's proposed budget. To ensure continued
19 access, we ask the Legislature to reject cuts
20 to critical pipeline programs and instead
21 increase funding by 20 percent. Programs
22 like HEOP, STEP, CSTEP and Liberty
23 Partnership are successful and effective.
24 These proposed cuts roll back legislative

1 additions and threaten the future of
2 thousands of New Yorkers.

3 We're grateful to the Legislature for
4 rejecting similar proposals in last year's
5 budget. We hope that you will again protect
6 Opportunity Programs to sustain this critical
7 investment.

8 We are disappointed by the continued
9 elimination of Bundy Aid for campuses with
10 endowments greater than 750 million. Bundy
11 Aid is outcome-based, which means colleges
12 receive funding based on the number of
13 degrees they confer. And the funding is
14 invested back into programs that help more
15 students graduate. This cut will continue to
16 increase costs for hardworking students who
17 rely on the financial support provided by
18 Bundy Aid. We strongly urge you to restore
19 Bundy Aid to impacted campuses.

20 CICU also urges the Legislature to
21 expand the Opportunity Promise Scholarship,
22 known as free community college to associate
23 degree students in our sector. This
24 initiative, aimed at students 25 to 55, can

1 reduce worker shortages in critical fields
2 such as education, nursing and STEM. Our
3 member institutions award nearly one-third of
4 associate degrees in high-demand fields.
5 Twenty percent of associate degree students
6 age 25 and older attend an independent-sector
7 campus. This program should work like TAP
8 and be open to all New York students
9 regardless of whether they attend a public or
10 a private nonprofit institution.

11 Despite substantial contributions to
12 New York State's higher education ecosystem,
13 our campuses are needlessly excluded from key
14 state initiatives and funding opportunities,
15 and this hinders our shared mission of
16 producing capable graduates who drive
17 New York's workforce and economy forward.

18 The economic partnership between the
19 independent sector and New York State is
20 exemplified through HECap, through the
21 Centers for Advanced Technology and the
22 Centers of Excellence.

23 (Time clock sounds.)

24 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

1 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: All right, good
2 afternoon. Thank you for giving the
3 Association of Private Colleges the
4 opportunity to present this testimony.

5 My name is Donna Stelling-Gurnett. I
6 am the president of APC. The association
7 supports 12 privately owned, primarily
8 family-founded and family-led institutions
9 educating over 22,000 students across
10 New York State. These institutions have deep
11 roots in their local communities, strong ties
12 to the industries they work with, and drive
13 economic growth to help meet the workforce
14 needs of New York State.

15 I'd like to begin by thanking the
16 Legislature for their commitment to making
17 much-needed changes to the Tuition Assistance
18 Program. The changes made last year will
19 benefit approximately 93,000 students in both
20 public and private institutions, including
21 48,000 students that are newly eligible for
22 TAP. While these improvements are greatly
23 appreciated, further steps are needed to
24 ensure that TAP continues to support

1 New Yorkers.

2 APC supports the proposals that will
3 continue to expand and streamline part-time
4 TAP, extend the number of years a student can
5 receive a TAP award, and reinstating
6 Graduate TAP.

7 APC also applauds the Governor's
8 proposal to offer scholarships to adult
9 students pursuing associate degrees at
10 community colleges in high-demand fields such
11 as teaching, nursing, technology and
12 engineering. However, we ask the Legislature
13 to expand the program to include all students
14 regardless of where they choose to attend
15 college and get their associate's degree.

16 I'd also like to mention the enhanced
17 supports for students with disabilities.
18 This funding provides much-needed support to
19 over 100,000 identified students with
20 disabilities attending institutions across
21 New York. APC member colleges have used this
22 funding to increase and expand faculty and
23 staff training, increase mental health
24 literacy, and improve the processes for

1 identifying students with disabilities and
2 mental health issues.

3 The Governor's proposal contains
4 \$2 million for this program. That's a
5 \$2 million cut from last year's budget. APC
6 requests the Legislature restore the funding
7 for this program and fully fund the
8 \$6 million requested by SED.

9 Finally, I'd be remiss if I didn't
10 mention the APC Student Leadership Council
11 members that are here in Albany today
12 visiting with their legislators and sharing
13 their stories. So keep an eye out for the
14 white and blue scarves and say hello if you
15 see them.

16 And with that, I will end my
17 testimony, and I'm happy to answer any
18 questions you may have. Thank you.

19 MS. GENN: Hi. Good afternoon,
20 Chair Stavisky, Chair Hyndman and
21 Chair Krueger, and thank you so much for
22 allowing this testimony today.

23 Again, my name is Ruth Genn, and I'm
24 the executive director of Literacy Academy

1 Collective.

2 So what if I told you that in one
3 decade a state moved fourth-grade reading
4 scores from 49th to the 9th percentile? And
5 what if you found out that in the same state,
6 Black fourth-graders now ranked No. 3 among
7 their peers nationally for reading and math,
8 and that Hispanic fourth-graders rank No. 1
9 for reading scores and No. 2 for math scores?

10 That state is of course Mississippi,
11 and they are now number one in the country
12 for the most significant gains in student
13 achievement.

14 But what if I told you that we know
15 exactly how they did this and that New York
16 State is on the verge of that same path? I
17 am here today to urge you to learn about and
18 to support the New York State Path Forward, a
19 statewide policy effort with a specific
20 action plan to integrate the science of
21 reading into higher education preparation
22 programs and certification requirements.

