

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

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June 16, 2016

Start: 1:04 p.m.

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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - Committee Rm.
16th Fl

B E F O R E: INEZ D. BARRON
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: James Vacca
Fernando Cabrera
Jumaane D. Williams
Laurie A. Cumbo
Ydanis A. Rodriguez
Vanessa L. Gibson

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

James Murphy, Dean
Enrollment Management
City University of New York, CUNY

Catherine Abata, Budget Director
City University of New York, CUNY

Carmel Martin, Executive VP for Policy
Center for American Progress
Washington, D.C.

Karan Aileen (sp?)
Appearing for State Assembly Member Charles Barron

Harold Stolper, Senior Economist
Community Service Society

Mallory Nugent, Senior Policy Analyst
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies

Chica Onyejiukwa, Vice Chair
Legislative Affairs, CUNY Student Senate
President, Student Government, Hunter College

Amanda Roman, Student
College of Staten Island
Board of Directors, NYPERG

John MacFarland, Brooklyn College Graduate
Tech Adviser, CLAS Student Government Office

James Hoff, Professor of English
CUNY Professional Staff Congress
Borough of Manhattan Community College

Steven Briar, Professor and Historian
Urban Education PhD Program
CUNY Graduate Center

Mike Fabricant, Vice President
Professional Staff Congress

2 [sound check, pause]

3 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Once again, with the
4 cell phones, make you take down the ring tones, and
5 put them on the vibration. If you're going to take a
6 phone call, please take it outside to lobby--to the
7 lobby where the elevators are, and we are about to
8 start soon. [pause]

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good afternoon. My
10 name is Inez Barron, and I am the Chair of the
11 Committee on Higher Education. Today, we are hearing
12 Introduction No. 1138, a bill I introduced in April
13 to establish a task force to review proposals for
14 restoring free tuition at the City University of New
15 York. From its founding as the Free Academy in 1847
16 until the financial crisis of the 1970s, the City
17 University of New York was committed to providing
18 students of merit a free college education. Since
19 arriving at the Council in 2014, I have made it clear
20 that we should be working to restore CUNY to its
21 former glory, as the Free University of New York.
22 I've spoken extensively about how CUNY's free tuition
23 policy made it possible for me to attend Hunter
24 College in the 1960s. We have held hearings
25 exploring graduation rates and student debt. With

2 Council Member Vallone and Speaker Melissa Mark-
3 Viverito, I pushed for restoration of the Council's
4 Merit Scholarship to partially alleviate the
5 financial burden for college students who maintain a
6 B average. In the budget year 19--2015, the Council
7 established the City Council Merit Based Scholarship
8 available to all New York City high school graduates
9 who have a B average and attend a city college
10 university--a city college institution. At budget
11 hearings and in meetings I have pressed CUNY
12 administrators on whether we share a common belief
13 that college should be a right that is part and
14 parcel of the commitment we make to provide free
15 public education in grades K through 12. I cannot
16 affirmatively say that we are in agreement about
17 this. Too often CUNY's responses to questions about
18 restoring free tuition boil down to an assertion that
19 60% of CUNY students graduate with no debt. Beyond
20 the fact that--beyond glossing over the fact that 40%
21 of CUNY students do graduate with debt, the assertion
22 raises a question of what percentage of students
23 never graduate, but nonetheless, the CUNY burdened by
24 student loans. Ultimately, however, such assertions
25 move us away from a discussion of whether we should

2 restore free tuition, and how the city and state can
3 work together to make that happen. The path to
4 restoring merit-based free tuition policy isn't easy,
5 and we recognize that those who earn college degrees
6 have a far greater buying power during their
7 lifetime, and we do want to acknowledge that towards
8 of goal of better preparing students for college, the
9 DOE, the Department of Education of New York City has
10 established a goal of having at least two-thirds of
11 high school graduates be college and career ready,
12 and they have instituted several initiatives to make
13 that happen, the Universal Literacy, Algebra for All,
14 AP for All, College Science, Computer Science for
15 All, College Access for All at both the high school--
16 middle-school and high school levels. But again, the
17 path to restoring a merit-based--merit-based tuition
18 fee policy isn't easy. CUNY is the largest
19 institution with a multi-layered bureaucracy reliant
20 on local, state and federal funding, accounting to a
21 central administration, a Board of Trustees appointed
22 by city and state officials, and the New York State
23 Board of Regents. There are obviously a lot of
24 political interests and financial interests in play,
25 and there are legitimate policy debates about race,

2 class and immigration that surround this issue.
3 Clearly, an oversight hearing is not the forum for
4 such a debate, and is not going to reduce the path
5 forward on this issue. However, I firmly believe
6 that we have an obligation to advance this very
7 necessary dialogue. This is why I introduce this
8 legislation to create this as a taskforce of experts
9 and interested stakeholders to produce
10 recommendations on how to proceed.

11 Intro 1138 would establish a task force
12 consisting of 13 members including the Public
13 Advocate, the City Council Speaker, the Director of
14 the Office of Management and Budget, or their
15 designees. The Mayor would have six appointees, and
16 it would bring together representatives of the CUNY
17 faculty, students, the Board of Trustees, experts in
18 Finance and management of public universities and
19 representatives of advocacy organizations. This task
20 force would be tasked with producing a report that
21 includes an analysis of existing and potential
22 revenue streams that could replace tuition.
23 Obstacles preventing the implementation of a free
24 tuition policy and recommendations for how such
25 obstacles could be addressed. The task force would

2 have a mandate to produce this report within six
3 months of its first meeting. It is my hope that once
4 we have the report we can move beyond the question of
5 whether we agree on the policy, and move to the
6 question of what steps are being taken to advance it.
7 I would like to acknowledge the members--the
8 colleagues who are--who are here this afternoon,
9 Council Member Vacca, Council Member Cabrera, and
10 we'll be joined by others as the day goes on. I
11 would like to thank my Legislative Director and CUNY
12 Liaison Ndigo Washington; the Committee's Fin--
13 Finance Analyst Jessica Ackerman; our Policy Analyst
14 Chloe Rivera; and our Committee Counsel Jeff
15 Campagna. At this time, I will call the first panel.
16 We will have the University Budget Director,
17 Catherine Abata and Dean James Murphy as the first
18 panel. Please come forward. [pause] If you would
19 raise your right hand, please. Do you affirm to tell
20 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth
21 in your testimony before the committee, and to answer
22 all questions honestly?

23 PANEL MEMBERS: (in unison) I do.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. You may
25 give us your name and give us your testimony.

2 [pause]

3 DEAN MURPHY: I know the light is there.
4 The light's broken. [coughs] Good morning,
5 Chairperson Barron and members of the Higher
6 Education Committee. My name is James Murphy. I'm
7 CUNY's University Dean for Enrollment Management.
8 Our office is responsible for admissions, financial
9 and registration for all 270,000 undergraduate and
10 graduate students at CUNY. I'm joined today by the
11 University Budget Director Catherine Abata. We are
12 delighted to be here today to discuss the City
13 Council forming a task force to explore the
14 possibility of CUNY receiving adequate funding--
15 receiving the adequate funding needed to provide free
16 or at the very least reduced tuition for all or
17 certain categories of students. I would like to
18 begin with a little history of free tuition at CUNY.
19 A free tuition regardless of their background for
20 [coughs] or finance--financial means was the
21 cornerstone of the Free Academy, which later became
22 City College when it was established in Manhattan in
23 1847. Back then a class typically averaged about 100
24 or so students. In 1909, two years after moving to
25 more spacious accommodates at Holmes, City College

2 expanded its offerings to include a separate evening
3 baccalaureate program. Over the time, the system's
4 night school's general studies expanded through the
5 city and served tens of thousands of non-degree
6 students. By 1930, there were three public colleges
7 in New York City, City, Hunter and Brooklyn, which
8 offered a free education to students admitted to
9 degree programs based on a very high academic
10 average. Applicants who all were average were
11 admitted as non-degree students and attended for the
12 college--for the most part at night. These students
13 paid for their courses Tuition known as--known then
14 as instructional fees were uniform for all non-degree
15 students who paid regardless of their financial
16 circumstances. For many low-income students in the
17 pre-financial aid, tuition was a hardship. In fall
18 1957, for example, 36,000 students attended Hunter,
19 Brooklyn, Queens and City Colleges for free, but
20 24,000 paid up to \$300 a year the equivalent of about
21 \$2,500 today according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor
22 Statistics Online Inflation Calculator. Students at
23 New York City Community College were paying
24 instructional fees as early as the 1950s. Free
25 tuition for--free tuition for day students only

2 lasted through much of the last century until 1970
3 when the University dropped all tuition charges for
4 undergraduate in-state students, and accepted any
5 applicant with a high school diploma. The move
6 ushered in a brief period of free tuition at CUNY for
7 all New York State undergraduate students despite
8 attacks by state official including then Governor
9 Rockefeller, who by 1961 had successfully ended the
10 free tuition, which had been offered to certain
11 groups of students at the SUNY colleges.

12 Unfortunately, free tuition would not survive the
13 fiscal crisis of the 1970s. [coughs] At one point,
14 CUNY could no longer meet its fiscal obligations, and
15 actually had to close down for a two-week period.

