

**Testimony of
Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost Wendy Hensel
The City University of New York**

**New York City Council Higher Education Committee Hearing
Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Budget
March 18, 2024**

Good morning, Chair Dinowitz, and other members of the City Council Higher Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here this afternoon. I am Wendy Hensel, Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost for The City University of New York. I am joined today by CUNY's Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer Hector Batista, and CUNY's Senior Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance and Chief Financial Officer Sherif Soliman.

I want to thank Speaker Adrienne Adams and the entire City Council for your steadfast commitment to CUNY, our mission, our programs and, most of all, our students. Over the past two years, your support and that of Governor Kathy Hochul and the State Senate and Assembly have been critical to the important contributions CUNY has made to New York City's rebound from the pandemic.

CUNY is embedded within the lifeblood of New York City. More than 80% of our 50,000 annual graduates stay in the city, diversifying every sector of the city's workforce and contributing to every aspect of its economic and civic life. CUNY alumni in New York account for about \$70 billion in annual earnings – that's close to 5% of the state's GDP. And when you consider their increased future earnings and the tax revenues they produce, each taxpayer dollar invested in CUNY returns a benefit of at least \$15 to New York State. To quote an editorial in the Daily News last spring: "Every dollar in is a dollar that is magnified and keeps New York's economy humming along."

Our campuses also act as anchor institutions across our great city. Throughout 2023, our outreach programs and initiatives directly engaged over 50,000 community members through educational workshops, health clinics, cultural

events, and volunteer activities. We have strong partnerships with the New York City Public Schools, businesses and industry, and nonprofits that address community needs like job training programs, literacy campaigns, and environmental conservation efforts.

We are deeply committed to our role as an engine of social mobility and are building a strategy to make our university even more impactful as an agent of change and economic engine for our state and city. Last June, we unveiled an ambitious strategic roadmap called “CUNY Lifting New York” — a detailed plan for bolstering the already profound impact our university makes in the lives of our students, their families and communities, as well as on the city, the region and state.

Both our Roadmap and our Fiscal 2025 Budget Request focus on four goals. They are:

- One, be a National Leader in Providing Access to Higher Education for Diverse Populations of Students;
- Two, improve Our Ability to Exceed Predicted Student Outcomes and Eliminate Academic Equity Gaps With Innovative Curriculum and Support for Our World-class Staff and Faculty;
- Three, advance Our Community Through Comprehensive Research, Engagement and Services; and
- Four, modernize the CUNY System.

We have experienced many recent successes in the last year that are already advancing our “CUNY Lifting New York” strategy including:

- Fixing long-term flaws in our transfer system by ensuring that students who go from a CUNY community college to a senior college receive full credit for the first two years of classes taken within their major, saving them an estimated average of \$1,220 in tuition and significant time toward graduation.
- Launching a \$10 million initiative to get CUNY students more paid internships that are embedded in their degree programs, and providing new internship opportunities to 4,000 students;

- Adding 115 fully online, high-quality degree programs across the university to provide access to working adults and those who need flexibility in order to obtain a college degree;
- Securing \$638 million in external research funding, a record amount last fiscal year;
- Working on wide-ranging transformational capital projects that advance CUNY's core educational mission, including the recent completion of the state-of-the-art \$95-million Nursing Education, Research and Practice Center at Lehman College;
- Confronting hate and taking steps to combat antisemitism and all forms of bigotry on every front, including partnering with Hillel International; launching a portal for community members to report incidents of hate and discrimination; initiating a campaign to promote students' and employees' right to request religious accommodations; forming an advisory council on Jewish life; building a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Hub on our website; and distributing \$1.3 million in State and City Council funding to colleges for trainings, events and activities that address religious, racial and ethnic bigotry.

While our accomplishments with your support have been laudable, our continued progress in “lifting New York” is challenged by the \$94 million in PEGS that have been imposed on the University and are set to be baselined. We have worked tirelessly to mitigate the harm from these PEGS and preserve our academic mission and reputation as a leading university. However, the negative effects of the PEGs for our students, our academic programs, and our colleges are now widespread and unavoidable. My colleagues with me today will discuss the specific impacts on personnel and operations across the colleges, and I will give just a few examples of how our key academic programs are affected.

- We have reduced city funding to support our K-16 programs with the New York City Public Schools. Tutor Corps, which supports STEM teachers in middle and high school classrooms by providing one-on-one tutoring, now serves half as many NYCPS students as a result of losing \$1.1 million in funding over the last two fiscal years. As a reminder, when PEGS are implemented, CUNY not only loses its direct funding from the City, but also

program funding from our city partners who are managing their own reductions from the PEGS;

- The FY 24 baselined funding for our Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) remained stable, and we thank you for that support. However, our Accelerate, Complete and Engage (ACE) program, which serves 2,800 bachelor degree seeking students per year at a cost of \$7.1 million, is not included in the Mayor's Preliminary budget. Our ACE program achieves a 4-year graduation rate of 60% vs. 41% for a matched cohort, reducing the actual cost per graduate by 13% after accounting for the \$2,500 per student investment. Because funds must be sought each year and are not baselined, it is difficult to manage vacancies, which are often paused pending the next budget cycle, resulting in higher advisement caseloads and fewer students admitted to the program;
- CUNY lost \$2 million per year in funding to support developmental education last year to meet the needs of those who enter CUNY unready to take college-level math and English without additional support. The decline in funding affects the amount of corequisite support available and jeopardizes the critical progress CUNY has made to ensure underprepared students have a clear pathway to college-level coursework;
- We have paused some of our professional development for faculty who have experienced challenges in teaching in the wake of the pandemic, especially in English and math developmental courses.

As these handful of examples reflect, the PEGS have led to reductions in instructional and student services staff that directly affect student progress to degree completion and higher earning ability. Reduced staffing has affected academic advisement, counseling, library staffing and hours, career services, and student financial aid offices, among others. These effects are magnified by the fact that many students are now enrolling with significant learning delays and intense needs because of the pandemic and require more support than ever before.

Chairperson Dinowitz and members of the committee, the University community deeply appreciates your continued commitment to a high-quality CUNY education.

This concludes my testimony, and Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer Hector Batista will continue with his testimony.

**Testimony of
Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer Héctor Batista
The City University of New York**

**New York City Council Higher Education Committee Hearing
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Thank you, Wendy.

I echo my colleague and thank Speaker Adams, Chair Dinowitz, the higher education committee, and all members of the City Council for consistently recognizing the value of CUNY. Your commitment to ensuring our resiliency is greatly appreciated.

I also want to acknowledge CUNY Trustee and Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, Henry Berger, who has joined us today.

You heard from our Provost about our student demographics. Let me begin my testimony today by giving you a sense of our faculty and staff demographic and the gains this administration has done in diversity, equity and inclusion.

We have seen an increase in women and minority employees across many of our faculty and staff classifications. According to our 3-year workforce demographics report:

- The 3-year trend of full-time Instructional Staff shows the increase in the percentage of female and minority Faculty.
- The 3-year trend shows an increase in the percentage of minorities in Faculty, HEO Series and ECP titles and reflects an increase in the percentage of women in Faculty titles.
- Employees in the faculty rank of Professors have increased in the percentage of minorities and women by 9.7% and 8.3% respectively.
- Growth in Non-Professoriate in titles such as Lecturers and Instructors is most evident in total minorities with an increase of 211 faculty members or 38.3%.

But as the Council knows, CUNY is facing difficult financial challenges. Our obligations are exceeding our available resources, so we are faced with a structural deficit. The primary factors contributing to the structural deficit are enrollment declines and unfunded mandatory costs that the University has had to absorb.

As we seek your support in this budget cycle, it is important to first begin by summarizing steps that we have taken, and continue to take, to address our structural deficit, because it is important for you to know that we take our stewardship of the money this Council provides very seriously.

University-wide, we have taken steps such as instituting a hiring freeze, applying across-the-board savings targets for this current fiscal year and the previous one, and working with colleges exhibiting fiscal distress on achieving additional deficit reduction targets through expense reductions and opportunities for revenue generation. Our actions, combined with additional state aid, have led to the structural deficit being reduced by more than half of what it was two years ago, from \$234 million in Fiscal Year 2022 to \$107 million according to our latest projections at the current fiscal year's mid-year point.

Our strategies to continue to reduce the structural deficit do not only include college level actions. We are also implementing various system-wide shared services strategies to achieve additional savings and streamline operations. Among them are centralizing certain IT functions to benefit from economies of scale, pursuing a more effective deployment of maintenance and repair teams to campuses, and consolidating contracts to negotiate better pricing.

Our efforts are not limited to expense reductions. We are also focused on revenue strategies that can help our goal of fiscal stability. We continue to implement enrollment and retention strategies to ensure that students succeed on their educational journeys, and those efforts have led to an uptick in enrollment that helps increase revenues to the University. Although the enrollment uptick is welcome news, it is not enough to counteract the nearly 15% decrease in enrollment when compared to pre-pandemic levels.