23 My organization, Literacy Academy
24 Collective, is a school support organization

1 that opened the very first in-district public
2 school specifically designed for students
3 with dyslexia and other struggling readers in
4 the South Bronx. The recent release of
5 NAEP scores shows that only 31 percent of
6 New York State students are at or above
7 proficiency in reading. Yet we know that
8 95 percent of students can learn to read with
9 the proper instruction.

10 So over the past 25 years we have
11 learned a lot about how the brain learns to
12 read and what kind of instruction is
13 necessary to address how the brain learns to
14 read, and often we call this the science of
15 reading. Unfortunately, here in New York
16 State most teachers are not trained in the
17 science of reading. So it's true that while
18 many teachers have not been trained to
19 recognize dyslexia, not all students who fail
20 to read even have dyslexia. Many have simply
21 not been taught to read using evidence-based
22 practices grounded in the science of reading.

23 And the reality is that many of our
24 EPP graduates have not been trained to teach

1 reading the way that the brain learns to
2 read, to reach all children. In fact,
3 New York State ranks fifth from the bottom in
4 terms of how well we integrate the science of
5 reading into our educator preparation
6 programs. And The Path Forward is aiming to
7 change that.

8 So about 18 months ago, Commissioner
9 Betty Rosa and Chancellor Lester Young showed
10 incredible leadership by signing on with LAC
11 to participate in The Path Forward. And with
12 their support we built a steering committee
13 with leaders from State Ed, the Governor's
14 office, the Legislature, CUNY, SUNY, CICU and
15 NYCPS, and working groups with over 55
16 members from across the state. And that
17 steering committee developed a robust action
18 plan statewide to help New York City with the
19 process of integrating the science of reading
20 into our educator preparation programs so
21 that every teacher who graduates will be
22 ready to teach reading on Day One.

23 It needs to be funded. It's
24 imperative that we keep the momentum. And we

1 are here to ask you to include a \$500,000
2 appropriation in the one-house budgets to
3 support the implementation of the plan.

4 Thank you.

5 MR. LACOSSE: Good afternoon. My name
6 is Chris Lacosse. I represent the 400 police
7 officers in the New York State SUNY system.

8 I'm here today to ask for your support
9 in centralizing our agency. In New York
10 State we are the only decentralized law
11 enforcement agency. It is common for most
12 state agencies to be that -- state law
13 enforcement to be centralized.

14 We have a commissioner and deputy
15 commissioner in Albany. However, they cannot
16 direct or order any chief on any of the
17 29 campuses to perform any task.
18 Centralization would give the University
19 Police many things. Among those, the
20 legitimacy through standardized policies and
21 procedures. Currently 29 campuses have
22 29 different policy and procedure manuals.
23 And that spans the gamut how they respond to
24 sexual assaults, persons in distress, and

1 things of that nature.

2 It gives us built-in service sharing
3 for things like the pro-Palestine rallies we
4 had last summer. While the chancellor or the
5 commissioner can merely ask for assistance
6 from agencies and the campuses amongst
7 themselves, they are under no obligation to
8 assist.

9 It gives us a clear and standardized
10 career ladder, one we've lacked for the
11 entirety of our existence. That would help
12 us retain officers. Right now we are
13 basically a revolving door. My agency alone
14 at SUNY Albany has gone through some
15 50 officers in about seven years, and we are
16 a 30-person department. Currently we only
17 have four classified titles to aspire to
18 after police officer.

19 It gives us buying power. We have
20 29 campuses with 29, quote unquote, budget
21 lines. And that makes things very difficult
22 for the smaller schools. Obviously they
23 don't have the money the centers have. It
24 gives us the buying power for equipment,

1 cars, all of that assorted stuff.

2 While this is not an overnight change,
3 we know this is long-term savings and they
4 are immeasurable. As I am in the twilight of
5 my 25-year career, I am hopeful we can
6 achieve this step for the future safety of
7 our university communities and for the
8 SUNY Police.

9 Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

11 Assemblywoman Hyndman.

12 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I'm going to
13 try and ask everyone a question in three
14 minutes.

15 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: You can have my
16 three minutes.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: I can have
18 yours? Okay, great.

19 I'll try to go this way. For Kap --
20 for Kaplan, sorry. This weekend it was
21 really hard getting a hotel room as all the
22 hotel rooms, the bar students are here. So
23 although, you know, it's an impediment, the
24 testing -- I know I just paid \$250 for my

1 daughter to take the exam. But I know for a
2 lot of families sometimes it's hard to make
3 sure that they have the money available.

4 Do you have preliminary numbers about
5 like how much you think it would cost for
6 students to take the nursing exam, the bar
7 exam? I know there's a -- I have a budget
8 ask, but if you could give, for my
9 colleagues, more of how much -- how many
10 exams we'd be able to cover if it's covered
11 in this year's budget. That's one.

12 To Lola, if you can also talk, when it
13 comes to your sector playing defense to what
14 comes down from the federal government, what
15 plans does your sector have in place to make
16 sure they're able to continue to offer the
17 level of education? Because I think we were
18 premature in cutting off the cap that we set
19 on the endowments and making sure now schools
20 are going to have to really look at how
21 they're able to give the financial aid
22 packages that they have been giving to
23 students who do go to schools in your sector.