16 Both city and state were silent on offering
17 assistance and President General--General Ford
18 refused any--any help noting that public colleges in
19 his home state of Michigan charged tuition. It became
20 clear tuition was the only source of funding
21 available. The chairperson of the CUNY Board of
22 Trustees, and two other trustees resigned in protest.
23 On June 12, 1975, Governor Hugh Carey signed into law
24 a new financing plan, which allowed CUNY to complete
25 the academic year. Tuition was charged for the first

2 time for all students in the fall of 1976. CUNY
3 currently enrolls over 274,000 students in a
4 combination of fall, winter, spring and summer
5 sessions. It will be important to determine if free
6 tuition will be available for each session or just
7 fall and spring. We would expect enrollment to grow
8 if tuition was eliminated. However, of the past
9 eight years, CUNY's enrollment has increased by
10 30,000 students. We do not currently have the
11 faculty or the space to significantly increase
12 enrollment any further. CUNY enrollment includes
13 undergraduate, graduates, matriculated, non-
14 matriculated, New York State residents--New York
15 City residents, out of state and international
16 students. An important part of free tuition--tuition
17 policy is the determination of which categories of
18 students would be eligible for free tuition and for
19 how many years or semesters. Currently, matriculated
20 New York State residents are eligible to pay in-state
21 tuition. If we include all categories of students,
22 we could see a dramatic increase on admissions
23 applications from both New York State residents and
24 out of state residents. If we do not have the
25 capacity to grow, free tuition could have the

2 unexpected consequence of limiting access to
3 applicants from New York City, many of whom apply
4 late in the process. This past year, CUNY
5 administered \$1.4 billion in federal, state and city
6 and institutional financial aid of which slightly
7 less than one billion was grant aid to our
8 undergraduate students. This aid coupled with
9 federal and state--federal and state tax credits
10 allow 60% of our matriculated undergraduate full-time
11 students to attend CUNY tuition free. In fact, \$700
12 million of--over \$700 million of--of this aid goes
13 directly to pay tuition and fees. Any plan to offer
14 free tuition should probably incorporate these funds,
15 not necessarily as financial aid, but maybe a block
16 grant, you know, as part of a--a funding formula. We
17 appreciate the Council calling attention to the--the
18 issue of student affordability, and look forward to
19 continuing to partner with you on this topic. I will
20 now ask Cathy--Catherine Abata to provide the
21 financial information.

22 CATHERINE ABATA: Good afternoon, Chair
23 Barron and members of the Higher Education Committee.
24 My name is Catherine Abata, and I am CUNY's Budget
25 Director. Thank you for your continued support for

2 CUNY, and for the opportunity to speak with you today
3 about forming a task force to explore the possibility
4 of identifying funding in order to provide free
5 tuition at CUNY. Tuition rates are \$6,330 at the
6 senior colleges, and \$4,800 at the community
7 colleges. This generates about \$1.5 billion out of
8 the total budget of \$3.2 billion. Financial aid and
9 scholarships cover about 49% of our tuition revenue
10 budget. Students out-of-pocket tuition and fee
11 expenses are about \$784 million, and this includes
12 all students both undergraduate and graduates. The
13 University's fixed costs increase annually, and while
14 we always strive to cover these increases through
15 efficiencies where additional state and city funding
16 may be absent, it does put pressure on our ability to
17 identify funding for programmatic investments. If
18 tuition were to be eliminated, while it would
19 definitely be a financial benefit for students and
20 their families, any result in reduction in funding
21 levels would be harmful and would likely outweigh the
22 initial financial benefit. Revenue from tuition has
23 enabled the university to make significant
24 investments over the last five years including the
25 hiring of 1,000 new full-time faculty and the

2 enhancement of academic and student support services.
3 During this time, graduation rates have increased at
4 both senior and community college, 20% more degrees
5 were awarded annually, and more credits were earned,
6 and the goal is certainly to be able to continue this
7 trajectory of improving success in outcomes.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [off mic] Thank you
9 for your testimony. [on mic] Thank you for your
10 testimony. I want to acknowledge that we've been
11 joined by Council Member Vanessa Gibson. So I have a
12 few questions to start, and then I'll invite my
13 colleagues to share their questions as well. First
14 question: Notwithstanding the space limitations and
15 the other things decided in your--in your testimony,
16 which I'll go into in greater detail. The first
17 question is do you think that college should be free,
18 that it should be an extension of the rights that
19 students have from K to 12? Do you think it should
20 be free and extended beyond that 12th grade?

21 DEAN MURPHY: My own personal opinion?

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes. I'll take
23 both. I'll start with your personal.

24 DEAN MURPHY: My personal opinion is
25 college should be affordable to--for all students.

2 Whether it should be free to--for all students or
3 not, certainly depends. I'm not sure the taxpayers
4 should have to foot the bill for somebody who makes--
5 whose family \$500,000 a year, but I also don't
6 believe somebody whose family makes \$100,000 a year
7 should have to pay to attend colleges.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So if that's your
9 position, then do you think that the state bill,
10 which allows for students to be a part of the
11 benefits up until--I think it's \$50,000, but then the
12 mysteriously jumps to \$80,000 and then includes them
13 in getting the benefits. Do you think that that's a
14 legitimate practice? That there's a--

15 DEAN MURPHY: You're talking about the
16 take--you're talking about the--the--the TAP program--
17 -

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

19 DEAN MURPHY: --and the income formula
20 for the TAP program--

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Right.

22 DEAN MURPHY: which is--I think is very
23 stringent when you--I--I think the--the TAP program
24 should be more generous.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, and the
3 problem with affordable is it depends on who you're
4 talking to, you know? It's a fragment. I think it
5 always needs to say affordable to whom--

6 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] That's
7 correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --or what is
9 affordable.

10 DEAN MURPHY: Affordable to--to different
11 people means different things.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Exactly. Okay, so
13 in--in your testimony you said that you would expect
14 enrollment to grow as tuition was eliminated, and
15 that over the last eight years enrollment has grown
16 by 30,000 students, and we do not currently have the
17 faculty or space to significantly increase enrollment
18 any further. Are you saying that you're capping
19 enrollment going forward?

20 DEAN MURPHY: I'm not saying we're
21 capping enrollment going forward.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

23 DEAN MURPHY: What I'm saying is right
24 now we don't have the space for the faculty. If we--
25 if we're going to increase enrollment, and right now

2 we seem to be in a--in an era that enrollment is
3 holding steady. But if we were going to increase
4 again, we would have to certainly increase faculty,
5 especially full-time faculty, and we would need more
6 space.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So we don't--

8 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] We're not
9 chopping enrollment, no.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay because that's
11 what I'm sort of incurring--inferring from what you
12 have here, and you say you do not have the capacity
13 to grow? Free tuition could have the unexpected
14 consequence of limiting access to applicants from New
15 York City many of whom apply late in the process.
16 Could you expand on that further?

17 DEAN MURPHY: Well, if we have free--if
18 we have free tuition I would expect that the
19 applications from students who live outside the city
20 who all want to come to study in the city, but it's
21 not affordable for a lot of them. They--they would
22 certainly want to come to CUNY because the tuition
23 would be free, and they could use what they would
24 have spent on tuition for housing.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So, the City Council
3 Merit Scholarship Program awards--

4 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] Only in New
5 York City.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes, only in New
7 York City. So with that kind of proviso extended to
8 free tuition, do you still think that that would have
9 a negative impact on New York City students?

10 DEAN MURPHY: If--if--the statement I was
11 saying is that if--if we allowed all categories of
12 students to enroll, that's why I was--

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Okay,
14 I see that.

15 DEAN MURPHY: --I was--I was asking to
16 restricted categories would enroll.

17 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay. I see that.
18 So back to your question about families that are
19 making large amounts of money, do you think then that
20 they should be able to pay tuition for-- We talk
21 about--I asked the question should there be an
22 extension of K to 12, and in referencing that answer
23 you said those who pay, who have large incomes should
24 pay affordable amounts. Do you think that they
25 should also be required to pay for tuition for--pay a

2 tuition fee for the basic education from K to 12 just
3 because they make more money?

4 DEAN MURPHY: Most of--most of the people
5 who make more money are paying anyway. They're
6 saying it's--that they're children to private
7 schools, but I do not.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, I just want to
9 make it clear because I'm trying to understand why we
10 would stop it at 12 and then look at the income
11 requirements and say okay because now past 12th grade
12 because based on your income we think you should pay
13 more, but--

14 DEAN MURPHY: I understand your point.
15 Yes, I understand your point.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, good. I'm
17 going to defer to my colleagues before I come back
18 with my other questions. Council Member Cabrera.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you so
20 much, Madam Chair. Thank you for brining this forth
21 to this committee, and welcome CUNY. As you know,
22 I've always been a fan of CUNY, but I have a few
23 questions. If--I'm just curious. If we were to have
24 free tuition just for community college--let's say if
25 we were to take steps moving forward, baby steps,

2 just community colleges and you still would have the
3 same amount of TAP, the same amount of Pell Grant
4 assistance for us. Everything else that we bring
5 forth, how much would it cost CUNY to make this a
6 reality? Because I have a number in my head. I just
7 want to--

8 CATHERINE ABATA: [interposing] It--it
9 would be about \$146 million. What would be the
10 initial cost? Because I know this--from my
11 understanding I think it was a hearing that we had on
12 it, Chair. I heard a number for us. Maybe it was
13 like \$30 million in the first year, and then it will
14 go to \$90 million. Did I hear right, or did I have a
15 good dream that night? [laughter]

16 CATHERINE ABATA: That's a good one.
17 (sic) So the--so the total amount of out-of-pocket
18 expenses that all community colleges pay currently is
19 about \$146 million. So perhaps what you heard is I'm
20 guessing a phase-in of the program, right? Maybe if
21 we started with--

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: [interposing]
23 Okay.