While we have a comprehensive plan to tackle the structural deficit and achieve fiscal stability, the plan is threatened by the effects of several rounds of baselined PEGs. It was welcome news to hear of the cancellation of the third round of PEGs, but the baselined PEGs for Fiscal Year 2024 that now total \$94.1 million, and the estimated \$95.6 million in Fiscal Year 2025, will continue to impede CUNY's progress. To put this in perspective, the cumulative PEG of \$94.1 million is 15% of the entire City contribution to our operating budget.

CUNY is an organization of people, so naturally much of our operating budget, about 85%, is dedicated to personal services. Community colleges are down over 400 positions, or about 7%, when compared to headcount levels in Fiscal Year 2021.

Let me describe a few examples to illustrate the impact of these personnel reductions on campus operations:

- At **Borough of Manhattan College**, 73 positions are vacant. They include faculty, academic and student support services staff, buildings and grounds professionals, and instructional/ administrative support. These vacancies have caused student delays in academic navigation which relate to student retention and success, delayed expansion of cohort programs which have a 50% higher graduation rate than non-cohort participants, and impacted students' preparedness for workforce and career pursuits.
- At **Kingsborough Community College**, a total of 51 staff and faculty full-time positions are currently unfilled at the college, including faculty, lab technicians, and financial aid personnel. Other areas in campus operations are thinly staffed including bursar, registrar and custodial services. Academic tutoring has been cut back, and there are no more academic lab regular open hours.
- At **Hostos Community College**, 77 positions have been cut. In the Student Development and Enrollment Management division, there has been no replacement of vacant positions in student support service areas – Financial Aid, Admissions, and Advisement departments that remain unfilled. There are 10 unfilled faculty lines. Double-digit vacancies in Custodial Services,

and the IT department has also seen several reductions in staff over the years and is operating with a minimal crew supporting the campus community, the campus network, handling increased security issues, and working on successfully incorporating CUNY-wide IT and campus IT-related initiatives.

The impact of the reductions in instructional and student services staff coupled with the programmatic impacts outlined by University Provost Hensel demonstrates how the PEGs have directly affected student progress to degree completion and higher earning ability. But I would also like to highlight another aspect of the PEGs that cannot be overlooked -- facility conditions that are critical to the overall campus environment.

Facility conditions are an important factor for student progress, recruitment, and retention, but also in CUNY's ability to attract and retain high-quality faculty and staff. We are doing what we can with facilities, working hard on a dynamic master planning exercise to bring CUNY critical buildings systems to a state of good repair. As part of that work, we are completing a University-wide Facility Condition Assessment that will give a more precise, University-wide evaluation of CUNY's maintenance standing on a building-by-building level. This will allow for an even more efficient allocation of limited maintenance funding. But planning alone will not suffice so long as the PEGs prevent us from maintaining the required levels of facilities staff.

I would like to turn to the capital budget. CUNY is home to 300 buildings across New York City, encompassing 29 million square feet of classrooms, labs, theaters, athletic facilities, and more. These spaces are vital for our students and faculty, and to the communities we serve, and we are asking for \$333.1 million in capital support. These funds will allow us to preserve the University's infrastructure, recapture spaces that are under-utilized, improve technology, meet our energy conservation goals, and ensure that we can continue to serve the region with graduates trained for high-demand positions in the sciences, technology, mathematics, teaching, and nursing.

In conclusion, we respectfully request that you restore the PEGs to enable CUNY to invest in the programs that we know will lead to upward social mobility for CUNY students.

The downstream results of less investment in CUNY will have a cumulative negative impact on the City economy – fewer college graduates, a lesser credentialed workforce, lesser ability to attract businesses to the City, lower personal income and business tax bases, longer term potential for more individuals requiring City services. And of course, real investment in CUNY will do just the opposite. We know this is a broader goal that we collectively share, and we look forward to working with you to deliver a stronger future for CUNY.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and we look forward to your questions.



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

**STATEMENT OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
MARCH 18, 2024**

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. Thank you to Chair Dinowitz and members of the Committee on Higher Education for holding this hearing and for allowing me to share my statement.

As we know, the Covid-19 pandemic deeply impacted higher education in New York City, namely the City University of New York (CUNY) system. From enrollment and retention to student wellbeing, CUNY saw significant strains all across the board.¹ Fast forward to now, enrollment has gone back up and students are returning, with applications for Fall 2024 up by 386%.² While CUNY is coming back—in part due to new and continued programs that support student success—CUNY yet again finds itself on the budget chopping block. Why are our educational institutions regularly on the front lines whenever there are Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) cuts and budget cuts? If anything, our schools should be one of the last options for budget cuts.

We have repeatedly heard CUNY referred to as the socio-economic engine of the city. As a two-time graduate of Brooklyn College, I can attest to the power our city's public higher education system possesses. Numerous financial publications repeatedly rank CUNY institutions as some of the top colleges for upward mobility.³ The benefits of a CUNY education are clear, and investments from the city need to match up to the contributions of its students. We cannot continue to see cuts to programs across campuses, chronic understaffing, and volatile retention as a result of budget cuts. In an analysis by the Comptroller, the Mayor's preliminary budget plan would have CUNY facing cuts of \$20 million per fiscal year, with a potential cumulative total of \$95 million of PEGs per fiscal year from January 2022.⁴ These looming cuts (on top of past budget cuts) have led to CUNY administrators taking austerity measures, which—according to PSC-CUNY—include increasing enrollment caps on classes, reducing student services, and layoffs of faculty and staff on contingent appointments. In particular, CUNY has identified nine “Colleges of Concern” (which includes Brooklyn College) whose progress in meeting savings targets was deemed not up to par, leading to

¹ <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2023/cuny.pdf>;

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7877316/>

² <https://www.chalkbeat.org/newyork/2023/11/20/cuny-application-spike/>

³ <https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2023/12/12/cuny-tops-list-of-best-colleges-for-upward-mobility-according-to-24-7-wall-st/>

⁴ <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/comments-on-new-york-citys-preliminary-budget-for-fiscal-year-2025-and-financial-plan-for-fiscal-years-2024-2028.pdf>



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

additional cuts. All of these cuts must be restored; CUNY should have never been placed in this position in the first place.

Furthermore, CUNY's retention and enrollment also relies on its programs and services, and such programs are integral to many students' success. Programs like CUNY Reconnect are to thank for re-enrolling over 25,000 CUNY students to complete their degrees.⁵ The majority of these students are Black and Hispanic as well as women, largely over the age of 24. The program's navigators serve as advisors that direct students to resources such as childcare and financial aid that would have otherwise been roadblocks for students. The cost of the program for FY2024 was approximately \$5.4 million, a worthwhile investment so that the estimated 700,000 adult New Yorkers with some college credits but no degree⁶ are able to return back to college. Additionally, programs like the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) and Accelerate, Complete, and Engage (ACE) help to eliminate barriers college students face, provide comprehensive academic and financial support, and lead to graduation rates that exceed non-ASAP/ACE students. These programs are funded by a number of sources, but funding from the city is particularly important.

In order to secure the future success of its students, CUNY's wraparound services need to meet the needs of its student body. CUNY should consider screening students for eligibility for city programs such as Fair Fares, which provides New Yorkers who make less than 120% of the federal poverty line with MetroCard discounts. CUNY's Child Care Centers are also crucial for the success of student parents, many of whom may otherwise find difficulty in finding childcare while attending classes and studying.⁷ CUNY must also be a space where students have access to well-rounded and nutritious meals and can combat food insecurity. Colleges like Hunter College have their Purple Apron Food Pantry, which is available to all CUNY students regardless of income.⁸ In a time where CUNY campuses have shut down cafeterias,⁹ city funding must prioritize the food insecure.

CUNY is an asset to the City of New York. We cannot let years of disinvestment into the country's largest urban public university continue any longer. Education should never be on the chopping block in the name of fiscal austerity. I am asking the City Council to listen to the voices of CUNY faculty, students, and alumni in putting CUNY in the position of betterment, progress, and improvement.

Thank you.

⁵ <https://www.nydailynews.com/2023/11/30/nyc-funded-cuny-program-helps-college-dropouts-re-enroll-and-complete-degrees/>

⁶ <https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2022/08/30/council-speaker-adams-and-cuny-chancellor-matos-rodriguez-launch-program-to-re-engage-thousands-of-former-working-age-students-towards-gaining-degrees-that-increase-earning-potential/>

⁷ <https://www.cuny.edu/academics/current-initiatives/office-of-early-childhood-initiatives/childhood/>

⁸ <https://www.healthycuny.org/cunyv-food-pantries>

⁹ <https://www.thecity.nyc/2022/12/01/students-protest-cuny-hostos-cafeteria-shut-closed/>;
<https://www.thecity.nyc/2024/03/04/cuny-bcc-hostos-bronx-no-cafeteria-service/>

Testimony of Dorian Block
Senior Editor, Center for an Urban Future

Before the New York City Council Committees on Finance and Higher Education
on New York City's Budget Allocation for the City University of New York

"Investing in CUNY to Create a More Equitable Economy"

March 18, 2024

Good morning. I'm Dorian Block, senior editor at the Center for an Urban Future, an independent think tank focused on creating a stronger and more inclusive economy in New York. I'm testifying today on behalf of CUF's editorial and policy director, Eli Dvorkin. Thank you to Chairs Brannan and Dinowitz and members of the committees for the opportunity.