24 And Donna, one of the things you

1 talked about was you're grateful for the
2 expanded TAP. But I know that a lot of our
3 high schools would benefit if they were able
4 to get those early college programs. For
5 instance, my district is very close to the
6 New York Automotive and Diesel Institute, and
7 that kind of program would really benefit
8 students if they were able to get the college
9 program and get those credits towards an
10 associate program in automotive technology
11 would be fantastic.

12 Forty-five seconds left, I'm sorry.

13 MS. BRABHAM: I think I'll start first
14 before I forget what the question was.

15 (Laughter.)

16 MS. BRABHAM: It was a long question.

17 So I think -- in summary, I think your
18 question is what are we going to do to kind
19 of fight back against the -- what we're
20 hearing from the new federal administration,
21 you know. And it's a -- I guess it's an easy
22 and difficult question at the same time.

23 First of all, we don't know what's
24 going to happen at the federal level. We've

1 received the "Dear Colleague" letter, you
2 know, that says, you know, cease and desist
3 from doing any activity that could be
4 considered DEI or risk losing federal
5 funding. There's no parameters about what
6 that means. When you talk to lawyers, they
7 say the letter does not have the force of
8 law.

9 So what we're doing is coming before
10 our state Legislature and we're asking you to
11 stand in the gap. We're asking you to
12 restore the cuts to the Opportunity Programs
13 that -- you know, that the Governor did in
14 the proposed budget, we're asking you to add
15 20 percent to the current funding level so
16 that we can continue to serve, you know,
17 deserving students that deserve the
18 opportunity to achieve the dream of a college
19 degree.

20 Am I out of time?

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: No. He gave
22 me his three; I'll take it. Okay.

23 MR. ADAMS: I can try to answer very
24 quickly so everyone else has time.

1 You asked what's covered. What we're
2 talking about is 40-plus programs. You name
3 the licensure or certification exam that's
4 required for critical jobs like nursing,
5 engineering, medicine, as well as
6 certifications and things like program
7 manager -- those are all covered. Forty-plus
8 programs for 140,000 students at the CUNY
9 system, no matter how many times they want to
10 take those.

11 And on average it's -- you said \$250
12 to take the bar exam, but it's another two,
13 three, four thousand dollars to take the
14 prep, which is absolutely necessary to pass
15 the bar exam or do well on the MCAT or other
16 exams. So the average cost for those is over
17 a thousand dollars per person, a cost that's
18 not often considered.

19 So even if only 10 percent of CUNY
20 students take advantage of this, you're
21 talking about \$14 million in savings for
22 those students. And we've seen with our
23 other university partners usage rates far in
24 excess of that.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. Thank
2 you, Donna. And just before you go, to the
3 PBA for SUNY, I didn't know that it wasn't a
4 centralized system when it came, and I
5 remember when the protests were happening at
6 New Paltz, I believe they called the Troopers
7 in to assist. Which we know the campus
8 police has a relationship with more students,
9 and bringing that in set a different element.

10 So I didn't know that. Is the
11 chancellor supportive -- I want to make sure
12 I get Donna in too, but is the chancellor
13 supportive of unifying the, what is it,
14 29 different --

15 MR. LACOSSE: Twenty-nine campuses,
16 yes.

17 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Yeah.

18 MR. LACOSSE: The chancellor is
19 supportive, but there are hurdles. The
20 presidents of each college, they are going to
21 most likely have an issue with it. They
22 control what happens on their campuses.

23 If that was the case, if we were
24 centralized, that would come out of SUNY

1 Central. The presidents would lose that
2 control. So I believe there's an issue
3 there.

4 But I think overall he was supportive.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: All right.

6 Sorry, Donna.

7 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Okay. So APC
8 member institutions would love to be able to
9 participate in the state-funded early college
10 access programs. Unfortunately, some of the
11 earlier programs, the P-TECH programs, came
12 through from federal funding, which excluded
13 us.

14 But since then the program has
15 expanded and it's now fully state-funded, so
16 we would love the opportunity to participate.

17 Many of our institutions, including
18 the Automotive and Diesel Institute, are
19 working with their local high schools.
20 They're cultivating those relationships.
21 They're offering the dual degrees and the
22 dual credit programs at all of their own
23 expense.

24 I was with Monroe University

1 yesterday, who said that they have over 1200
2 students enrolled at different local high
3 schools, and the programs are there, we just
4 aren't able to --

5 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senator.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you, we're
7 going to cut you off there.

8 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,
9 Chair.

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Thank you.

11 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: I get it. No
12 worries.

13 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I'm not exactly
14 sure what happened, but we're not continuing
15 it.

16 (Laughter.)

17 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Three minutes for
18 Senator Toby Stavisky.

19 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, I'm going to
20 ask real quick questions because I'd
21 appreciate real quick answers.

22 In no order at all: Chris, I totally,
23 totally agree with you about the campus
24 police, the uneven nature, et cetera, and

1 that's why I'm sponsoring the bill.

2 MR. LACOSSE: Thank you very much. We
3 appreciate that.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: You're doing a
5 great job under difficult circumstances.
6 We've been talking about this with previous
7 folks from the State PBA.

8 MR. LACOSSE: Thank you.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: Lola, got a quick
10 question. You mentioned Bundy Aid, which is
11 for scholarships for students. There's a
12 number of institutions where their endowment
13 was more than 750 million. Did they -- it's
14 almost I'm embarrassed to ask the question.
15 Did they provide -- did they replace the
16 missing money with money from their own
17 university to give scholarships to students?