24 CATHERINE ABATA: --the incoming freshman
25 class for next year. I--I don't have calculations on

2 those numbers, but we could certainly do that kind of
3 calculation for any kind of phase in that, you know,
4 that we would want to be looking at.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I mean do--do
6 you--does CUNY is in the opinion and--and the
7 position that that's a--that's not a super big ask
8 and, of course, this will have to be legislators
9 coming up with the funding or conduit for the funding
10 to come in because you can't come up with your own
11 funding. But I mean this is a reasonable amount \$140
12 million, and I--I don't see that that--that being out
13 of the scope of reality, or potential reality.

14 DEAN MURPHY: I want to be clear that
15 CUNY is listening, is willing to listen to any
16 proposal, and see where the funding is coming from.
17 I don't want to give you the impression that CUNY is
18 completely opposed to free tuition.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay. So, if
20 there's State--

21 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] We're--we're
22 remaining neutral on that subject right now

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay. So if the
24 State--okay, neutral means you could be counter
25 (sic).

2 DEAN MURPHY: Yeah.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: All right, so--
4 so--so--

5 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] We're
6 Switzerland.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: [laughs] So if
8 the state were to say surprisingly, but the State
9 were to say, hey, you know, we find \$140 million that
10 I think will be better used than in some of the
11 projects that are seen that to be honest with you
12 would--would not give the type of return that I think
13 that we will absolutely get out of CUNY. Again, I'm
14 a believer in CUNY. I believe that it's a
15 tremendous--students get a tremendous education. So
16 would you be in a position to say yes, you know, we
17 will welcome the \$140 million, and then allow for New
18 York City residents to be able to go to the community
19 college, and that would be the first step.

20 DEAN MURPHY: We would certainly be
21 interested in looking at how that would work, and if
22 it--if every--if everything fit and everything worked
23 then we would certainly be interested in it.

24

25

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: What does--what
3 does that mean that you'd be interested in how that
4 would work, right?

5 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] Well, look,
6 you know whenever you talk about--

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: What's the
8 logistics that you worry about?

9 DEAN MURPHY: Whenever you talk about the
10 \$146 million, what else would be cut? You know, is--
11 is that rate that would be given to CUNY for other
12 projects being cut? So, I--I mean we'd have to take
13 a look and see where the funding is coming from and
14 how it's going to be spent?

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I--I agree with
16 you and I--I am in total violation with you that
17 nothing else should be cut that really, you know, I--
18 I think that we have agendas throughout the state
19 that really does not equal the return that I believe
20 that we will get by planting the seeds in the young
21 people and removing the obstacles that--that are in
22 previous generations, as you mentioned, so when they
23 mentioned that they were afforded to people, I'm just
24 wondering why those previous generations and their
25 economies they were able to do this. And perhaps--

2 perhaps it's a matter of priority. I learned that
3 when people want to get things done, they get it
4 down. You know, when there's a will there's
5 obviously a way. Well, thank you so much. Keep up
6 the great work that you're doing, and that closes--I
7 close with that. No more questions, Madam Chair.
8 Thank you so much.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. I want to
10 acknowledge that we've been joined by Council Member
11 Ben Kallos. I'm going to ask my colleague Vanessa
12 Gibson if she will pose her questions now.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Thank you very
14 much Chair Barron and good afternoon. It's good to
15 see all of you here. I appreciate the discussion
16 we're having, and certainly want to thank our Chair,
17 Chairperson Inez Barron for putting forth this
18 legislation. In terms of having a conversation about
19 an actual task force, I think being here and my--
20 during my tenure at the Council being a graduate of
21 CUNY and SUNY, I'm a twofer, definitely want to
22 recognize, you know, the importance of having this
23 discussion. And whether we develop short or long--
24 long--term plans, I certainly think it's something
25 that should be very viable. It's a reasonable

2 request, and I'd like to know CUNY's thoughts on the
3 legislation before us actually developing a task
4 force. What would you envision in terms of the
5 stakeholders that would involved in this task force,
6 and what do you think of our series of goals?
7 Because obviously getting to tuition free at CUNY is
8 the ultimate goal, but I also think there obviously
9 should be other goals as well in terms of academic
10 excellence making sure there's always diversity at
11 CUNY with faculty and--and other priorities. So,
12 what would you think the task force should be
13 composed of in terms of stakeholders, and what some
14 of our goals should be in mind around this task
15 force?

16 DEAN MURPHY: I actually agree with
17 Councilwoman Barron who I think outlined at the
18 beginning of her speech or opening remarks about who
19 should be on the task force. I think that just
20 encompasses everyone. There should be students.
21 Three should be faculty. There certainly should be
22 representatives in the city. If you're going to ask
23 for money from the state, they're going to want to
24 be--they're probably going to want to be involved.
25 [laughs] You know, there certainly should be some--

2 some representatives from CUNY's Board of Trustees,
3 and certainly members of the City Council. And I
4 think, you know, so ultimately I do understand that
5 your goal is free tuition for everybody, but if we--
6 if we have to proceed and take baby steps and
7 increase the affordability by lowering tuition by--by
8 providing additional funding to CUNY, that would be--
9 you know, that would be a great step. And, you know,
10 as far as the others--the other things, how--how is
11 the--what type of funding is needed to--to provide
12 the types of services that CUNY students need in the
13 way of tutoring, in the way of advisement as well as
14 faculty? What type of additional funding is being--
15 will be needed, you know. Academic counseling is--
16 is--is--has got to be a priority for us because we
17 just don't have enough academic counselors--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: [interposing]

19 Right.

20 DEAN MURPHY: --for our students.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: I think we've
22 done an incredible job at CUNY where many of our
23 colleges are literally bursting at the seams because
24 of enrollment. A lot of older adults are returning
25 back to school to get higher degrees of education.

2 So I think coupled with all of that and knowing the
3 history, I know my colleagues and I we're all still
4 facing student debt. I have debt from undergrad and
5 grad. So I really wish that I was at CUNY during the
6 '70s when it was free, but I recognize, you know,
7 that, you know, decisions have to be made, and many
8 of us really do believe that, you know, during that
9 time when tuition was instituted was when you saw a
10 large enrollment of students of color that joined the
11 CUNY system. So certainly speaking on behalf of many
12 of my students in the district that are CUNY students
13 that always my goal. I have never been a fan of
14 tuition increases when I was in the Assembly, and all
15 the efforts that we undertook because we recognized
16 that we had to support SUNY and CUNY, but not on the
17 backs of students. So I am absolutely very
18 supportive of any efforts whether it's short-term,
19 long-term, whether we can make baby steps, as long as
20 we make those steps in the right direction moving
21 forward and not backward. I guess I just wanted to
22 pose one question, and similar to what my colleague
23 Council Member Cabrera described in terms of
24 community colleges, and I do believe the Chancellor
25 may have made mentioned that having four-year schools

2 institute tuition free may not be the immediate
3 approach, but starting with some of the community
4 schools. So I wanted to find out if there was any
5 thought behind that. Is it just that we're starting
6 at a lower level with community colleges or we think
7 that the first two years are, you know, the most
8 important in terms of the students' academic success?

9 DEAN MURPHY: I believe the momentum
10 there as--as President Obama's pre-community college
11 speech.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay.

13 DEAN MURPHY: I think that's where there
14 that--that came from this time. Apparently there was
15 some willingness by the federal government to--to
16 support a free community college, which certainly
17 would make it a lot easier to get to that goal.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GIBSON: Okay, great.

19 Well, I'm happy that we're having conversations and
20 they're along the same lines. I do believe that, you
21 know, the work we're doing as a Council as an
22 Administration is certainly investing in students.
23 The CUNY Merit Based Scholarship Program has given
24 thousands of students every year an opportunity to
25 get into college and not worry about the financial

2 burden. So I'm very supportive, and certainly pledge
3 my support to work with you and work with our chair
4 and the members of the Council to make sure we can
5 not only pass this bill, but really make it a
6 reality. So I think for being here, and thank you
7 Chair Barron for your leadership.

8 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Council
9 Member. Before I go to my colleague for his
10 questions, you indicate that there might be increased
11 costs due to academic counseling that would be
12 required for students that would be coming in.

13 DEAN MURPHY: Well, I--what I meant is
14 that we don't have enough academic counselors now.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay.

16 DEAN MURPHY: But certainly if we brought
17 more students in we'd have to increase the academic
18 counseling also, but yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Going back to when I
20 was--back in the day when I went to Hunter College it
21 was free because you had to maintain a B average.
22 You had to come in with a B average from high school,
23 and maintain that during the time that you were
24 there. If you didn't, of course, you were put on

2 academic probation which, unfortunately, I
3 experienced because I did drop down a level.