To help more New Yorkers get ahead in today's fast-changing economy, there are few investments more worthwhile than boosting college and career success initiatives at the City University of New York (CUNY).

In recent years, the Center for an Urban Future has published several reports focused on what policymakers can do to strengthen CUNY's vital role as a springboard to economic mobility. Our recent research proposed the creation of CUNY Reconnect, a first-of-its-kind, major return-to-college initiative that has already re-enrolled more than 26,000 working-age adults at CUNY who had not finished their degrees. We've also published reports on harnessing CUNY as a launchpad into technology-powered careers; scaling up the highly effective CUNY ACE program to boost senior college success; and growing the innovative CUNY 2X Tech initiative, which helped spark a \$10 million, five-campus expansion late last year.

Investing in CUNY isn't just a win for students, it's vital for the economic security of New York City and State. Yet today, CUNY finds itself at a financial crossroads, as steep budget cuts threaten the programs that are most effective at helping students earn a degree. CUNY faces a cut of more than \$85.8 million in city funds in the Mayor's preliminary budget, compared to last year's adopted budget. Reversing these cuts will be essential if the city is to continue making progress toward a more equitable economy.

We strongly encourage the Council to fully fund CUNY in the FY 2025 budget. In addition, we recommend four key areas where these investments can have the greatest impact:

1. Renewing the highly successful CUNY Reconnect initiative.

Nearly 700,000 working-age New Yorkers have obtained some college credits but no degree. In just two years, the CUNY Reconnect initiative, thanks to the tremendous commitment of Speaker Adams and the City Council, has helped more than 26,000 students return to college and re-enroll, of which over 1,900 have earned degrees. The majority of these students are Black and Hispanic, and women, and most are over the age of 24. At a relatively modest cost of just \$5.4 million last year, CUNY Reconnect has succeeded in helping working-age New Yorkers complete credentials while boosting enrollment, and this program deserves to continue and grow.

2. Expanding CUNY ACE to help more senior college students succeed.

At a time when a college credential has become increasingly critical to accessing well-paying jobs, but when far too many of those entering CUNY's four-year schools are leaving without a degree, the City Council should look to scale up the CUNY Accelerate, Complete, and Engage (ACE) program. Today, only 36.2 percent of full-time students at CUNY's senior colleges graduate in four years. For Black and Latinx students, the graduation rate falls to 27.5 percent. Fortunately, the ACE program has begun to change this, providing students attending CUNY's senior colleges with a mix of academic advisement, career development, tuition scholarships, textbooks, and transportation assistance that has proven to be critical in boosting graduation rates—by as much as 40 percent. However, limited funding has restricted that program to serving just 3 percent of all eligible students. We urge the Council to invest in growing CUNY ACE, which will help students save money by completing their degrees more quickly, maximize the city's other investments in student success by boosting completion rates, and strengthening New York's economy by raising earnings and growing the tax base.

3. Boosting CUNY's career success programs

Although programs like CUNY ACE and ASAP have made meaningful progress in boosting graduation rates, CUNY still has work to do to ensure that CUNY degrees lead to lasting economic opportunity. Today, too many students end up unemployed or underemployed even after earning a credential. Fortunately, several CUNY programs are succeeding in launching students into well-paying careers in the tech sector, health care, finance, and other industries. But these programs are generally operating at a very small scale, and budget cuts threaten their continuation. To ensure that CUNY is as effective as possible in generating economic mobility, the City Council should support the growth of these initiatives—such as the Tech in Residence Corps and the Tech Talent Pipeline Residency Internship program, Futures in Finance, and CUNY Career Launch—and help expand access to career services.

4. Strengthening the crucial CITE program so that every future teacher can be trained in computing education.

Nearly one-third of new teachers hired by New York City Public Schools each year graduate from CUNY. At the same time, fewer than 5 percent of all new teachers are prepared to teach computational thinking—the ability to ask questions, organize data, and solve problems with computers. This training gap is preventing many students in New York City public schools—in particular, Black and Hispanic students, low-income students, and girls—from receiving early encouragement in computing education and from pursuing computer science in high school, college, and careers. To help close these equity gaps, the City Council should invest in CUNY's promising Computing Integrated Teacher Education (CITE) program, which trains future teachers to use computing concepts in all subjects and at every grade level. With the Council's support, this program can expand to reach all 11,000 aspiring teachers enrolled at CUNY every year.

New York's elected leaders are nearly unanimous in expressing the desire to expand economic mobility, while ensuring New Yorkers are ready for the well-paying jobs the city's economy is creating and making the state's tax base more resilient. No institution is better positioned to deliver on those needs than CUNY. Now is the time to invest in CUNY's effectiveness, not limit its potential.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.



**TESTIMONY OF THE
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP
BEFORE THE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING
March 18, 2024
New York, NY**

Good afternoon, my name is Megan Ahearn and I am Program Director for NYPIRG, the New York Public Interest Research Group. NYPIRG is a statewide, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded by college students in 1973 to engage their peers in civic life. NYPIRG’s broad programmatic work provides students with a range of opportunities to participate in public affairs and advance responses to social problems that matter most to them.

In collaboration with and guided by professional staff—researchers, organizers, advocates and attorneys—students tackle pressing issues while learning and developing professional-level skills that will boost their prospects for success in college, the job market and throughout their lives. Our Board of Directors consists of public and independent college and university students elected from campuses with NYPIRG chapters across the state. We advocate for a free and quality public higher education to make one of the most important institutions in New York State accessible to all and to boost racial and economic equity. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the City’s budget for CUNY.

NYPIRG calls on the New York City Council to advocate for a strong City budget that rejects the PEG (Program to Eliminate the Gap) cuts that have amounted to \$94.1 million since 2022, and instead funds services and programs that attract and retain students such as advisement, CUNY Reconnect, ASAP and ACE, and student metrocards. We also urge your continued advocacy to your state counterparts for a final state budget that improves upon the Governor’s Executive Budget.

CUNY Funding in the New York City Executive Budget

Unfortunately, the Mayor’s budget includes cuts that would make it more difficult for students to graduate, excludes funding for important student programs, and does not increase funding for community colleges to blunt the impact of the pandemic and historic underfunding. We call on the City to reject the PEG cuts and commit additional funding of \$35.5 million to expand programs

that work to recruit and retain students through graduation, such as CUNY Reconnect, ASAP, and ACE.

Leading up to and through the pandemic, higher education institutions across the nation experienced enrollment challenges, from decreases to nose dives. CUNY's enrollment trends largely match the national trends, with community college enrollment reductions pre-dating the pandemic and seeing significant drops once the pandemic hit. Now, enrollments are beginning to bounce back, but the PEG undercuts CUNY's ability to bolster services that attract new students. Further, they create an atmosphere of uncertainty among staff and students. Classes have been canceled just two weeks before the spring semester, leaving students scrambling.

CUNY's testimony clearly laid out the impact of the PEG cuts on faculty and staff positions, from reductions of dozens at some schools to over 100 at others. The Mayor's \$94.1 million in PEG cuts creates fewer hours of operation for libraries, cafeterias, student resource offices, and it increases wait times for advisement, counseling, and student financial aid assistance. Students will tell you that classes are already packed and it is hard to find the classes they need to graduate.

We urge the City Council to fight for a final budget that rejects the \$94.1 million PEG cuts and adds \$35.5 million for new academic advisors to expand CUNY Reconnect, ASAP, and ACE.

Expand Fair Fares to CUNY Students

Mass transit defines where you live, where you play, and where you go to school. It is the great equalizer of opportunity and why accessible, affordable, and safe transportation is so important. For New York City's college students, affording a Metrocard swipe or Omny tap can be the difference between earning a degree or dropping out altogether. A recent survey by the Center for an Urban Future found that affording a Metrocard was the biggest financial barrier cited by students and advisors when discussing college costs. Acknowledging the importance of mass transit to education equity, New York City's K-12 students receive free Metrocards, yet that resource doesn't exist for higher education. The need to address transit affordability to support educational attainment could not be more pressing. Thank you to the Council and Speaker Adrienne Adams' stalwart advocacy for Fair Fares. **NYPIRG urges the City Council to support expansion of the Fair Fares program to all CUNY students and individuals at 200% of the federal poverty level.**

Support Opportunity Programs

The NYC budget should add funding for CUNY's nationally renowned Accelerated Studies in Associate Programs (ASAP) and its 4-year counterpart Accelerate, Complete, and Engage program (ACE) to protect and expand funding for these successful programs. ASAP and ACE take a comprehensive approach to college access and affordability by covering tuition costs, building in

academic counseling, mentoring, and covering related costs such as free Metrocards and textbooks. This approach works – increasing retention and graduation rates – and ASAP and ACE deserve support. CUNY Reconnect has brought tens of thousands of students back into the educational fold after dropping out. This new program also includes increased advisement resources and mentoring, and financial aid assistance to support degree completion.

We urge the City Council to fight for a final budget that rejects the PEG cuts and adds \$35.5 million for new academic advisors to expand CUNY Reconnect, ASAP, and ACE.