18 MS. BRABHAM: Senator, I'm sure that
19 some of our colleges and universities were
20 able to do that. There may be others that
21 were not able to do that. In fact, I've
22 heard from some of my staff that on some
23 campuses where the number of scholarships
24 that, you know, were awarded may have been

1 reduced slightly.

2 I'd be happy to provide you with more
3 detail on that about specific campuses.

4 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah, I'd
5 appreciate it. Because I think it's
6 important. These are allegedly the most
7 financially sound institutions with money in
8 the bank, so to speak. Maybe they can't
9 touch their endowments, et cetera.

10 MS. BRABHAM: Well, and that's the
11 point that I was going to make. They're
12 financially sound because they're making
13 prudent financial decisions, but also, you
14 know, as you know, endowments just aren't,
15 you know, large stacks of money that you can
16 use any way that you see fit, so ...

17 SENATOR STAVISKY: Right. Thank you.

18 And Donna, I think many of us agree
19 that a student is a student no matter where
20 they -- you know, there should be parity.
21 How would you go about providing the funding
22 necessary to achieve the parity that you talk
23 about?

24 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: That's a very

1 good question. I would suggest we put some
2 parameters and metrics around the schools
3 that are accessing the funding. That might
4 be one way to do it.

5 But obviously, you know, I think maybe
6 the real answer to that is, you know, above
7 my understanding, I guess. But really, you
8 know, I think we just need more funding from
9 the State Legislature to help support, but --

10 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblyman Ra.

12 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

13 For APC, can you detail how the
14 changes with regard to part-time expansion
15 last year -- how many students, if you know,
16 benefited at your member institutions?

17 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Yeah. Well,
18 first of all, thank you very much for that
19 expansion last year. We appreciate the fact
20 that part-time TAP was expanded to include
21 students attending proprietary institutions.

22 It is a little early for us to have
23 those exact numbers just yet because they
24 just started being able to access it this

1 year, this academic year. But I can reach
2 out to our members and see if we can get that
3 exact number for you.

4 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. And what about
5 the proposals in this year? Would those
6 benefit additional students?

7 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Absolutely.
8 Anything I think that you can do to increase
9 flexibility for our students is very
10 important. Expanding the number of years
11 that students can receive a TAP award from
12 four to six or, if it's a five-year program,
13 to seven years. Expanding the part-time TAP
14 process right now and streamlining it,
15 lowering that credit limit to three credits,
16 would be very helpful and make a huge impact.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay, thank you.

18 And CICU, the endowment limitation
19 with regard to Bundy Aid. I know like last
20 year, for instance -- I have Hofstra
21 University in my district -- they were below,
22 now they're above. And, you know, it means
23 they're going to eventually lose a lot of
24 money that was previously given out for

1 scholarships.

2 So, I mean, I know I'm preaching to
3 the converted here, but, right, this
4 arbitrary number and doing this in this
5 manner doesn't really make any sense. I
6 don't know what that number is based upon. I
7 don't know if you know of other schools that,
8 you know, maybe were just below it, now are
9 above it.

10 MS. BRABHAM: No, I think that Hofstra
11 is the only school that was just below it and
12 is now included in that group. It was 17
13 last year, I think. You know, with the
14 addition of Hofstra, it's 18 now.

15 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Okay. And, I mean
16 that number obviously can fluctuate, so it
17 just doesn't seem to make a lot of sense to
18 me.

19 MS. BRABHAM: Well, no, it doesn't
20 make a lot of sense for that reason and it
21 also doesn't make a lot of sense considering
22 that, you know, the independent sector is
23 such an economic driver in this state. We,
24 you know, add \$97 billion to the state

1 economy every year. We're major employers in
2 every corner of the state. You know, when
3 you count campus and spillover jobs, that's
4 about 400,000 people that we're employing
5 across the state.

6 And so it doesn't make any sense to
7 take away money from campuses that is
8 intended for students. It puts -- you know,
9 it can put campuses at risk. I know that
10 people like to say, Oh, you know,
11 endowments -- and paint every school with a
12 very big brush, you know. But that's not
13 actually, you know, the case.

14 So it definitely does, you know, put
15 our campuses at risk. And more importantly,
16 it puts student aid at risk.

17 ASSEMBLYMAN RA: Thank you.

18 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: The Senate is
19 over.

20 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: The Senate is over,
21 okay.

22 Assemblyman Smullen. No? Okay.

23 Assemblywoman Simon.

24 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: So thank you all

1 for your testimony.

2 I have a very quick question for you,
3 Ms. Genn, about -- you didn't quite finish
4 there. So I just want to establish what it
5 is the request is, that this is funding that
6 you're seeking for a particular key next step
7 to assess programs. Is that true?

8 MS. GENN: Correct.

9 So part of the statewide action plan
10 was looking at sort of the regulatory
11 structures that we have in place to support
12 educator prep programs and to understand
13 whether the science of reading is being
14 implemented. And so these dollars would
15 support positions at State Ed who would be
16 able to support the implementation of what's
17 in the action plan that was, you know,
18 designed by leadership across the state.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay, thank you.

20 And thank you for participating in
21 that as well.

22 MS. GENN: Yes, absolutely.

23 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And so I have a
24 question for you, Mr. Adams, about -- you

1 know, I've worked with a lot of students
2 taking tests. That's like how I built my law
3 practice for years. And many of them had
4 gone to Kaplan programs and individual
5 tutoring.