4 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] Welcome to
5 the club.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [laughter] Oh,
7 okay. So my question is if we had free tuition based
8 on once again on students coming in with a B average
9 being entitled to have that free tuition and then
10 other students coming in perhaps at a reduced price
11 of tuition not based on a reduced cost for tuition.
12 Is that something you can't run through?

13 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] I'm--I'm not--
14 --I'm not a big fan of--of Merit Scholarship. I
15 prefer scholarships for needy students. I'm sorry.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, okay. So need
17 based. So when I come back next year and come with--
18 come with my proposal for a need-based scholarships
19 in addition to merit-based scholarships--

20 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] I'm right
21 there with you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Good. [laughter]
23 Very good. Okay, very good. Council Member--I want
24 to acknowledge we've been joined by Council Member

2 Cumbo, and we will now have questions from Council
3 Member Kallos.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you, Chair
5 Barron, for leading this effort, and this committee
6 as chair and through Introduction 1138, which I am
7 proud to be a co-sponsor. I think it is one of the
8 first things I mentioned to you when I met you in the
9 Council. For those who don't know, I'm Council
10 Member Ben Kallos. I'm a graduate of both SUNY's
11 Albany where Vanessa and I are both alum, and Buffalo
12 where I attended law school, and I am still in debt,
13 and will be for the foreseeable future. You can read
14 about it in the Daily News, in fact. [laughter] I
15 want to thank all of the CUNY students for being here
16 today, and if I could trouble the audience for a
17 quick Instagram photo to show the support, and you
18 can find it on Twitter or Instagram@benkallos. Can I
19 see smiles? There we go. Those are the smiles I was
20 looking for. Thank you.

21 MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] You can apply
22 for your trouble now. (sic)

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: I--I hope that
24 the professors will give--

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I have to ask that
3 we please not have comments from the audience. Thank
4 you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And any appreciation
7 that you want to show, we don't clap, but you can
8 give us the sign language. Thank you.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Graduating with a
10 bachelor's degree means \$1 million more in lifetime
11 earnings that a high school degree according to the
12 United States Census. So in 2006, those with just a
13 high school degree earned just \$31,071 while their
14 peers with a bachelor's degree earned \$25,717 more
15 than an average income of \$56,708. Rather than
16 rezoning New York City from affordable housing and
17 manufacturing into luxury development, we could
18 double city, state and federal income tax collections
19 by simply funding CUNY education through free
20 tuition, and taxpayers could expect an immediate
21 return on investments with three years, and for an
22 initial investment--at the time I did these numbers--
23 of \$22,920. The 40-year pay-off if somebody stays in
24 the city is about \$346,398. That's return on the
25 investment of about 15 times, which is better than

2 you'll see in any hedge fund. It comes--if--if you
3 do all the math between the city, state and federal
4 taxes somebody who graduates from CUNY will end up
5 paying about \$8,660 in taxes. And one solution I
6 have been talking about, but I prefer free, would be
7 that any of these--financing any loans from the city
8 could be forgiven at 10% per year that somebody stays
9 in the city because just the city's share of it would
10 be \$2,574 in taxes because the people would be
11 earning more. Again, this is across the average.
12 This is using census numbers. There will be people
13 who earn less. There will be people who earn more,
14 but in that case we would actually see a complete
15 return on investment. Since that proposal, President
16 Obama in his State of the Union has presented a free
17 community college plan, which we'd love to learn more
18 details on, but it seems-- I'm--I'm curious about
19 where we are in implementing that since that was
20 announced by the President. The other piece of this
21 is it seems like this whole system of--if we were to
22 do free tuition for anyone who doesn't already have
23 other financial aid, whether it's other aid packages,
24 with--according to CUNY's number only 20% of CUNY's
25 students graduate with debt. So we're talking about

2 20% of that 270 or so thousand, which means we're
3 only really talking about 40,000 or 50,000 kids, and
4 then 58% of those full-time undergraduates are
5 receiving enough federal or state tuition assistance
6 to attend CUNY tuition for free. So this should be a
7 very small portion, and I guess the question is what
8 is the price tag if we were to cover the tuition on
9 any of the folks who aren't already covered? So I
10 guess those are the two opening questions.

11 CATHERINE ABATA: So the total price tag
12 for all students at the university--[background
13 comments] Okay, the total price tag is about \$784
14 million. At the community colleges it's about \$146
15 million.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: And so--and
17 that's--if we were just going to give it to everyone,
18 or just the people who need it over and above
19 existing aid?

20 CATHERINE ABATA: It would be out-of-
21 pocket expenses that students are currently paying.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: So we just
23 increased our budget from \$78 billion last year to
24 \$82 billion, and if we had taken just one billion of
25 that dollars, we would have had 275,000 children--not

2 children--adults, people of all shapes and sizes and
3 ages in the CUNY system for free. Yes.

4 CATHERINE ABATA: Yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Have you done a--
6 what--what is the cost if we were just to cover this
7 subset of people who would graduate in debt who are
8 having trouble graduating and aren't graduating.
9 Maybe they went. They need to take time off because
10 they have to pay off their students loans, and they
11 won't be able to come back for the foreseeable future
12 or if we paid it they might be able to. So where are
13 we for the people who aren't otherwise covered by
14 financial aid or aren't going to graduate debt free?

15 DEAN MURPHY: So the average student who
16 does graduate from CUNY it's 20% of the students--I'm
17 sorry--not 40% were staying before, but 20% of the
18 students who graduate from CUNY graduate with debt.
19 The average debt is between \$12 and \$14,000 per
20 student. I--I don't understand the question beyond
21 that. Is there--?

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Okay, so maybe the
23 price tag or if it's 12--so it's 50,000 kids--sorry
24 20--50,000 graduates and at 12,000 that's about \$600
25 million if we just covered their costs.

2 DEAN MURPHY: I--I understand what you're
3 saying. It's--you may certainly do the math that
4 way, but once you start covering costs for that
5 you're going to increase the cost because why would
6 you be singling out the students who were just taking
7 out student loans? Some students are taking out
8 students loans. Others are working two jobs to pay,
9 you know, to pay their tuition. So I mean I--I don't
10 think you can--you can, you know, look at the way
11 you're looking at it, but it's certainly part, you
12 know, it's certainly part of the discussion.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: And what--has--
14 has CUNY done any studies on the economic impact of
15 your graduates? What's the average salary when
16 somebody graduates CUNY and--

17 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] We--we can
18 get you those numbers. There have been studies done.
19 We can get you--I don't have those numbers off the
20 top of my head.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: If you could
22 share that with me and--and the Chair I think the
23 public should know what the return on investment is,
24 and if it means that taking care of all of our
25 graduates and making sure that they're paid for means

2 that we instead of having an \$82 billion or \$85
3 billion we end with a \$90 or \$100 billion budget, I
4 think that's what the investment--

5 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] Return--
6 return on investment is significant.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Great, and where
8 are we in--in implementing President Obama's Free
9 Community College Program?

10 DEAN MURPHY: We have--we have not
11 because of state--and because of state restraints we
12 have not gone anywhere with that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: What is the state
14 restraint? This is a committee that--

15 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] Funding.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: --could pass a
17 reso--so they're--the state is not funding the--

18 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] Well, we
19 haven't even--we haven't even gotten to discussions.
20 If the--President Obama had proposed--he had this
21 proposal, but he didn't necessarily fund the
22 proposal.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: Oh, so my--my
24 understanding is the state does its share--CUNY does
25 its share and then the federal government shows up

2 with its money as--as the usual federal reimbursement
3 route.

4 DEAN MURPHY: So if you--if you recall,
5 though, the state was trying to push--push about a
6 third of our budget off on the city this year so I
7 think the--the bottom line is we have not done any
8 research in that--we have not had any major
9 conversations about this outside of some back office
10 discussions.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: All right, we--we
12 still a couple of days left in the session, and I--I
13 believe that our chair has a--a strong partner in
14 Albany who can do some work here. So to the extent
15 you can share with us as soon as possible what is
16 necessary so we can pick this up in September, now is
17 the time. I will reserve my questions, but just
18 thank you for your support, and I'll--so my last
19 questions is how many more people do you expect--How
20 many people would be eligible for free tuition?
21 You're--you're concerned about additional--how--how
22 many more additional students could you expect if we
23 did this, and I think that's a good thing.

24

25

2 DEAN MURPHY: It would--it would depend
3 on the categories of students. If we included free
4 tuition--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: [interposing]
6 Everyone?

7 DEAN MURPHY: --if we, it would be--the--
8 I couldn't even venture guesses. We would certainly
9 grow by at least 30 or 40,000 students over the
10 course of a couple of years.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER KALLOS: That would be
12 amazing. Thank--thank you to CUNY and thank you to
13 our chair, Barron, for her leadership.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Council
15 Member. I want to acknowledge that we've been joined
16 by Council Members Rodriguez and Williams, and I
17 believe Council Member Cumbo has questions.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Thank you, Chair
19 Barron. I only have two questions. Wanted to talk
20 about in the ACS hearing we talked at length about
21 foster care, and students that are aging out of
22 foster care, and their ability to attend CUNY. Can
23 you talk a bit about that in terms of is the
24 expectation behind young people that are aging out
25 foster care to have the ability to attend CUNY for

2 free. As you were stating that you were believe very
3 much that it should be based off of need, and certain
4 the need is there.