Support Council-Funded Initiatives

Lastly, the NYC budget should fully fund City Council-funded initiatives that support CUNY students' success, including campus childcare centers, Peter Vallone Merit Scholarship Program, Citizenship Now, and campus food pantries and anti-hunger initiatives that destigmatize hunger and increase SNAP application through outreach programs. Food insecurity was already an epidemic before the pandemic. 1.2 million New Yorkers are food insecure and monthly visits to soup kitchens are up by 60% and even higher for families with children.¹ **We also echo the calls to institute more eligibility reviews and get students who qualify for benefits already, such as for SNAP and Fair Fares, enrolled in those programs.**

Advocate for CUNY Funding at the State Level

At the state level, the Executive Budget underfunds base aid to public higher education institutions, keeps financial aid programs stagnant, and cuts opportunity programs and Bundy Aid. Since 2011, nearly constant hikes have raised tuition rates by more than 42%, far exceeding the growth in the economy. **We urge the City Council to advocate to your counterparts in the State Legislature to adequately fund CUNY in the final State budget, including: passing the New Deal for CUNY, and boosting per-Full Time Equivalent (FTE) support for community colleges.**

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

¹ City Harvest, Hunger in NYC, <https://www.cityharvest.org/hunger-in-nyc/>.

[REDACTED]

From: Harold Forsythe <haroldf607@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 17, 2024 4:38 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony regarding NYC Budget for CUNY, with specific reference to community colleges

[REDACTED]

To the Honorable Members of the New York City Council:

I will not be able to make the meeting on Monday, March 18, so I have decided to submit in writing certain points that I hope members of the Council will consider when determining the pending budget for the City University of New York.

I have spent my entire adult life teaching in higher education, full-time and part-time, at community colleges, small liberal arts colleges, and R1 and R2 universities. As a student I benefited from the American commitment to education for the whole people and as a teacher I have attempted to pay forward the debt I owe to the teachers who shaped me. I have also given thought to the challenges going forward. I write you all about those challenges today.

There are more than a million children and young people in New York City's public school system. They are being well taught by my co-workers in the K-12 system. I count on my co-workers in public schools to prepare these young people for higher education: a tiny proportion for private institutions, a much larger group for the senior colleges in CUNY, and probably the largest group matriculating to the CUNY community colleges. This is a necessity because most high-paying jobs for which a high school degree was adequate 50-100 years ago are long gone.

The demography of New York City is such that when after 13 years the children who started kindergarten in say 2013 are graduated from high school, another group just as large will have started in the system. Meanwhile, NYC (and NYS) will be called upon to provide seats in public colleges for most of these high school graduates. Community colleges, the special responsibility of the City, are crucial because in a multi-lingual population where English is often a secondary language, literacy skills must be polished. Moreover, the quantitative skills expected of college students these days would have killed my generation, who mainly got by on our high school math. The senior colleges not being funded for remediation desperately need the community colleges to prepare young people for the junior and senior years. Students transferring from community colleges are vital resource for the senior colleges.

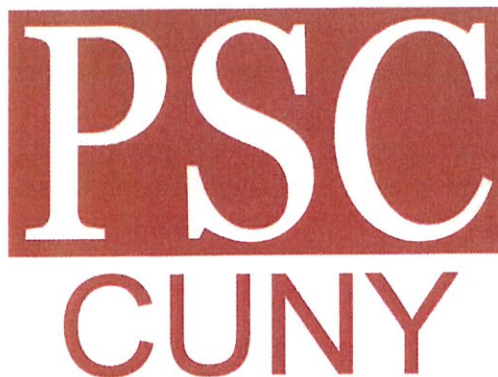
It would be easy enough to leave my testimony here. It is our duty to look after the huge population of young people who need to be trained to advance. Yet, there is another issue which I think you on the Council and your senior staff understand better than I do. My generation is in process of withdrawing from the workforce: by choice or by the force of time. The entire post-WW II generation will be out of the national workforce within 10-12 years if not sooner. What are the needs of the public and private sectors in this, the one Mega-City in predominantly English-speaking North America, in terms of expertise? From where will the engineers,

accountants, economists, lawyers, administrators, doctors, nurses, etc, come? We could import them. Yet, isn't it better social planning not to mention better politics, to actually educate our doctors at the CUNY Medical School, the lawyers at our Law School, our economists at Baruch and the CUNY Grad Center, our engineers at City College, and so on? Where will we get new generations of teachers for the 1.1+ million and growing student population in the City's K-12 system?

I ask you to invest in higher education for the coming generations. I am, of course, a member of PSC and know by long experience that a better paid faculty and staff works harder and has better morale. But when I walk onto campus, I joke with my colleagues and intently watch my students. It is the latter with whom I identify most. They are me: minus 55 years. They work for near minimum wage putting themselves through college now. I can remember doing just that. Our job, my job, is to help these young people make their dreams of acquiring skills come true. Those learned 20-somethings and 30-somethings will transform our City for the 21st century. I am convinced that your decision to invest in public higher education, despite the nay sayers, will pay off in every way conceivable in the years and decades to come.

Thank you for reading and considering this.

Respectfully, Harold Forsythe, Adjunct Lecturer History & Political Science, CCNY
PSC-CCNY,



**TESTIMONY OF DR. JAMES DAVIS
PRESIDENT PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY
New York City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing - Higher Education
March 18, 2024**

Good afternoon Chairs Dinowitz and Brannan. On behalf of 30,000 PSC members, thank you for your continued advocacy on behalf of the City University of New York. Without the council's intervention last year, the fiscal strain on the University would be far more severe.

Post Pandemic: Students returning to shrinking campus budgets

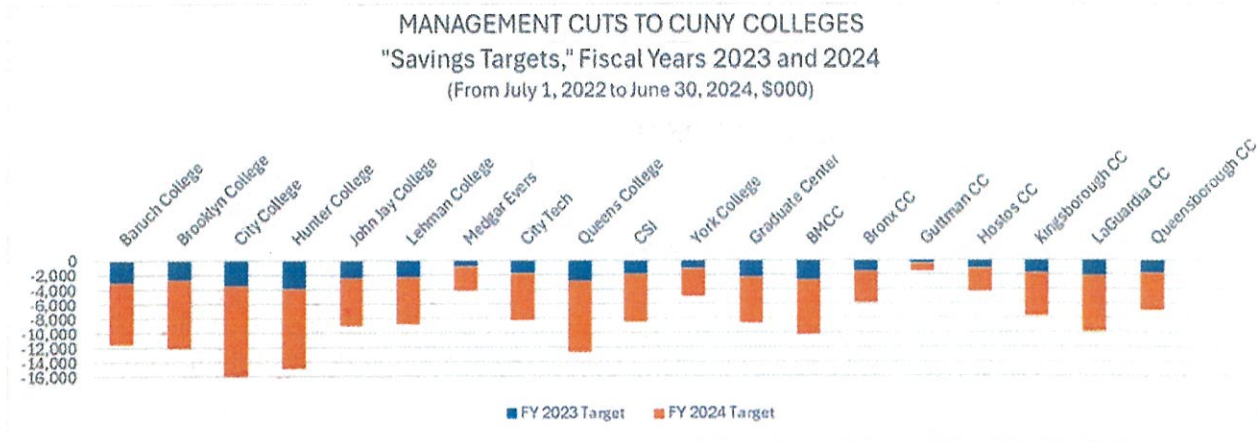
Enrollment is up across the board at CUNY. Some campuses have come back more quickly than others, but students are returning. Spring enrollment from 2023 to 2024, 10.6% and transfers are up 9.2%.¹ For Fall 2024, applications are up 386%. Recent legislative initiatives are helping to bring students back. Special thanks to Council Speaker Adrienne Adams for her leadership on CUNY Reconnect, a program that has brought 25,000 CUNY students are back to complete their degrees. Other initiatives include a waiver of application fees and recruitment letters targeting NYC public school seniors. Governor Hochul aims next year to guarantee CUNY admission for the top 10% of New York State high school graduates, and FAFSA applications from all graduating seniors will be required. (Chart 1)

These are positive developments but the road back from COVID has been long and bruising. Many years of disinvestment have rendered CUNY unable to cope with enrollment fluctuations due to an overdependence on tuition. The Mayor continues to cut CUNY even as the City's financial picture improves. In a panic, our administration implemented damaging new midyear savings targets, pushing nine of our colleges deeper into austerity. CUNY does not have an enrollment crisis, we have a crisis of understaffing and student retention. Cutting programs leads students to drop out. To keep CUNY moving toward recovery, we need your help.

25 Broadway, 15 Floor, New York, NY 10004 (212) 354-1252 www.psc-cuny.org

¹ [CUNY's Subcommittee on Enrollment](#), March 11, 2024

My members know how to educate the students we serve and support their academic and personal development. But they cannot be effective in a chaotic environment in which hundreds of classes are canceled in the lead-up to the semester,² instructors come and go like a revolving door, and vacant staff positions go unfilled by design, leaving those who remain doing the jobs of two or three people.