6 And tell me how -- because some of my
7 clients of course were served by that,
8 addressing those needs of students with
9 disabilities who are taking these tests often
10 need accommodations, need support for that --
11 but how is it that the folks that you work
12 with, that work for you, work with those
13 students?

14 MR. ADAMS: So we -- all of our online
15 programs we strive to get them WCAG 2.0AA
16 compliant, which is the compliance standard
17 for disability and accommodations.

18 If students need specific
19 accommodations -- like for example we have a
20 sight-challenged student right now that we're
21 working with that came to us on the LAST --
22 those students are given extra assistance and
23 accommodations as needed. We have a whole
24 department that does that. In fact, on our

1 legal team we have somebody who's
2 specifically an expert in accommodations, to
3 make sure that we're both following the state
4 law and the federal law on that.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: And supporting
6 their request for accommodations for the
7 tests as well?

8 MR. ADAMS: Absolutely. Supporting
9 their requests for accommodations, yes,
10 absolutely.

11 And we do work with public
12 universities across the country, and many of
13 them have very stringent standards for
14 disability access and accommodations, and we
15 meet all of those.

16 ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay. Thank you
17 very much.

18 MR. ADAMS: Yup.

19 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Assemblywoman
20 Chandler-Waterman.

21 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN:
22 Thank you all for your work and dedication in
23 higher education.

24 So as I listen to these testimonies, I

1 cannot only -- I can't help but reflect on my
2 four children, who are unique in their own
3 way. I have my eldest, who graduated from
4 CUNY, my son who's currently in SUNY, and my
5 other daughter, who attends a private
6 college. And we always want to ensure all
7 voices are heard no matter where they attend
8 or receive their education.

9 So as a proud graduate of a private
10 college myself, Berkeley College and
11 Metropolitan College of New York, I became
12 independent with the birth of my first child
13 and actually my marriage, right? So it was
14 very challenging juggling and navigating,
15 trying to figure out financial assistance and
16 all tuition assistance when it came to
17 non-traditional students.

18 So the question I have is, how does
19 the current TAP structure impact independent
20 students like myself? Yes, that would be
21 you.

22 MS. STELLING-GURNETT: Thank you.

23 So right now independent students get
24 a much lower TAP award, and they also have a

1 much lower maximum income threshold that they
2 have to be under to be eligible. So it
3 impacts them greatly.

4 And there's a huge disparity between
5 independent students and dependent students.
6 And right now there's two different TAP
7 schedules, depending on what category you
8 fall into. APC has for years asked to
9 eliminate that disparity and just have one
10 TAP schedule and treat everyone equally. So
11 that's -- you probably saw that in my written
12 testimony, but that's what we would be
13 advocating for.

14 I will say last year the income
15 threshold was raised for independent
16 students, so we appreciate that. But the
17 disparity is still pretty stark. So we would
18 ask for that to be eliminated.

19 ASSEMBLYWOMAN CHANDLER-WATERMAN:

20 Thank you so much.

21 Anybody else have anything they would
22 like to add, or anything else that you would
23 like to speak about? No? Okay. Thank you
24 so much.

1 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Well, I want to
2 thank you, panel. This concludes this
3 section of the hearing. And I appreciate
4 your testimony.

5 I will now call up Panel F: New York
6 Public Interest Research Group; Fostering
7 Youth Success Alliance; On Point for College;
8 REACH NY; Friends of the New York State
9 Liberty Partnerships; and the Association for
10 Program Administrators of CSTEP & STEP.

11 (Pause.)

12 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: It looks like one
13 person is missing, and it's not Blair Horner.

14 For the people in the booth, could you
15 just state your name and your organization so
16 they know the correct names to put up
17 on-screen. We'll start with you
18 (indicating).

19 MR. HORNER: Blair Horner, NYPIRG,
20 New York Public Interest Research Group.

21 MR. MARKEN: Kevin Marken, On Point
22 for College.

23 MR. ALBA: Renaldo Alba, Association
24 for Program Administrators of CSTEP and STEP.

1 MS. ALTMAN: Elizabeth Altman, the
2 New York State Liberty Partnerships, Inc.

3 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

4 Let's start from the left to the
5 right. Ladies first.

6 MS. ALTMAN: Oh, okay. Thank you.

7 Honorable members of the committees,
8 my name is Liz Altman and I sit here before
9 you today as the president of the Friends of
10 the New York State Liberty Partnerships, Inc.

11 LPP is a lifeline for thousands of
12 New York State's most vulnerable youth. As a
13 first-generation graduate who experienced the
14 transformative power of State Opportunity
15 Programs, I advocate for LPP, New York's only
16 state-funded dropout prevention program with
17 a -- 37 years -- yeah, 37 years of proven
18 success. As part of LPP's "whole student"
19 approach, programs are embedded into the
20 student's and the family's communities,
21 working from both IHEs and LEAs, and
22 alongside CBOs and local stakeholders.

23 This synergistic partnership weaves
24 LPP into the fabric of local communities,

1 fostering belonging and ensuring culturally
2 relevant support.

3 LPP's dedicated team provides
4 resources for students to overcome academic
5 challenges, attendance issues, and
6 complexities of life's challenges. We know
7 that security is foundational to thriving,
8 and LPP staff create safe spaces allowing the
9 students to benefit from services like mental
10 health, academic enrichment, experiential
11 learning and civic engagement.