5 DEAN MURPHY: The students aging--aging
6 out of foster care unless they have significant
7 income of their own are receiving the maximum TAP and
8 POE (sic). Currently, I don't know you might be
9 aware of this. There are some discussions about
10 housing up to 40 students at--at--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: [interposing]
12 That has been Queens.

13 DEAN MURPHY: --at Queens College and ten
14 students at the College of Staten Island and, you
15 know, we've been-- Kathy and I were on a couple of
16 phone calls the past couple of days. What that looks
17 like, that's a go.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So there will be
19 an opportunity there for housing. What about on
20 other CUNY campuses that also have dormitory
21 facilities?

22 DEAN MURPHY: Well, not in the short term
23 but certainly in the long term that could--it's just
24 a little too late for next year, but certainly we
25 could look at that for the fall 2017 semester.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So--

3 CATHERINE ABATA: [interposing] And we
4 planned--sorry--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Go ahead.

6 CATHERINE ABATA: --but there plans to,
7 you know, grow that program over the next couple of
8 years.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So what would be
10 the option for let's say students that wanted to
11 attend the college currently without dormitories?
12 Let's say a student is aging out and they'd like to
13 attend Medgar Evers College, which does not have
14 dormitory facilities, what would be the plan or the
15 option? Could they stay at another CUNY campus where
16 they do have housing, and then commute to Medgar or
17 what is the thought?

18 DEAN MURPHY: Yes, yes they could. In
19 fact, the Queens College Plan, the Foster Children,
20 we expect only a couple of students to be actually
21 Queens College students. We expect the other to be
22 attending the college in Queens Borough. I believe
23 there is one from John Jay that they're talking
24 about, a couple from Lower Manhattan Community
25 College. Staten Island is a little bit different

2 because, you know, the--the travel restrictions, but
3 certainly the plan is for--for students be able to be
4 housed on other campuses. And, quite frankly, right
5 now for getting foster children, if a student in CUNY
6 at any CUNY college is looking for dorm space, and
7 it's available in other community colleges, they're
8 eligible to--to take that space, you know, as long
9 the--of course, there's a cost involved. You know,
10 there's also New York City Housing group that
11 provides housing for students in a number of places
12 around the city, and a lot of our CUNY students are
13 housed in those facilities.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Do you know how
15 many young people that are aging out of foster care
16 actually into CUNY every single year?

17 DEAN MURPHY: I can't tell you the number
18 that actually enter every year. We did a couple of
19 different--we looked at it from a couple of different
20 ways last year because we're actually trying to get
21 that number, and the best we can determine is
22 somewhere between 270 and 300 students currently
23 enrolled at CUNY who were currently or were former
24 foster children.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: So that's between
3 270 to--

4 DEAN MURPHY: 300.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: --that you
6 approximate enter each year or are currently in the
7 fiscal--

8 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] Those who are
9 currently enrolled, currently enrolled.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: I see because I
11 think that the opportunity to have free tuition as
12 well as room and board could be such a power and
13 important solution for so many young people who like
14 nobody at the age of 18 in New York City is almost
15 ready to move on their own, have a job, pay for
16 housing, and have it all together. So I think that
17 this is a really viable opportunity that we should
18 certainly hone in on, and continue to find solutions.
19 Final question. The Chancellor had testified that
20 only the first two years of college should be free.
21 What is distinct about the last two years of college
22 that they should not be an entitlement?

23 DEAN MURPHY: So I--I'm not familiar with
24 that testimony, and it's the second time it was

2 mentioned. I don't know what the thought--thought
3 process was there?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CUMBO: Okay because we're
5 very curious about it as well. Okay, thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Now,
7 we'll move to my colleague Council Member Rodriguez
8 for questions.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Chair. First
10 of all, thank you for the work that you have done,
11 and as you know, Dean Murphy also means being
12 connected with a family of tradition and working
13 hard on CUNY as an institution to continue opening
14 more doors not only at the student level, but also at
15 the staff level, which has one of the efforts of
16 Chancellor Murphy when he was running the
17 institution. As someone again that went to our city
18 college in 1989, fighting against tuition increase
19 and budget cuts, organizing that effort to keep our
20 college open. We win tuition, and I believe that our
21 fight at that time when Mario Cuomo was the one who
22 came out with a tuition increase proposal from \$750
23 that we paid at the time, that--that there was an
24 effort to raise tuition from \$750 I think it was like
25 to \$2,000. And we were able with the students in--in

2 the street marching with more than 25,000 students
3 from Wall Street to John Jay to present the governor.
4 He did not increase tuition. He did not cut--

5 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] I remember
6 that.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: --the funding.
8 But when I was there those years at City College, 80%
9 of the population was Black and Latino. And was the
10 same numbers that we have senior colleges. Today, we
11 are dealing with a different reality, which is I
12 don't know the accurate data in front of that, but I
13 can say that population has been going down probably
14 to 70% or less in our top senior colleges being
15 Baruch, John Jay, City, Hunter and Brooklyn College.
16 And for me it would be interesting to analyze on how
17 tuition plays a role. Because when I was there,
18 beside the year that I used to be a taxi driver to
19 support myself and my family at night and go to
20 college in the day time, at some point I also applied
21 for public assistance. And in the '80s as a student
22 in senior college we were allowed to get our public
23 assistance so that we can get additional help to pay
24 our costs. As you know, we got rid of everything in
25 the previous administration and the Pataki (sic) and

2 the Administration in the city and still today we
3 have inherit a situation that even though with the
4 Commission of HRA and the Mayor, they restored the
5 right of the student at community college to be able
6 to get public assistance without mandated to work 35
7 hours to get those benefits back. It's not the same
8 thing for the senior colleges.

9 DEAN MURPHY: That's correct.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: The state
11 doesn't allow a student at the senior college to be
12 to say we can get public assistance, and we can get a
13 waiver of those 35 hours because those 35 hours
14 should be counted for the homework, for all the needs
15 that they have to do. So, again there was additional
16 help in the population. I think that the CUNY
17 population represents the diversity of the city.
18 Today, we have seen a reduction especially for our
19 working class who are the first door to have it bring
20 to--for the middle-class was to be able to enter
21 college. So when we think about the plan of having a
22 free tuition, you know, in our colleges it's not only
23 to dream that one day we go back to free tuition, but
24 it's also how a student will be able to be in senior
25 college, and be able to quality to get additional

2 support from the HRA so that they don't have to work
3 those 35--be able to get the additional dollars to
4 support themselves without having the requirement to
5 work 35 hours. So when you look--and I say the
6 institution--the future in the 20 years from now
7 knowing that the city has lost--has seen a reduction
8 of especially the Black and Latino in our senior
9 colleges. How do you think that a free tuition
10 policy will help to increase the population of
11 especially the under served community from the Black
12 and Latino so that we can bring that number as it
13 used to be ten years ago?

14 DEAN MURPHY: I think that, you know,
15 CUNY and all its colleges should serve as--should
16 reflect the diversity of the city. How we get to
17 that point is not something I could answer off the
18 cuff here. There's a lot of--a lot of ideas we could
19 put forward, but a lot of discussion has to be--be
20 had, and there's got to be some give and take by--by
21 different groups of people.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: [off mic]

23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: I want to thank you,
25 Council Member and certainly we want to move from the

2 dream of free tuition to reality of free tuition. So
3 we've got to take the steps to make that happen, and
4 I'm not going to call on Council Member Williams for
5 his questions.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you,
7 Madam Chair. Thank you for--for this bill. I think
8 it's a great bill, and I always like to see--it's
9 always difficult to figure out what we can do, but
10 it's always great when we figure out what we can do
11 within the power that we have. I think this is a--a
12 great first step. I have you I think beat, Council
13 Member Rodriguez. I got arrested fighting for
14 tuition in the '90s. I can't remember when it was.
15 I don't remember what exactly the raise was, but we
16 went out fighting. We lost, but we went out--we went
17 out fighting. Obviously, this is a--a great bill,
18 and I think I heard that you support the bill, is
19 that correct?

20 DEAN MURPHY: We support certainly
21 looking at the possibility of free tuition yes. We
22 support forming the task force.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, thank
24 you, and I know it was brought up before, but
25 obviously tuition used to be free. When the

2 complexion of the students changed, they started
3 implementing tuition. I personally don't believe
4 that was a coincidence, but we're here now. We know
5 what the value of education is. We think it's just
6 horrible to keep telling people the value of
7 education, the value of education, and then put up
8 these barriers to get the education. And we know
9 that the largest expansion at CUNY happened during
10 the Great Depression because they knew exactly how
11 important education was to get out of that situation.
12 So I can't see how we can expand CUNY in the Great
13 Depression and not get free tuition when we are in
14 a place where the richest people are making a lot of
15 money. So I think it's important that we move here.
16 But I did want to ask what part--and you may have
17 answered it, but what portion of the--what percentage
18 of the funding comes from tuition?