CUNY's Nine "Colleges of Concern"

MIS
CUNY MANAGEMENT: TURNING FISCAL CHALLENGE INTO FULL-BLOWN CRISIS
MID-YEAR CUTS AT 9 "COLLEGES OF CONCERN"

Nine colleges were projected not to meet their savings targets for this fiscal year. These colleges of concern were directed to make additional mid-year cuts in December 2023 and implement "Enhanced Deficit Reduction Plans."

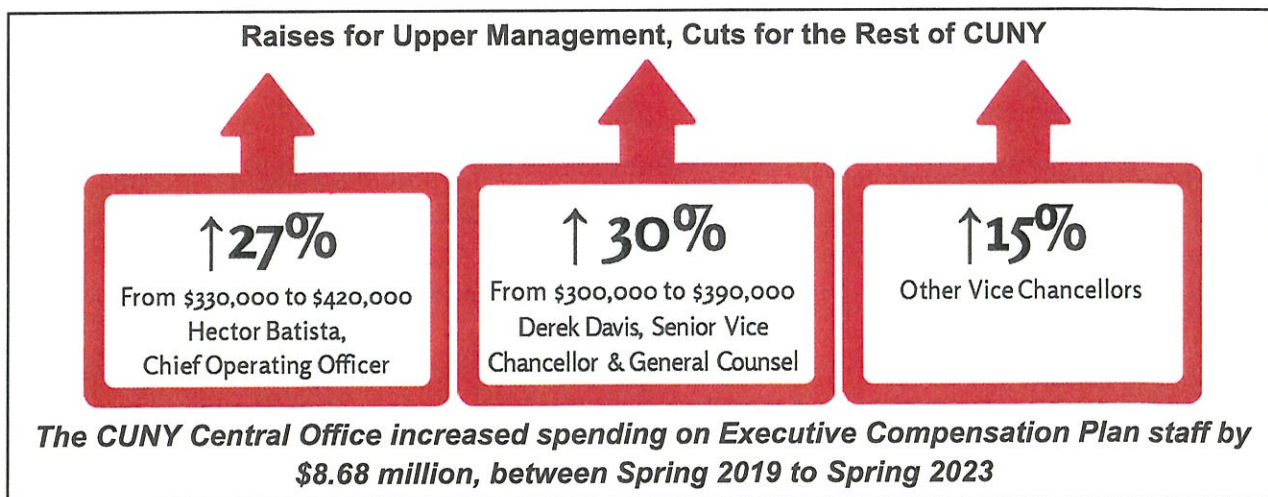
Enhanced Deficit Reduction Plans Undermine Academic Quality

Increasing enrollment caps on classes	Less classroom attention for students
Cancelling course sections	Student schedules in chaos; required courses not offered when students can take them
Reduced services in libraries, labs, offices, meal halls	Less student support; diminished learning environment for students
Hiring freezes, allowing only one rehire for every three staff departures	Rising workloads and unmanageable caseloads for staff; longer waits for students
Abrupt layoffs of adjunct faculty and full-time faculty/staff on contingent appointments	Lost jobs and health insurance; demoralized workforce

² [CUNY Layoffs and Class Cuts Come Just Weeks Before New Semester | THE CITY — NYC News, https://queensledger.com/2024/01/11/queens-college-lays-off-26-professors-two-weeks-before-spring-semester/](https://queensledger.com/2024/01/11/queens-college-lays-off-26-professors-two-weeks-before-spring-semester/)

CUNY's austerity measures include increasing enrollment caps on classes, reducing student services such as library hours and cafeteria access, and abrupt layoffs of hundreds of faculty and staff on contingent appointments, including 26 Queens College full-time substitute Lecturers before Spring semester. Despite the fact that all but three CUNY colleges ended fiscal year 2023 with a surplus, the administration cut across-the-board in fiscal year 2024, anticipating the expiration of federal stimulus funding and slow enrollment growth. This past fall, nine of the colleges (Chart 2) were told their progress in meeting savings targets was insufficient, and the administration imposed further cuts, extracting tens of millions in additional savings. This was on top of the \$57 million in fiscal year 2024 savings that these nine campuses - two community colleges, six senior colleges, and one professional school - were already tasked with delivering.

Our exasperation at these cuts is compounded by the fact that we have yet to hear of any CUNY administrator making the sacrifices they demand from our members. Where was the Board of Trustees' fiscal discipline when they approved 30 percent raises for the top two executive vice chancellors in 2022? Where is the Board's call now for furloughs for the executive staff to help achieve cost savings in 2024? PSC members have heard enough about the university's "multi-pronged strategies" to reduce costs; every prong hurts us and our students, not them.



CUNY reverses its budget request

CUNY's preliminary budget request included \$61.5 million in restorations of city funds, then inexcusably that item disappeared from the final budget request the Board approved last December. So their fiscal year 2025 budget request does not ask for the operating funds that have been drained out by the mayor's Program to Eliminate the Gap. The PSC has been among the most persistent voices opposing Mayor Adams' unrelenting austerity towards the university, and we have, for decades, called for needed investments at both the state and city levels. The Chancellor, Board of Trustees, and Presidents have rarely if ever objected to proposed cuts, and have rarely put forward budget requests that would meet our needs. Nor did they do so this

year with the request the Board approved in December 2023. They must do better than accommodate austerity.

How to avert a retention crisis - PSC's City FY25 budget request

Full-time freshmen fail to return for their second year at alarmingly high rates at our community colleges - 40% stop out.³ Hiding this nationwide and well-known problem will not solve it. As CUNY itself knows, increasing student-facing staff and full-time faculty and providing wraparound support such as free MetroCards and textbooks boosts retention. Our budget requests focuses on logical and proven ways to get there.

1. The Mayor must restore \$94 million in city cuts. By FY24, cumulative PEGs had resulted in the loss of 363 civilian and pedagogical positions. Without operational support, these vacancies cannot be filled.

According to the Council's Report on the Fiscal 24 Preliminary Plan the, "citywide vacancy reduction plan required agencies to eliminate half of their current vacant positions. CUNY's vacancy reduction plan includes the elimination of 156 positions in each year... [through] 2027."

Colleges are exhibiting real stress. For example, at City Tech 67% of staff interviewed reported that their department had vacancies and 74% of staff reported that this increased their workload. At BMCC, staff report vacant positions and workload pressure in the Advocacy and Resource Center (ARC) where students wait in long lines for the food pantry and other supports.

At BMCC, we are really feeling the cut backs. In my department (mathematics) one of the largest departments at BMCC, we are not being allowed to replace our full time office assistant. The department has approximately 150 faculty but is currently operating with only part time staff. To top it off, we just added a new Data Science major that will earn money for BMCC but we don't have the staff to support it.

*Dr. Kathleen Offenholly, Professor of Mathematics
Borough of Manhattan Community College*

Restrictions have been put on hirings by CUNY. For every three vacated positions one will be replaced. How are advisors, counselors, and financial aid officers supposed to continue serving the students if positions that are vacated will not be replaced? How are we, as a college, supposed to continue advising students, processing financial aid applications or seeing students seeking mental health counseling if professional staff is not hired? First generation students need help with processing their financial aid applications. They rely on advisors for advice and graduation services, mental health services especially in the post pandemic world.

*Justyna Jagielnicka, Licensed Mental Health Counselor
Borough of Manhattan Community College*

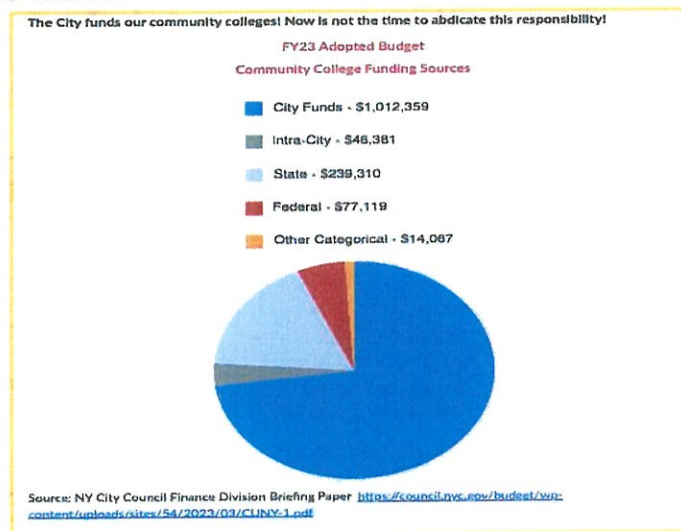
³ "Stabilizing the University's Finances," CUNY report to the New York State legislature, January 2024

2. Fund CUNY Reconnect and ASAP with \$35.5 million to move toward ASAP for all. *CUNY can reconnect and retain students.* An ASAP-for-all model would provide students with academic support in CUNY's most successful and nationally recognized program. This should just "be college" but CUNY needs funding to match ASAP's graduation rate which is two times that of non ASAP students⁴. Funding could also support the expansion of CUNY Reconnect, which successfully brought back over 26,000 CUNY students since its pilot in 2022-2023.