12 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Excuse me.
13 Mr. Timekeeper, could you start the clock?

14 You had extra time there, so --

15 MS. ALTMAN: Okay. All right. I'll
16 keep it quick, though.

17 We at Liberty know "summer melt"
18 challenges graduates. "Summer melt"
19 challenges our graduates. The Liberty staff
20 work to close that gap. The results speak
21 for themselves. Last year we served over
22 18,000 students with a 96 percent retention
23 rate and 86 percent graduation rate and a
24 less than 1 percent dropout rate.

1 Respectfully, we request the
2 restoration of the Governor's proposed cut
3 and we urge the committee to support a
4 20 percent increase. The increase is vital
5 to increasing our student reach, enhancing
6 staffing levels, and expanding essential
7 services.

8 This investment supports state
9 postsecondary enrollment and workforce
10 development goals by providing young adults
11 ready for the mental and emotional demands of
12 the 21st century. Imagine the kind of
13 support, inclusivity and restorative impact
14 this would have on communities across the
15 state. Our promise at LPP is simple:
16 Student excellence and a lasting legacy.

17 Thank you for your time.

18 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

19 MR. ALBA: Thank you for the time,
20 Chair Pretlow, Chair Krueger, of course
21 Chair Hyndman and Chair Stavisky. I send
22 greetings from 25,500 STEP and CSTEP students
23 throughout the State of New York.

24 STEP and CSTEP are housed in public

1 two-year, four-year and private institutions,
2 a network of 118 projects. Twenty-six of
3 them are housed in two-year schools, 43 of
4 them are housed in four-year public schools,
5 and 49 of them are housed in private
6 institutions. It's worth mentioning that
7 11 of them are housed at medical colleges or
8 health institutions in New York State.

9 And so thank you for your time. And
10 I've been here the whole day and listened to
11 some of the questions. I hope my remarks can
12 answer some of the other questions in earlier
13 sessions. But what I would say is that for
14 nearly four decades STEP and CSTEP programs
15 have distinguished themselves as New York
16 State's only network of pipeline programs
17 within the opportunity program portfolio,
18 specifically designed to prepare secondary,
19 undergraduate and professional school
20 students for STEM, health and licensed
21 professions.

22 STEP and CSTEP's multiplier effect has
23 helped New York State meet the need for a
24 highly skilled workforce while generating

1 high-income tax earners who reinvest in their
2 communities. Very simply, STEP and CSTEP
3 work for New York State.

4 Now I must urgently bring your
5 attention to a critical issue facing STEP and
6 CSTEP programs throughout New York State.
7 The 2026 fiscal year marks the beginning of a
8 new five-year contract -- 2025 through 2030.
9 And any cuts in this year's budget will
10 result in the elimination of projects. It's
11 not a simple reduction, it's going to
12 eliminate projects for the next five years.

13 Any loss of projects -- and this is to
14 Senator Stavisky's question earlier on about
15 the impact of the Executive Budget cuts. Any
16 loss of projects will severely destabilize
17 these vital programs at their respective
18 institutions across New York State and lead
19 to an immediate decline in student enrollment
20 across all levels -- secondary,
21 undergraduate, and professional schools.

22 We're respectfully requesting the
23 restoration of a 4.37 percent cut, which
24 totals \$1.6 million, and we ask for an

1 additional 20 percent from the Legislature.

2 We come from the Legislature. It's
3 good to be home. We know that you support
4 us, you've supported us in the past. But
5 this year's situation is unique and different
6 than in previous years. In fact, the country
7 is at a different place than we were before
8 January 20th. And what I'm asking is that we
9 maintain this network of 118 projects,
10 working with the communities that we serve to
11 ensure that we have a pipeline into the
12 professions that have proven in need of the
13 type of talent we produce.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

16 MR. MARKEN: Good afternoon,
17 distinguished Chairs Krueger, Pretlow,
18 Stavisky and Hyndman, and honorable
19 legislators. I'm Kevin Marken from On Point
20 for College, representing our 3,000 students
21 and 4,600 graduates from On Point for
22 College.

23 On behalf of our students and
24 Executive Director Sam Rowser, thank you for

1 helping empower the dreams of our students.
2 We help some of the ones most in need --
3 students that are lower-income, first
4 generation, single parents, rural and urban,
5 domestic violence survivors, homeless,
6 refugees, differently abled, immigrants,
7 foster, former foster youth. We help them.

8 And one of the things we're proudest
9 of, when we level the playing field for these
10 students, these students, despite the
11 additional challenges, despite being
12 lower-income, they succeed at a higher rate.
13 The persistence rate is 10 to 25 percent
14 higher for those at the community college
15 level. So they work hard and lift themselves
16 and their families out of poverty.

17 Over the course of a lifetime,
18 On Point graduates provide over \$11 billion
19 spent in their communities. On Point serves
20 students from Central New York and the
21 Mohawk Valley, forwarding their dreams along
22 with our New York City partners, colleges,
23 businesses, nonprofit partners. On Point
24 provides comprehensive college access,

1 success and career services for over
2 3,000 young adults ages 17 to 29, from
3 application through graduation and careers.