19 DEAN MURPHY: [off mic] Did we answer
20 that?

21 CATHERINE ABATA: About 45%.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: How much?

23 CATHERINE ABATA: Forty-five percent--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [interposing]

25 And how much--

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2 CATHERINE ABATA: --of the total budget.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: --and how much
4 does that make it?

5 CATHERINE ABATA: \$1.5 billion.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: \$1.5 billion
7 per year?

8 CATHERINE ABATA: Right and I'll just
9 note that out of that \$1.5 billion out-of-pocket
10 expenses for students is about \$784 million. The
11 rest is covered by financial aid.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, say that
13 again.

14 CATHERINE ABATA: So of--of the \$1.5
15 billion that makes up our tuition revenue budget,
16 \$784 million of that is actually paid by students out
17 of pocket, and the remaining amount is covered by
18 financial aid.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: And how much of
20 that--that will be, that out-of-pocket expense?

21 CATHERINE ABATA: The out-of-pocket is
22 \$784.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: That means--I--
24 I assume that it grows a little or does it--does this
25 remain the same?

2 CATHERINE ABATA: Absent tuition
3 increases it remains the same, and absent any shift
4 in terms of students being eligible for more
5 financial aid or less financial aid it remains the
6 same, and enrollment obviously would have an impact.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So if we had
8 \$800 million per year everybody can go to school for
9 free?

10 CATHERINE ABATA: Yes.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: So, we'll
12 basically look at our budget and it shows you what's
13 important. So basically for the city and the state
14 and the federal government \$800 million is not
15 important enough for everybody to have free access to
16 education, and I think that's appalling. So I'm glad
17 that you're supportive of this now. I--I was struck
18 when I brought up questions before to CUNY. I think
19 we asked--we asked them questions about if we had
20 found funding would they still support, you know,
21 increases in the future and they said yes, which is
22 very disturbing. Is that still the case? If we
23 found \$800 million a year would you still support
24 increases in tuition?

2 DEAN MURPHY: I think what we have to do
3 is we have to make sure that CUNY is funded
4 sufficiently. If you're saying that this year it's
5 \$800 million, and the next ten years it's going to be
6 \$800 million, that could be a problem. But if you're
7 saying that we're going to get an increase each year
8 to cover, you know, cost including, you know,
9 technology and salaries and all that--that, you know,
10 it would be a different conversations. That's I think
11 part of what has to be discussed with the task force.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Do you foresee
13 increases? When we achieve the dream, and I think we
14 can achieve the dream, do you foresee an increase in
15 enrollment?

16 DEAN MURPHY: I would--I spoke about this
17 before. I do and I have a little bit of a problem
18 with that because I--I actually am concerned that the
19 enrollment increase would not come from New York City
20 students necessarily. It would come from out of
21 state students who are flocking to New York now to go
22 to college that they would now flock to CUNY because
23 CUNY is free. And, of course, a lot of these--a lot
24 of these individuals come from communities in more
25 affluent parts of the country where they have, you

2 know, one counselor for every 50 students, and they
3 just get their admissions applications out sooner.
4 So I--I do have some concerns about that. I think
5 that's something we have to talk about, you would
6 have to talk about in the task force would be, you
7 know, who actually is eligible for in-state tuition.
8 Someone mentioned before what if it was just New York
9 City students? Well, I would see it grow with the
10 New York City students, but that would be a better
11 growth.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Yeah, I'm
13 going--you talked about before, and that's actually a
14 legitimate point. I think everybody should have
15 access. I want to make sure New York City has access
16 first. [laughter] So, I--

17 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] I think we're
18 in agreement there.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I think--I
20 think that's a good point. Actually, I know that we
21 saw enrollment jump during the Recession of people
22 going to public colleges who otherwise might have
23 gone to private colleges. I think that's a
24 legitimate concern, but I'm glad at least on this
25

2 we're on the same page, and I'm looking forward to
3 achieving the dream. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. You
5 indicated that 45% of the revenue budget comes from
6 tuition. How has that changed over the last 10, 20
7 years, and what has been the change in percentage of
8 the state contributions to the budget to operate
9 CUNY?

10 CATHERINE ABATA: So, I don't have the--
11 the numbers from ten years ago, but the trend has
12 been that tuition has made up a larger percentage of--
13 --of CUNY's overall, and I can get you that 10-year
14 history.

15 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, we appreciate
16 that. Are there any other questions from council
17 members before this panel leaves? What portion of
18 the financial aid that students receive comes from
19 loans?

20 DEAN MURPHY: What portion?

21 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Yes.

22 DEAN MURPHY: Are we talking about--are
23 we talking about undergraduates or graduates or both?

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Both.

2 DEAN MURPHY: Okay so it's about \$280 of
3 \$1.4 billion.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: That's combined.

5 DEAN MURPHY: Yes.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: That is from loans?

7 DEAN MURPHY: Yeah, I think it's--I
8 think--of the top of my head, and I'll get you the
9 exact numbers, I think it's \$140 million undergrad.
10 I think it's \$160 million grad believe it or not.
11 There's more money being taken out by grad students
12 than undergrad--undergrads, but we can get you those
13 numbers.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, great. Okay,
15 thank you. Thank you so much for coming and
16 presenting your testimony. If we have any further
17 questions, we will submit them to you, and we would
18 appreciate a--

19 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --a speedy response--

21 -

22 CATHERINE ABATA: [interposing] Thank
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --as soon as you
25 can. Thank you.

2 DEAN MURPHY: And I just want to say that
3 we--we appreciate the City Council--all the efforts
4 of the City Council--

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Yes.

6 DEAN MURPHY: --makes on our behalf--

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Yes.

8 DEAN MURPHY: --including the Merit
9 Scholarship.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Yes,
11 and we're doing the--

12 DEAN MURPHY: [interposing] And I'll be
13 right there with the need scholarship.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. I'm glad
15 for that, and we're pleased with the--what the budget
16 reflects is coming to CUNY. Wish it were more, but
17 we're pleased with what we see. Thank you.

18 DEAN MURPHY: Thank you.

19 [pause, background comments]

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: We're now going to
21 call our second panel. We're going to have Carmel
22 Martin from the Center for American Progress; Harold
23 Stolper from Community Service Society; Mallory
24 Margaret. No, that's not right. Nugent from FPWA

2 and Aileen representing Assembly Member Charles
3 Barron.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [off mic] Who's
5 that.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [laughs]
7 [background comments, pause] If you would raise your
8 right hand, please. Do you affirm to tell the
9 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in
10 your testimony before this committee, and to answer
11 all questions honestly?

12 CARMEL MARTIN: I do.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, and let's
14 start with [off mic] Ms. Martin, Carmel Martin
15 because she has traveled all the way from Washington,
16 D.C. specifically to be here for this hearing. So we
17 invite you to give us your name and your testimony.

18 CARMEL MARTIN: Thank you. Thank you,
19 Chairwoman. My name is Carmel Martin, and I'm the
20 Executive Vice President for Policy at the Center for
21 American Progress, which is a progressive think tank
22 in Washington, D.C. I've spent my career in public
23 service in both the legislative and the executive
24 branches of government working for Senator Ted
25 Kennedy in the Senate, and I was an appointee of

2 President Obama at the Department of Education. I'm
3 very thrilled to be here and thank--thank the
4 committee for having me and the Chairwoman for
5 inviting me. I welcome the opportunity to testify
6 today about improving college affordability and
7 success at the City University of New York. As you
8 know, each year CUNY provides affordable high quality
9 education to thousands of students across New York
10 opening the door to the middle class and providing
11 opportunities that lead to a better life. CUNY is
12 particularly important for low-income and students of
13 color who make up 57% and 77% of its enrollment
14 respectively. Keeping college affordable is critical
15 for those students. Unfortunately, national trend--
16 trends threaten college affordability efforts.
17 Across the country lawmakers have put funding for
18 public higher education on the chopping block forcing
19 institutions to raise tuitions and balance budgets on
20 the back backs of students. Thanks to these cuts,
21 the real price of a four-year college is up 289%
22 since 1980. While college prices have skyrocketed,
23 wages have stagnated in recent years. This leaves
24 families squeezed devoting more to college while
25 struggling to cover other essentials like healthcare,

2 housing and childcare. Left without--with no other
3 choices, students may turn to student loan debt or
4 they may go part time jeopardizing their chances or
5 completing and exacerbating stark gaps in college
6 attainment by income in this country, and I have
7 addressed this issue a little more thoroughly in my
8 written testimony. While we have made progress in
9 terms of college going rates by income, by race and
10 overall, we have seen a stagnation in terms of
11 college completion. Given these negative national
12 trends, I'm encouraged to hear the committee's
13 interest in finding ways to eliminate tuition at
14 CUNY. Doing so could send a powerful clear message
15 to students that higher education is a more--is
16 within reach for them. If done right, this push
17 could also provide a model for tackling college
18 affordability not just in New York, but across the
19 country. In my testimony, I want to focus quickly on
20 four things that I hope the committee will consider
21 as it works on affordability. First, additional
22 support must pri--prioritize the students with the
23 greatest financial need. Free tuition for all is a
24 laudable goal, and one which I would support, but we
25 also live in a world of finite resources. If trade-