3. Screen students for Fair Fares. ASAP's provision of free MetroCards is part of its success, But students are not screened for eligibility for existing city programs like Fair Fares. We support the Speaker's efforts outlined in her State of the City to expand Fair Fares eligibility to 200% of the federal poverty level and to ensure better transit access to all students.⁵

Conclusion

While there are certainly financial challenges at CUNY, support from this council and leadership from City Hall will signal to our members and students that their dedication to education and community service are valued.



Putting resources into CUNY is an investment that cannot be shied away from; it is exactly what this city needs. CUNY's return on its investment repays New Yorkers many times over, as research consistently shows.⁶ The City cannot retreat from its commitment to public higher education. We urge you and the Mayor to secure significant new investments in CUNY's community colleges.

Thank you for fighting for PSC members, CUNY students, and for the opportunity to testify before you today.

⁴ [About – CUNY ASAP](http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/about/) www1.cuny.edu/sites/asap/about/

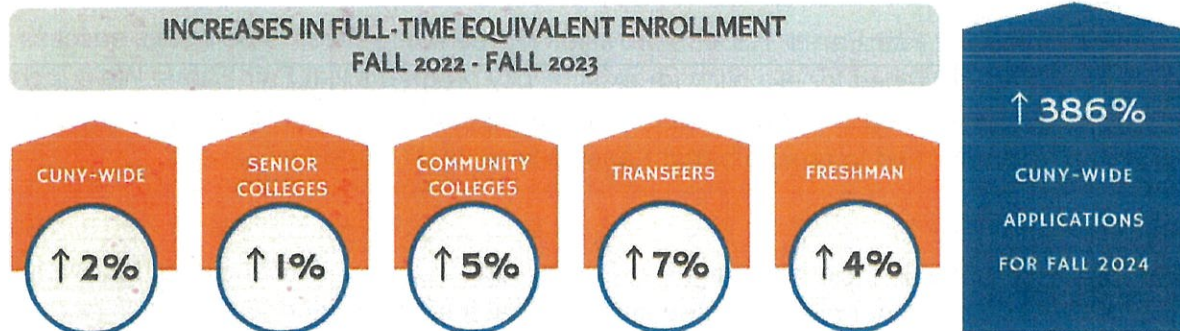
⁵ [Moving Forward Together](#), Speaker Adams, State of the City. March 13, 2024

⁶ [CUNY's Contribution to the Economy: Office of the New York City Comptroller](#), March 2021

CHART 1

CUNY MANAGEMENT: TURNING FISCAL CHALLENGE INTO FULL-BLOWN CRISIS

ENROLLMENT IS REBOUNDED



Initiatives that helped this Year

- CUNY Reconnect, a program sponsored by NYC Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, has brought back 25,000 CUNY students to complete their degrees.
- Waived application fees
- Targeted recruitment letters to NYC public school seniors

Proposals from Governor Hochul that Will Help Next Year

- Guaranteeing CUNY admission for top 10% of NY state high school graduates
- Requiring FAFSA applications from all graduating seniors

While full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment remains lower than the pre-pandemic level, it is on a strong upswing.

CHART 2 - CUNY's Campuses of Concern

Campus	Expected cuts	Impact	Council District
Borough of Manhattan Community College	TBD	Staff hiring reductions - one person rehired for every three people who departed	Council District 1, Christopher Marte
Brooklyn College	\$3.5 million	TBD	Council District 45, Council Member Farah Louis
College of Staten Island	\$2.4 million	TBD	Council District 50, David Carr
John Jay College	\$4.5 million	200 classes cut; staff hiring reductions:one person rehired for every three people who departed	Council District 6, Gale Brewer
Kingsborough Community College	TBD	TBD	Council District 48, Inna Vernikov
New York City College of Technology	TBD	TBD	Council District 33, Lincoln Restler
Queens College	TBD	26 full-time faculty members were laid off just days before this semester began	Council District 24, James Gennaro
School of Professional Studies	TBD	Undergraduate capstone courses (except for clinical nursing) will be raised to a cap of 17 from 5-10	Council District 3, Erik Bottcher
York College	\$1.9 million	150 Spring classes cut in late January	Council District 27, Nantasha Williams

**Testimony for New York City Council
Committee on Education**

Re: FY 25 Preliminary Budget - Education

March 18, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is **Suzanne Martin** and I am Executive Director of SteppingStone Day School.

Over the last few years, the NYC Department of Education has used around \$1 billion per year in temporary federal COVID-19 relief funding to support programs that were needed long before the pandemic and are still needed today. These programs include 3-K, preschool special education, social workers, community schools, psychologists, coordinators working in homeless shelters, restorative justice, bilingual supports, Learning to Work, and many more. The funds are *expiring*, and unless the City adds funding to the budget to continue these programs, they could be rolled back or eliminated as soon as July. The expiration of federal stimulus dollars comes on top of proposed cuts in city funding and expiring one-year city dollars currently funding important education programs.

Unless the City restores the funding, here are some of the programs, services, and staff on the chopping block – along with the funding needed in FY 25 merely to restore these programs to their current funding levels:

- 3-K slots for thousands of young children (\$263M);
- **Preschool special education classes and services for young children with autism and other disabilities (\$96M);**
- More than 100 community schools – providing after-school programs, mental healthcare, food pantries, and more – at schools serving more than 40,000 students (\$77M);
- 450 school social workers at schools serving nearly 200,000 students (\$67M);
- Learning to Work programs for students who are working hard to get back on track so they can graduate from high school (\$33M);
- 100 DOE coordinators working on the ground in shelters to help students experiencing homelessness get to school (\$12.3M);
- Restorative justice programs to help students stay in school instead of being subject to exclusionary discipline (\$12M) – and the Mental Health Continuum at 50 high-needs schools in the South Bronx and Central Brooklyn (\$5M);

- Support for immigrant students—including bilingual programs (\$10M), expansion of translation and interpretation (\$7M), and the immigrant family communication and outreach initiative (\$4M) so that families can receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access;
- 60 school psychologists and 15 family workers helping to evaluate children with disabilities so they can get needed services (\$10M);
- Literacy initiatives and programs for students with dyslexia (\$7M);
- Student Success Centers to help students at 34 high schools prepare for college (\$3.3M).

We join with the Emergency Coalition to Save Education Programs in calling for the city budget to include funding to maintain the many important education programs currently supported with funds that will be expiring this year. Do not let these programs end on your watch.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. If you have any questions, you may contact me at SteppingStone Day School 917-612-1386.

COLLEGE DISCOVERY OVERVIEW AND IMPACT

The College Discovery Program was established within the community colleges by a Board of Higher Education Resolution on February 17, 1964, its major goal was “the admission of students from a spectrum of academic standing below the level of that which is conventionally regarded as appropriate for admission.” Originally conceived as an experimental five-year program, College Discovery sought to demonstrate that students who were then being excluded from college because of existing admissions criteria could, with the proper supportive services attain a college degree. CUNY College Discovery Guidelines, 1994

The College Discovery (CD) Program marked its 60th anniversary within CUNY on February 17, 2024. Recognized by the New York State Education Department as a New York State Opportunity Program, CD operates under the framework of education Law-EDN 6452. This program is designed to support **students whose income falls below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level guidelines** and whose academic performance is below an average GPA of 80.

Despite CD students facing significant challenges, the **retention rates** for CD students at all six community colleges for the 2019 cohort were **higher** than the general student population, and both the 2-year and 3-year **graduation rates** for CD students were **higher** than the general student population by 5 and 8 points, respectively.

CD is an **access program** committed to providing holistic support to its students. This support encompasses financial, personal and academic counseling, academic support services, and a summer bridge program. Since its inception almost 60 years ago, CD has continued to be a beacon of hope and **catalyst for transformation in the lives of countless CUNY students** who, due to academic and socio-economic barriers, might otherwise be denied the opportunity to pursue higher education.

The CD Program is an **educational initiative** that operates **at six community colleges**. It receives funding from the City (92%) and the State (8%). However, over the past decade, the program has seen a significant 32% decline in CD students, dropping from 2,068 to 1,402 students. This decline cannot be attributed solely to the nationwide decrease in higher education enrollment and disrupted learning; budget constraints are also a factor. The program budget, which includes administrative costs and financial aid support for students, has not kept up with contractual increases in personnel. These increases have risen by 35% over the past decade, accounting for 58% of the average CD budget of 5.5M over the past 10 years.

CD Programs offer more than just academic initiatives. They provide **a comprehensive support system** that addresses the multifaceted challenges faced by students from marginalized communities and those who have recently arrived in the country to build a better life for themselves and their families. With **academic support, financial assistance, counseling and advising, and career guidance**, students have the tools to succeed in their educational and future professional endeavors. By enrolling in CD Programs, students can receive the support they need to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals.

In order for CD Programs to carry out their mission of **providing vital support** to the most academically and financially vulnerable students, as well as those with the greatest educational needs, it is **essential to secure additional funding**. Investing in CD Programs is an investment in the future of our state, ensuring a more equitable, prosperous, and educated society.