4 Without the wraparound services
5 provided by On Point, most of these students
6 would never start college or, if they did,
7 may stop out with debt. On Point is there
8 for our students, whether it's certificates,
9 skilled trades or other credentials to meet
10 the workforce needs and position them for
11 great careers. On Point is unique in the
12 nation with this holistic approach. For
13 example, we even take students on 70 college
14 tours, provide supplies, transportation
15 through volunteers, breaks, childcare, summer
16 housing, tutoring, mentoring, advisement,
17 navigation, food, financial support,
18 internships, even dentists who provide pro
19 bono dental work.

20 Together with our partners, we find a
21 way to say yes and to help these students be
22 able to succeed and fulfill their potential.
23 On Point students contribute over \$23 million
24 in tuition, fees, and room and board to

1 community colleges and the SUNY and CUNY
2 systems, plus \$5.8 million from the
3 600 students who would have stopped out
4 without On Point having their back.

5 In the last two years we have provided
6 enhanced or direct services to many school
7 districts around the state. Those districts
8 also then provide services for access and
9 success through college, and so we want to
10 have the resources there for them. And state
11 support is key to that, to help make sure
12 that once we get them in, that they also
13 graduate.

14 Providing the \$1 million in state
15 funding for On Point's programs will benefit
16 thousands of first-generation students each
17 year, helping them with considering going to
18 college or the skilled trades, and being able
19 to know that this is not beyond their reach,
20 that they can succeed, we'll have their back.
21 This will also empower On Point to advance
22 the educational dreams of 500 low-income
23 students.

24 Finally, in conclusion, thank you for

1 your vital support in helping us keep
2 thousands of students On Point.

3 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

4 MR. HORNER: Good afternoon. The
5 testimony we submitted today is NYPIRG's
6 sixth. In our EnCon testimony we highlighted
7 the modernization of the Bottle Law, which
8 could raise as much as \$100 million. In our
9 Health testimony we released a national
10 ranking that showed that the quality of care
11 in New York hospitals is 34th in the nation.
12 In our General Government testimony we noted
13 that New York's voter participation rate is
14 now 43rd in the nation, the lowest it's been
15 in 20 years.

16 NYPIRG is unique. The board of
17 directors are all college students elected
18 from the schools that have joined. We have
19 affiliates at both the State University, the
20 City University, and in the independent
21 sector.

22 Today's submitted Higher Education
23 testimony includes a call for the restoration
24 of the Governor's proposed cuts to

1 Opportunity Programs, to raise the maximum
2 TAP award to match SUNY tuition, and to
3 restore TAP eligibility for graduate
4 students, among other things.

5 The testimony also highlights the
6 impact of decades-long cuts to Bundy Aid.
7 That program was established in 1968. A
8 select committee was created to look into
9 putting it together, and they concluded:
10 "Real level of need calls for direct
11 assistance from New York to private colleges
12 and universities."

13 In 1989, that support peaked at nearly
14 \$114 million. But today it's been savaged
15 from budget cuts. Instead of spending
16 \$260 million to assist private colleges --
17 which it would have been, adjusted for
18 inflation -- the state spends nearly
19 22 million. Just to give you one example.
20 Not -- it's only an alphabetical, it's not
21 about which legislator.

22 Adelphi University, which is
23 financially under stress right now, in
24 1980-'81 received a little over \$3 million in

1 Bundy Aid. If you adjusted that for
2 inflation, it should be around 12 million
3 today. They get a little under \$600,000.

4 There's no surprise, then, that nearly
5 a dozen colleges with endowments under
6 \$750 million are in dire financial
7 situations.

8 New York has seen six colleges shut
9 their doors in the last two years, throwing
10 their students into educational uncertainty
11 and potentially entire communities into
12 economic insecurity.

13 In closing there have been many
14 reports on economic development programs,
15 which a lot of money gets spent on. This is
16 the economic development program that works.
17 It's worth -- not just Bundy Aid, but higher
18 education generally. So we urge you to
19 increase the maximum TAP award and other
20 changes we recommend, to fund the Opportunity
21 Programs, restore Bundy Aid, and to stop
22 thinking about higher education as just
23 higher education but as an economic
24 development investment.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you.

3 Assemblywoman Hyndman.

4 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Thank you,
5 Chair Pretlow.

6 I ran a STEP and CSTEP program years
7 ago, and it is miraculous to see those
8 students who are now doctors, neurosurgeons,
9 family practitioners. And I know how
10 successful it's been.

11 So my question is you're saying that
12 not only do you want us to restore the
13 Governor's cuts but to increase it
14 20 percent. So if that's not done, of the
15 118 CSTEP and STEP programs, who decides
16 which ones no longer -- can't offer the
17 services anymore, I guess is the best way to
18 say it.

19 MR. ALBA: So it's a New York State
20 Education Department application for funding
21 that's released. And available funds are
22 what dictates how many programs are funded --
23 how many programs with passing scores are
24 funded for the next five years.

1 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: So SED will
2 have to decide which ones.

3 MR. ALBA: State Education Department,
4 yes. That's correct.

5 ASSEMBLYWOMAN HYNDMAN: Okay. That's
6 it, thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Senate?

8 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Toby Stavisky.

9 SENATOR STAVISKY: Thank you,
10 Senator Krueger.

11 Thank you all for coming.

12 And I have one question for
13 Blair Horner. Thank you for -- thank you for
14 your service, Blair. You've done a terrific
15 job, and I truly believe you are one of the
16 imaginative thinkers here in Albany.

17 And you mentioned the cuts to Bundy
18 Aid and the financially distressed colleges.
19 And one of the -- I did not have time to ask
20 Lola from CICU, Lola Brabham. How would you
21 remedy the situation of the colleges that are
22 in financial despair?