2 offs must be made, then they should benefit the most
3 at-risk students above all else. Second, the task
4 force should understand that the cost of college
5 includes more than just tuition. This is a key part
6 of prioritizing students with the greatest need.
7 Even someone with low or no tuition may still
8 struggle if they cannot cover living expenses like
9 rent, food, transportation, or child care, or they
10 may have to work so many hours to pay for these costs
11 that they fall behind in the classroom, which drives
12 out low college completion rates. The task force
13 should recognize the financial burdens may students
14 face beyond tuition and study what can be done about
15 those expenses. Third, tuition assistance for CUNY
16 should be awarded before federal financial aid, and
17 this is the most important point I want to make. The
18 estimates that the previous panel gave you presume
19 that federal financial aid goes first. What the
20 practical impact of that is if you made it tuition
21 free tomorrow, it would mean that low-income students
22 would benefit less than higher income students
23 because the federal aid would first be applied to
24 tuition, and then the city would make up the
25 difference, which would be a portion of tuition. For

2 high income students, the city would be making up the
3 entire portion of tuition. So really the--the low-
4 income students may benefit, but they may not. Their
5 Pell Grant may already cover tuition. So you have
6 made their situation no better off unless you have
7 this aid the first dollar not last dollar. That's
8 the student aid parts. So I think that's the most
9 important point I want to make today, but finally I
10 just want to say that I hope the task force does
11 think about completion as the goal and, therefore,
12 looks not just at the cost of college, but the
13 supports that low-income students need in order to
14 complete. Charging students nothing, but then
15 leaving them to flounder would undermine the ultimate
16 goal of completing college. CUNY has already been a
17 leader in experimenting with support services. Of
18 particular note is this accelerated study in
19 associate programs are ASAP. This program can
20 provide students with robust advice and support,
21 helps them navigate courses, and gives additional
22 financial help among other services. A rigorous
23 evaluation of ASAP by MDRC found the largest positive
24 effects of any community college intervention it had
25 studied. Other intervention--interventions may help,

2 too. We have put out a report at CAP about some
3 innovative programs across the country, which I'm
4 happy to share with the committee. They--you could
5 look at things like Guided Pathways that gives
6 students a clear map to graduation once they've
7 chosen a major as well as other promising types of
8 assistance like mentorships and summer bridge
9 programs to ease the transition to college.
10 Following these four recommendations would produce an
11 affordability program that could serve as a national
12 model. It would acknowledge the complexities of
13 affordability that go beyond just tuition, emphasize
14 completion and not just enrollment, and ensure that
15 the most at-risk students get the most support. And
16 it would do so in a way that is jointly supported by
17 the state city and federal governments. Thank you
18 again for the opportunity to be here, and I look
19 forward to any questions you have.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much.
21 We'll now move to Mr. Aileen representing Assembly
22 Member Charles Barron.

23 [background comments]

24 KARAN AILEEN: Greetings. Good
25 afternoon, Madam Chair. Good afternoon other council

2 members. Good afternoon everybody else. My name is
3 Karan Aileen, and I'm here today representing State
4 Assembly Member Charles Barron. Unfortunately, he is
5 unable to attend due to his obligations in Albany.
6 I'm here to testify in full support of Council Member
7 Inez Barron's Bill Intro 1138. This bill seeks to
8 create a task force to review proposals for restoring
9 CUNY back to where it used to be, free. As former
10 chair of the Committee on Higher Education, I, too
11 advocated for the return of free tuition. I'm proud
12 to see that my wife shares the same sentiment and is
13 taking this discussion a step further. New York City
14 is a port to the world where people seeking
15 opportunities dock for that prospect. The main path
16 towards achieving one's goals is through the
17 educational system. We must acknowledge the more
18 education you acquire the better your prospects are
19 to survive the capitalist system. People seek higher
20 education all across the country and the rising cost
21 of education is crippling and hindering these
22 opportunities especially for Black and Latino people.
23 Upon completing college, too many students are left
24 with insurmountable debt that stifles their chances
25 to build a life for themselves and their families and

2 attain any real wealth. New York City once agreed
3 that higher education should be free, but that was
4 for white males. Once tuition was initiated and as
5 attendance of our Black and Latino people increased
6 due to open admissions, the cost has been--has been
7 placed back on the backs of students. Every year our
8 students are left with the burden of lobbying the
9 city and state elected officials to not cut financial
10 AID. We must find better ways to cover the
11 increasing cost to obtain a college degree. It is
12 unreasonable to expect an 18-year-old to sign a
13 promissory note for their loans, and be expected to
14 pay back while only earning minimum wage. This is a
15 disservice to the next generation and we have an
16 obligation to create a better future for them. I
17 support the passage of Intro 1138, and encourage
18 members of the City Council and Speaker Melissa Mark-
19 Viverito to co-sponsor the bill. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank Mr. Aileen.
21 We'll now hear from CSS.

22 HAROLD STOLPER: Thank you for the
23 opportunity to testify today. My name is Harold
24 Stolper. I'm the Senior Economist at the Community
25 Service Society. We're a local anti-poverty

2 organization. So we're working on a report that will
3 propose or outline the components of an affordability
4 plan, and we just want to summarize some of the
5 findings briefly today. I'm not going to read from
6 the testimony. Since you all have it, I'm just going
7 to point out a couple key points. So the first
8 rather unsurprisingly is that a college degree offers
9 really the only security from unemployment and a path
10 to higher wages. If we look at folks who do have a
11 bachelor's degree, they have lower rates of
12 unemployment especially during times of recession and
13 earn wages that are about 80% higher. Second, our
14 own polling data shows that New York City residents
15 overwhelmingly support college affordability as an
16 urgent policy priority. They view a four-year degree
17 as really a requirement for sustaining a family, and
18 getting ahead. But they view costs not just tuition
19 but living expenses such as housing and food as the
20 main barrier. Third, low levels of college readiness
21 reinforce these financial barriers and limit
22 completion. So I think about 27% of New York City
23 public school 12th graders are deemed college ready.
24 This shifted towards 2-year colleges where there--
25 where they soak up their financial aid taking only

2 credit bearing courses, and in general are less
3 likely to succeed. The next point on the topic of
4 two-year versus four-year so recent tuition and
5 financial aid policy at CUNY has--if we look at the
6 neediest students, and then from--those families have
7 less have \$30,000 income who are federal aid
8 applicants, their net price tuition minus aid has
9 gone up by more 50% at four-year colleges over the
10 last five years, but only 10% at two-year colleges,
11 right. And at the same time, the enrollment has sort
12 of worked in the other direction. These students are
13 enrolling in much higher numbers at two-year
14 colleges. So we have concerns about--about these-the
15 neediest students being shifted towards two-colleges
16 where in some cases they're less likely to succeed.
17 So that's sort of the main points we want to make
18 today that affordability policy should ensure that
19 the neediest New Yorkers are not steered to two-year
20 colleges if they are, in fact, capable of succeeding
21 at four-year colleges. And we think so these
22 affordability policies should also include a range of
23 support services and programs, some of which were
24 just outlined by other people on the panel. This
25 includes--so there's evidence that providing

2 information to high school students about the cost
3 and benefits of different programs and events, and
4 staying on top of it, and informing them of
5 application deadlines can really help enrollment. We
6 support remediation in initiatives to help fast track
7 students into credit-bearing courses, and also on-
8 campus support programs such ASAP, which includes a
9 range of counseling services, and also subsidized
10 Metro cards has--appears to be an important piece of
11 that. So we are working with some of our allies, or
12 other organizations. We are sort of formulating our
13 proposal and we support this task force and hope that
14 our recommendations will--will be considered, and
15 thank you for the opportunity to testify.

16 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you and we
17 certainly are so proud of the ASAP program, which is
18 a stellar program and nationally recognized, and we
19 will now hear from the representative from the
20 Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies.

21 MALLORY NUGENT: Hi. My name is Mallory
22 Nugent. I'm a Senior Policy Analyst at the
23 Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies. I'd like
24 to Chair and the members of the committee for the
25 opportunity to testify today. I will not read

2 directly from my written testimony. This is one of
3 my favorite topics. So I start typing and look up
4 and there's nine pages of testimony. I am here to
5 express FPWA's support for the--for the bill at hand,
6 and our interest in participating in a task force
7 should one be formed with our interest--with our
8 focus on poverty alleviation, and our member agencies
9 that make up non-profits doing work around college
10 access both directly and potentially child welfare,
11 after school early childhood education. As an anti-
12 poverty organization FPWA commends the Council for
13 seeking to explore means to promote college access
14 and achievement. Education is a significant factor
15 in economic stability and upward mobility especially
16 for low-income students. Without a college degree, a
17 child born in the bottom depth of the income
18 distribution has a 45% chance of remaining there and
19 only a 5% chance of moving to the top fifth. When
20 that same child earns a college degree, their chances
21 of making it to the top nearly quadruple, and their
22 chances of making it out of the bottom increase by
23 more than 50%. You'll see more data in the written
24 testimony about the immense impact of a college
25 degree on a graduate's economic stability. It's

2 important to note that while a college degree can be
3 a key to upward mobility, students from low-income
4 families are much less likely to obtain a degree.

5 While half of all people from high income families
6 have bachelor's degrees, only 10% of those from low-
7 income families do. Give the demonstrated positive
8 impact of achievement in higher education, there's a
9 growing national trend towards eliminating the cost
10 barrier to college by institution Promise Programs.