CD Program Demographics

- Demographics: Gender/Ethnicity/Race
 - **64.2% Women; 35.8% Male**
 - 48.72% Hispanic
 - 31.94% Black
 - 12.94 Asian
 - 5.89% White
 - .50% American Indian or Native American

Today we are sharing in this hearing KCC College Discovery data on demographics and students' outcomes

**Kingsborough Community College
College Discovery
Fall 2022 - First-Time Freshmen*
Enrollment By Demographics
CD Freshmen vs. Non-CD Freshmen**

Ethnicity	CD Freshmen		Non-CD Freshmen		All Freshmen	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Amer Ind/Native Alaskan	0	0.0%	1	0.1%	1	0.1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	20	16.3%	253	16.2%	273	16.2%
Black/Non-Hispanic	59	48.0%	578	37.0%	637	37.8%
Hispanic/Other	30	24.4%	343	22.0%	373	22.1%
White/Non-Hispanic	14	11.4%	387	24.8%	401	23.8%
Total	123	100.0%	1562	100.0%	1685	100.0%

Gender	CD Freshmen		Non-CD Freshmen		All Freshmen	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Male	57	46.3%	780	49.9%	837	49.7%
Female	66	53.7%	782	50.1%	848	50.3%
Total	123	100.0%	1562	100.0%	1685	100.0%

**Kingsborough Community College
College Discovery
One & Two Year Persistence Rates
Fall 2020 First Time Freshmen
CD Freshmen vs. Non-CD Freshmen**

CD Status	One Year Retention or Graduation Rate						
	Fall 2020 Enrolled #	Fall 2021					
		Still Enrolled		Graduated thru SS2021		Enrolled or Graduated	
	#	#	%	#	%	#	%
CD	136	96	70.6%	0	0.0%	96	70.6%
Non-CD	1647	967	58.7%	0	0.0%	967	58.7%
All Freshmen	1783	1063	59.6%	0	0.0%	1063	59.6%

CD Status	Two Year Retention or Graduation Rate						
	Fall 2020 Enrolled #	Fall 2022				Enrolled or Graduated # %	
		Still Enrolled # %		Graduated thru SS2022 # %			
CD	136	44	32.4%	20	14.7%	64	47.1%
Non-CD	1647	427	25.9%	197	12.0%	622	37.8%
All Freshmen	1783	471	26.4%	217	12.2%	688	38.6%

Fall 2022

**Kingsborough Community College
College Discovery
Fall 2022 - First-Time Freshmen*
Cumulative GPA Thru Winter 2023
CD Freshmen vs. Non-CD Freshmen**

GPA Range	CD Freshmen		Non-CD Freshmen		Total Freshmen	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
0 - 1.99	25	20.3%	300	19.2%	325	19.3%
2.00 - 2.49	16	13.0%	176	11.3%	192	11.4%
2.50 - 2.99	23	18.7%	217	13.9%	240	14.2%
3.00 - 3.49	18	14.6%	218	14.0%	236	14.0%
3.50 - 4.00	14	11.4%	336	21.5%	350	20.8%
0 or Missing	27	22.0%	315	20.2%	342	20.3%
Total	123	100.0%	1562	100.0%	1685	100.0%

In closing, I would like to read a blurb from a current student at Bronx Community College:

Elizabeth Cuatle-Rojas who is graduating this May says: “My experience as someone who is part of the College Discovery Program at Bronx Community College has been the most wonderful experience I have had in my 2 years in college. Coming to college as the first in my family to pursue a higher education is scary and challenging, knowing that I am creating a path for future generations in my family. However, the College Discovery Program erased my doubts and fears by providing me with guidance and support that made it less challenging. During the summer program in 2022, I got to experience the dynamics of what a day-to-day college class looks like. They showed us how to annotate while reading and provided us with genuine feedback. Also, not to mention the incredible advisors, peer leader, tutors, and all the staff. They've been an incredible support in my education and in learning how to navigate through college. They taught me how to access Blackboard, CUNYfirst, create my BCC email, schedule my classes, complete my FAFSA application, and make sure I complete and meet all the requirements. The moment I walk into the office of CD, they give me a warm welcome. The environment there is friendly, and I have an excellent relationship with my advisor. They are always making sure I'm doing well in my education and reminding me to schedule meetings with my advisor. The event's CD has always been the best. Throughout the CD, I met a couple of friends there, which helped me feel less lost and lonely. Overall, I would say I'm very pleased to be part of the College Discovery Program, with their support and financial assistance, making my journey a lot less difficult and meaningful!”



University Student Senate
555 West 57th Street, 1420
New York, NY 10019
Tel: (646) 664-8844
Website: www.usscuny.org

New York City Council Committee on Higher Education
City University of New York: New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on
The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2025, The Preliminary Capital Plan for Fiscal
Years 2024-2028, and The Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report
Testimony of Salimatou Doumbouya
Student Trustee, Student Government President of New York City College of Technology,
City University of New York (CUNY)
USS Chairperson, CUNY University Student Senate (USS)
March 18th, 2024

Dear esteemed members of the New York City Council,

My name is Salimatou Doumbouya, a proud student of the New York City College of Technology and a graduate of Borough of Manhattan Community College. I stand before you today not just as University Student Senate Chair or student trustee, but as a representative of the future workforce that this city will depend on. I am here to advocate for the 225,000 students of CUNY and to discuss the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2025, the Preliminary Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2028, and the Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report.

The City University of New York (CUNY) is more than just an institution of higher learning. It is an economic engine that fuels the city's growth by educating its workforce and economically uplifting families. Our students are the city's future engineers, teachers, nurses, and entrepreneurs. Investing in CUNY is investing in the city's future.

The need for New York City to revitalize its workforce is apparent. CUNY students can serve as the workforce needed to make city agencies more responsive to the needs of New Yorkers. In response to a growing mental health crisis, CUNY students are in opportune positions to impact the industry.

However, to continue playing this crucial role, CUNY needs to be fully funded. We need additional funding for transportation, mental health services, support for students with disabilities, housing, and food. These are not luxuries, but necessities for our students to succeed.

Transportation is a significant barrier for many students. Additional funding of \$37 million could subsidize MetroCards for students, ensuring that no student misses class because they cannot afford the fare.

Mental health is another critical area. Balancing school, work, and personal life can be overwhelming. By increasing funding for mental health services by \$5 mil, we can provide students with the reliable support they need to thrive academically and personally. Students can also be trained as mental health service providers.



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Students with disabilities face unique challenges that can hinder their academic progress. Additional funding of \$7 million can provide them with the necessary accommodations and support services, ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.

Lastly, no student should have to worry about **housing and food**. Yet, many of our students are housing insecure or do not know where their next meal will come from. Increased funding of student well-being initiatives of \$7.5 mil can expand housing assistance programs and food pantries, ensuring that all students have a safe place to live and enough to eat.

Esteemed members, I urge you to consider these requests as you review the budget and capital plan. Remember that when you invest in CUNY, you are investing in the future of New York City.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Salimatou Doumbouya
CUNY Trustee
University Student Senate Chairperson
Student Government President of New York City College of Technology

From the staff's perspective, the impact of the recently imposed budget cuts at CUNY is deeply troubling. As a beneficiary of CUNY myself, hailing from Jamaica, I owe my improved life and societal contribution to my CUNY education. Many students, much like me, enter higher education seeking a better life, and CUNY has the power to turn their aspirations into reality.

However, the reality on the ground reveals challenges. Students often register late, sometimes just days before the semester starts, while class cuts are decided well in advance. Colleagues, responsible for advising, registering, and managing financial aid information, operate as unsung heroes, expected to perform like magicians without adequate support or recognition.

The recent budget cuts, especially the 11.5 million reduction for York College, have exacerbated the situation. Instead of supporting essential staff, there's a distressing trend of terminating positions without replacements. In the financial aid office, a critical role remains unfilled for months, forcing the redistribution of tasks among already burdened staff. Even securing discretionary funding for our students to work and supplement their lives lacks the necessary support to disburse aid promptly.

This lack of preparation and support is evident across departments. From the challenges in hiring student workers for Federal Work Study to the abrupt dismissal of an IT and Registrar department staff members, the college is struggling. York, situated in a community in need, requires urgent attention from officials who comprehend the complexities of our public school system and possess a genuine commitment to help.

I beg for assistance for CUNY, specifically York College, to ensure its continued impact on transforming lives and communities.

Cheryl Morrison, York College

HEO Delegate, Financial Aid Specialist

Hello,

I am the parent of two children who attends institute of collaborative, education, in Manhattan. I am currently on the SLT. Before that I was the PTA co-treasurer. This school has been the perfect fit & beneficial for my children in various ways, including its unique approach to student-teacher collaboration.

ICE is a member school of the New York Performance Standards Consortium, which is one of the 6 organizations that have a contract with New York City Public Schools as "Affinity Partners." I am baffled that the mayor is proposing eliminating the contract with Affinity. It is my understanding that without the funds from the Affinity contract, our school will no longer be able to adequately support educators in developing and fine tuning the curriculum that works so well for my children and their classmates. If the school has to pay for this professional development support on its own, it is basically an additional budget cut.

The Consortium has developed a successful and widely studied model over the last 26 years, funded through Affinity for the last 14. Consortium schools have a track record of higher graduation rates and higher college acceptance and retention rates when compared to traditional NYC schools, despite having many more English language learners and students with disabilities than traditional high schools.