23 MR. HORNER: The list that we worked
24 from was published in Forbes. We looked at

1 the 2023 listing. 2024 was behind a paywall.
2 So I may be imaginative, but I don't have any
3 money --

4 (Laughter.)

5 MR. HORNER: -- so I didn't get a
6 chance to look at last year's.

7 I just -- I mean, when it comes to
8 higher education, I think the one thing you
9 probably heard today, and I was here all day,
10 it's all about money. And you're about to
11 spend, you know, billions of dollars on
12 economic development and other tax-incentive
13 programs. Senator Krueger rightly pointed
14 out before about the problems that loom on
15 the horizon from Washington, D.C. It
16 certainly makes sense to focus on the
17 programs, invest in the programs that work.

18 And so college works. Purely from the
19 fact it cranks out, you know, the future
20 leaders, but also it's an economic
21 development engine. And so these little
22 communities, like the College of St. Rose
23 here in Albany, when they shut down, they
24 don't generate any economic activity.

1 So I think it's worth it to invest in
2 these kinds of programs. If you need to look
3 at how they operate more closely to make sure
4 they're doing what they're supposed to be
5 doing, I agree. The \$750 million cutoff
6 could be an issue to sort of take a look at.
7 I don't know what happened to the students in
8 those schools. But there's a lot of schools
9 that aren't, and they're the ones --
10 primarily, they're the ones on the ropes.
11 And a lot of them are in the districts from
12 some of the members that are here.

13 SENATOR STAVISKY: Yeah.
14 Incidentally, I guess it was seven hours ago
15 when I was walking toward this hearing room,
16 somebody stopped me. He's a, I guess,
17 professor at one of the SUNY community
18 colleges, and he reminded me that we met
19 many, many, many years ago when he was
20 involved with NYPIRG.

21 And here's -- NYPIRG's work has really
22 been felt everywhere. You know that somebody
23 very close to me worked for NYPIRG for quite
24 a few years. And I am in admiration of

1 NYPIRG. Thank you.

2 MR. HORNER: Thank you, Senator.

3 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: Assembly?

4 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: I don't believe I
5 have any other Assemblymembers.

6 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I have another
7 Senator, Rachel May.

8 SENATOR MAY: Thank you.

9 And thank you all for the work you do.
10 I came in late, so I didn't hear everybody
11 speak. But Kevin, always fantastic work that
12 On Point does.

13 And Blair, I wanted to thank you for
14 lifting up the economic development value of
15 colleges. Having had two colleges close in
16 Central New York in the last few years, we've
17 seen how devastating that is to the
18 communities around them and to jobs, like all
19 of the knock-on effects.

20 But I did want to ask Kevin in
21 particular about -- I mean, we know that
22 higher education is also about upward
23 mobility, and On Point is all about upward
24 mobility. And as we -- it's probably too

1 early to tell from this Trump administration,
2 but in general there's been a dampening
3 effect on, you know, affirmative action and
4 any kind of diversity initiatives in higher
5 education.

6 I wonder if you are seeing -- and also
7 threats to immigrants as well -- what you are
8 seeing in the way of how that's affecting the
9 students that you're working with now and the
10 students you might be able to recruit into
11 your program.

12 MR. MARKEN: Great question. There's
13 a great deal of concern with that, and I
14 think one of the ways to address it is to
15 provide those comprehensive services that
16 On Point does. Whatever the need might be,
17 we're there. And if there's one pathway, one
18 source of it, we look for other alternate
19 funding -- wherever we need to go, whatever
20 we need to do to help those students to
21 succeed.

22 And the state support has been
23 absolutely critical and is even more crucial
24 than ever. So we are seeing that. There is

1 concern. We're working to address it. And I
2 think that's one of the solutions, is to look
3 beyond some of the traditional pathways with
4 some of the alternative ones, many of them
5 discussed today, but including On Point.

6 SENATOR MAY: And I don't know if you
7 mentioned it, but I know SUNY Upstate Medical
8 University now has a link to On Point and is
9 taking students in.

10 MR. MARKEN: Yes, that's one thing.
11 We're strongly partnered with that.

12 And moving forward, Sam Rowser, our
13 executive director, is on it, helping to
14 facilitate and maximize that. Because our
15 students are the future and the potential.
16 They have great dreams. And most of them
17 wouldn't be going to college, wouldn't be
18 getting these skills without it.

19 By the way, Sam was playing basketball
20 with younger guys and broke a bone and his
21 Achilles tendon. So he was heartbroken that
22 he couldn't be here today to testify
23 personally. We extend his warm appreciation
24 to each and every one of you. So he

1 shouldn't be playing with those 20-year-olds
2 anymore, I think.

3 (Laughter.)

4 SENATOR MAY: Well, please give him my
5 best.

6 MR. MARKEN: We will.

7 SENATOR MAY: And thank you all for
8 the work that you do.

9 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: You good?

10 CHAIRWOMAN KRUEGER: I think so.

11 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Okay. Well, that
12 concludes our public hearing on higher
13 education. I want to thank you all for your
14 testimony.

15 And tomorrow we'll be reconvening for
16 another hearing at 9:30. So if you're
17 interested --

18 (Off the record.)

19 CHAIRMAN PRETLOW: Thank you very
20 much.

21 (Whereupon, at 5:43 p.m., the budget
22 hearing concluded.)
23
24