Please do the right thing and don't end the contract that enables a model of learning that works for our family and so many others. Keep Affinity funded.

Best,

Jennifer

Testimony of Justyna Jagielnicka, Licensed Mental Health Counselor

New York City Council's Hearing - Higher Education

MARCH 18, 2024 CITY COUNCIL

My name is Justyna Jagielnicka, I am a CUNY Alumna and I currently work at the Borough of Manhattan Community College as a College Discovery Program Counselor. I am a licensed mental health professional and it is because of my CUNY education I have reached a middle class status. I am very proud to work in CUNY where, I get to support students on their educational journeys. So as a former CUNY student and a current counselor in an opportunity program I know first-hand how investing in CUNY means investing in our students.

Today I am asking the city council committee to reject cutting CUNY's budget because CUNY students need access to well-funded academic programs and services so they can graduate!

I do not have to convince the committee how in the post-pandemic world mental health services in CUNY are absolutely critical. It is impossible for students to have academic health without mental health. It can be very challenging to excel in school while dealing with: depression, anxiety, and/or relationships problems. Reducing the budget allocation might have drastic effects on students seeking access to mental health counseling in CUNY!

Academic advisement services is another example of service CUNY students rely on to graduate. To cut CUNY's budget it means there are less advisors available to assist students in their quest to graduation. Students, especially first generation college students need essential information such as how to enroll in classes, apply for financial aid and to generally navigate the CUNY system. Academic advisors play a crucial role: they de-mistify the higher ed experience so students can take advantage of all the resources CUNY has to offer. Cutting CUNY's budget means there are no academic advisors to help students file re-admit paperwork, complete financial aid appeals, provide pre-law and transfer advisement.

As a result of the mayor's proposed PEGs, BMCC has been identified as a college of concern and as a community college we cannot sustain additional cuts! Professional staff see our departments, programs and offices shrink in numbers while we fight to provide the same quality and quantity of services to our students: admissions services, advisement, financial aid support, career services; cohort program support: College Discovery, UMLA, BLA and ASAP.

For poor New Yorkers the decision to go to college can both stressful and exciting. Many CUNY first year students are committed to their academic career but need remedial services offered by CUNY Start and CLIP programs to succeed. Without well-funded programs to provide these services, student cannot advance to credit bearing courses needed for their majors. Without accessible academic advisement services students are less likely to graduate and transfer to a senior college. Our communities, and local economy, need students to graduate on time.

I urge you to recognize the need to FUND CUNY and NOT cut our funding! THANK YOU!

March 11, 2024

New York City Council
Education Committee
Hon. Rita Joseph, Chair
New York City Hall
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Re: PreK/3K Cuts

Dear Council Member Joseph,

I'm an actor/teaching artist and solo mom by choice to an amazing 8month old. I love her and being a mom, but being a parent in New York City is tough. And doing it on a single income without someone else providing childcare and doing home maintenance; it's just impossible.

I had to stop looking for full-time arts administration jobs because the salary wouldn't cover the childcare it would require.

I'm using savings to pay for my daughter's daycare and the only way my family will be able to survive here is with the promise of universal 3k and 4k. Already I had to trek outside of my neighborhood in order to find a daycare that I can (sort of) afford and that offers part-time for infants.

I worry that without the opportunity to save, I'm jeopardizing my and my child's financial future.

I want to stay in New York because of the arts opportunities, the diversity, the representation of different family structures - like mine - and the community I've built here over the past fourteen years.

I need a New York that cares about families, and that includes universal 3 and pre-K.

Sincerely,
Laura Borgwardt

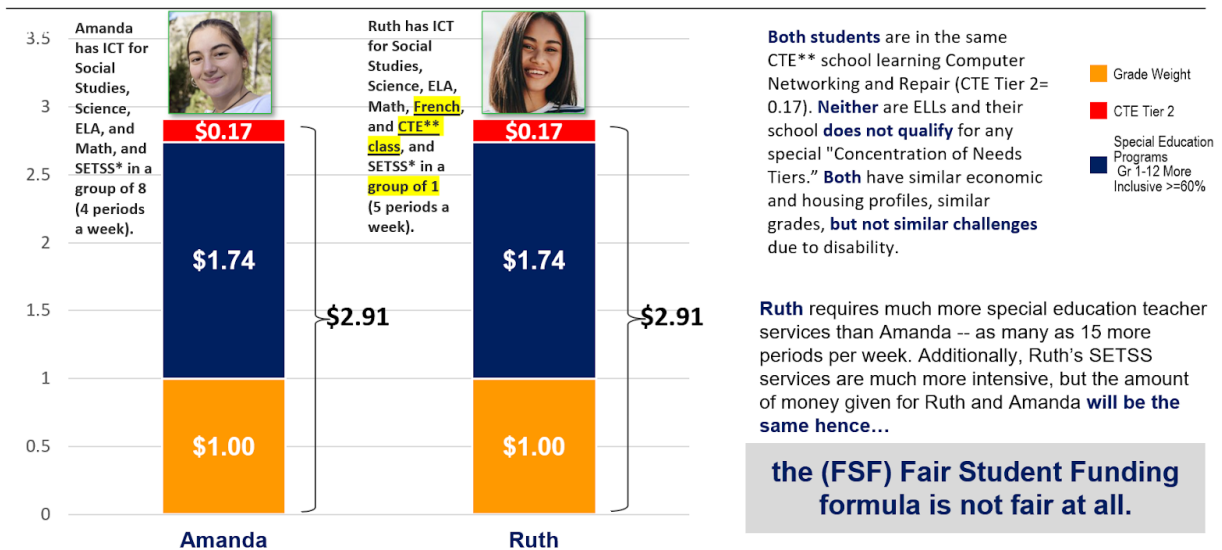
March 20, 2024

Dear Chair Joseph and the Education Committee of the New York City Council,

Thank you for holding the 12 hour hearing on 3.18.2024. I am a parent of a student with a disability in New York City. I am also a member of NYC Parents of Teens with Disabilities and I want to tell you that I have [watched](#) and [read](#) Jenn Choi's testimony and agree with what has been said.

This graphic greatly concerns me and to me, it explains why schools are less likely to give my child more services or more intensive services when needed.

How the FSF Weights Don't Work for Students w. IEPs



*SETSS= Special Education Teacher Support Services **CTE=Career Technical Education (Amounts based on if per capita were \$1)

We have also sensed this type of discriminatory behavior such as:

When investigating high schools prior to applications, the school says they don't do ICT and SETSS together. It's one or the other. Or the school says they don't do 1:1 SETSS or any SETSS smaller than 8. I have been told that my child's IEP has too many services and will need to be amended. I am further told that the school can't give me the services because it can't fit during the school day.

I hope that decisions can be made during this budget season to ensure that the Fair Student Formula is changed to make funding special education fair to our children with disabilities. This formula makes it automatic to not give more funds to students who need more services. I believe this formula creates a foundation for discriminatory judgments at schools.

Can you please help us and make them make changes?

Thank you.

Susan Holsonbake

Parent of a student with a disability

Manhattan

March 22, 2024

To whom may it concern:

My name is Yndiana Alba, a Dominican student in the English program at Lehman College. I have been in this country for 8 years and I have been studying English for two years. I came to this country like many people, looking for better opportunities for my family and me. The Adult Learning Center program has opened the doors for me to learn English. Thanks to them I have a job where I can express myself in Spanish, but I can also learn and express myself in English. I want to finish this English program, so I can go to university, have a career, give a better life to my children, help my community and people like me who want to learn English and continue their education, this English program is not only important to me, this English program helps more than 800 people every year, we have a waiting list with 300 students who want to learn English, today, at this moment I am the voice of each one of them, I can see daily how people suffer for not speaking the language, for not being able to have a good job and offer a better life to their family. I hope that they can benefit from this program like I am doing and can have more opportunities in this country.

Best,

Yndiana Alba

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gustavo Garcia-Flores

Address: _____

I represent: City College of New York

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 03/18/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dorian Block

Address: _____

I represent: The Center for an Urban Future

Address: 80 8th Ave, NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Manique Thomas

Address: _____ Bk, ny 11239

I represent: (Sheehy) Borough of Manhattan Community College.

Address: 199 Chambers Street, NY, NY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Salvatore D'Amico

Address: [REDACTED] 8526

I represent: Young Students - University Student

Address: 40

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BRENDA VARGAS

Address: [REDACTED] Waters Ave Staten Island NY

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cynthia Suarez-Ferrera

Address: [REDACTED] Gillespie Ave

I represent: myself

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 18 March 2024

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Davis

Address: _____

I represent: PSC CUNY

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Megan Ahearn

Address: [REDACTED] NY, NY

I represent: NYPIRG

Address: 9 Murray St NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

CUNY

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Wendy Hensel

Address: Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost

I represent: CUNY

Address: _____



Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms



THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

CUNY

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sharif Soliman

Address: Senior Vice Chancellor for Budget and Finance & CFO

I represent: CUNY

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

CUNY

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/18/24

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Hector Batista

Address: Executive Vice Chancellor and COO

I represent: CUNY

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