11 Promise Programs are place based scholarships, which
12 address tuition and expenses at varying levels for
13 stellar, less stellar and need based, merit based et
14 cetera. But they offer this promise to allow
15 students to go to college, and sometimes have
16 accompanying wrap-around services like New York
17 baseline(sic) program, which is nationally lauded.

18 Since Kalamazoo, Michigan began the robust Kalamazoo
19 Promise in 2005, Promise Programs have gained
20 traction in localities across the country with more
21 than 40 programs operating nationwide. Aside from
22 the financial boosts, communities like the ones
23 discussed in their written testimony reported growing
24 college going culture, families, students and school
25 staff are more likely to think of college as awaiting

2 (sic) rather than an F, resulting in better economic
3 performance, increased advanced placement courses
4 especially for students of color, and more
5 information circulating regarding college
6 opportunities. While Promise Programs have been
7 shown to be successful in a variety of communities,
8 New York City likely presents some unique challenges
9 and questions that a successful task force should--
10 should address. I was lucky enough to attend a
11 conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan in the fall, a
12 gathering of 200 representatives from Promise
13 Programs from across the country, and they all had
14 the same story of how their Promise Programs began,
15 and that began with a task force like this.

16 Community stakeholders who came together to address
17 the issues and make this work. And it also built a
18 sense of ownership. The Promise communities have a
19 real sense of pride in being a Promise community.
20 Some of the most pressing questions for New York
21 include how to ensure that CUNY's quality remains
22 where it should be given our potential rapid influx
23 of students, especially given they're already very
24 constrained by just--and the lack of investment from
25 the State. We also want to avoid unintended

2 consequences and ensure that students are at the
3 right--that are attending are at the right place,
4 that they're both properly prepared for college and
5 not, you know, going through remediation over and
6 over again. And that they're not under-matching
7 foregoing opportunities at more selective schools
8 that might be a better academic fit just because of
9 the price tag. An perhaps the most pressing is just
10 how to fund such a program especially given the size
11 of New York City's population. The in turn--the
12 return on investment with an increasing number of
13 graduates would be substantial, but the initial
14 investment would be large. Many local Promise
15 programs are funded by private donors, which is
16 likely a feasible solution given the size of New York
17 City's student body. FPWA strongly supports further
18 exploration of eliminating CUNY--CUNY tuition, and we
19 feel that it presents a unique opportunity for the
20 city to increase college access and college going
21 culture leading the state and promoting achievement
22 in higher education. I'm also happy to answer any
23 questions you have on anything in the written
24 testimony at a later date if you'd like.

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much
3 for your presentation here, and you've offered to
4 serve in the task force. So I would ask the others
5 on the panel, would you also consider serving on the
6 task force?

7 CARMEL MARTIN: Well, I'm out of town
8 [laughter] but you can call me up.

9 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: We are not looney.
10 My--my pastor had a phrase, which I developed--which
11 I adopted at a long--an early age. It was, "You
12 don't lock talent out of the organization." So
13 certainly, of course, we would do that yes. Okay,
14 and you commented on the fact that 27% of students
15 need remediation, and that's 27% of those who
16 graduated. So it's not the total graduating class.
17 It's only I think 71% of the students who actually
18 graduate, and of that 71% only 27% are adequately
19 prepared, and of the 20--27% who aren't prepared and
20 they need that remediation as well, and it's quite a
21 strain on our CUNY system. We do have a question
22 from my colleague Council Member Rodriguez.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Yes, and
24 before I the question I would like to say that even
25 though our focus today is on free tuition at CUNY,

2 but we cannot, you know, have any conversation about
3 free tuition to a student without addressing the need
4 for our professor to also get a contract who also
5 have been a critical ally to the student body, and
6 it's all about what we've been going through. And
7 for many years they've been working with our
8 contracts. So, I think it is important to highlight
9 that also the source funding especially at our state
10 level should be in place not only to do the best we
11 can for our students, but also for our professor. To
12 Ms. Carmel Martin, when you look at the national--
13 this situation at the national level, have you--is
14 there any other municipality or any other state that
15 are already engaged in this conversation of free
16 tuition? Have you seen some advance in this
17 conversation in other states?

18 CARMEL MARTIN: So there have been some
19 jurisdictions that have done free community college
20 at the state level. Tennessee has moved forward with
21 that. There are jurisdictions, as my panel
22 colleagues here mentioned who have engaged in college
23 Promise initiatives. So it's not necessarily free
24 tuition, but rather looking at students on an
25 individual basis, and making sure that costs are

2 covered. So it might be more than tuition for some
3 students, and less than--less than full tuition for
4 other students.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Uh-huh, and--
6 and I--my other question is on how can you from the
7 advocate side help us to make a case to persuade the
8 business community that they should be on side
9 because at the end of the day, if we have a better
10 plan of how to address a reality where based on the
11 Budget Director in New York City two years ago, he
12 said that this administration will inherit a city
13 with 46% of New Yorkers living in poverty. And if we
14 can turn our city into the more middle-class city, no
15 doubt that it will be good not only for those New
16 Yorkers who will be able to be in a better position
17 to support their family. But also from the business
18 community perspective, people will be able to spend
19 more in their establishments. They can buy more
20 shares if they would like to investments. So how can
21 help us on--

22 CARMEL MARTIN: [interposing] Excellent.
23 Yeah, I mean I think, two--two things and we have
24 some reports at CAP that I can send to the committee
25 afterwards that has more detail on both of these

2 issues. The first is, I think the businesses should
3 appreciate how it's in our short-term business
4 interest to have a more educated population. We
5 estimate that nationally in the next ten years 65--
6 65% of new positions will require a degree, at least
7 a two-year degree, while the population only--only
8 40% have--are meeting that goal. So they're to have
9 a shortage of--of skilled workforce, but I think the
10 other argument, which you've laid out is that in--in
11 the long--longer term by having a more educated
12 workforce, and therefore can have--earn higher wages
13 will create--put pressure--create a greater aggregate
14 demand for products and services. Middle income
15 families spend more of their income in the economy
16 than high income families do, and we've written many
17 reports making that argument that basically a mid--a
18 healthy middle class is not a--a result of a healthy
19 economy. A healthy middle-class is prerequisite to a
20 healthy economy for exactly the reason you said
21 Councilman, that--that when people are making a
22 living wage, they invest that money, and then that
23 creates aggregate demand in the economy. We did a
24 report last year that showed that one of the reasons
25 people are feeling so frustrated right now

2 economically is because over the last 10 years their-
3 -their wages have been stagnant while costs, costs of
4 things like college, housing, healthcare have gone
5 up. So your product typical nationally a prototypical
6 family of four their income actually went down by
7 \$5,000 a year because even though their--their rent,
8 their wages were flat. These costs mean--meant their
9 real wages went down. So I think that's another
10 thing to tap into politically. I think people
11 appreciate that college affordability is really a
12 pocketbook issue, and something that is important for
13 them in the short term because they just can't afford
14 it. But they also innately know that long term it
15 will have big benefits. One of the committee members
16 asked previously what the economic ROI of a college
17 degree is. I don't know what the aggregate number
18 is, but for an individual is the average is if you
19 get a four-year degree, you will earn a million
20 dollars over the course of your lifetime more than
21 you would if you didn't have that college degree. So
22 it means a lot for the individuals, but it also means
23 a lot for the economy at large.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: Yeah.

2 MALLORY NUGENT: I'd also add as we--we
3 spoke about Tennessee, and they were the first state
4 to do free community college, and that was put in
5 place by a Republican governor and a Republican
6 legislature, and that was done largely because of
7 support from the business community. There was a--a--
8 --an extreme skills gap that they--they weren't able
9 to meet in their business community. So the business
10 community came out in support of this free community
11 college to--to increase the number of--of capable
12 people to fill those jobs. And I--I thought it will
13 be just like. In New York State by 2020, 69% of all
14 jobs will require post-secondary education of some
15 kind. So that's definitely, you know, one way to
16 keep people on board.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RODRIGUEZ: And--and I
18 think that--first of all I would like also to make
19 that--to be clear that President Obama's vision on
20 investing more. His plan on--on investing more on
21 our colleges. It is not the reason why we are not
22 able to really say that we can implement this--this
23 plan is because the Republicans became an obstacle.
24 They would--they--they did not allow, you know, this
25 plan to move forward. So, he could have a have great

2 and his great proposal, but at the end of the day, it
3 was stopped by the Republicans there in the White
4 House. Therefore, there is no funding coming to the
5 state and, therefore, there is no funding also at the
6 local level that we can say how can CUNY be able to
7 implement or be able to explain now they're spending
8 the money. We don't have the money because that
9 money was never put in place there. But I would like
10 to end with, you know, we also have said before
11 there's a guy that he was right when he said
12 education is the passport to the future, and that
13 person was Malcolm X, and he was right. And, you
14 know, like I always say that we--most of us we go to
15 masses, we go to celebrate Rosa Park and Martin
16 Luther King. They did what they needed to do in
17 their time, but education isn't and you don't see the
18 right name. We--we can go and analyze all the
19 studies, all the research at University of Maryland
20 saying about the importance to invest in the first
21 year, CUNY, Columbia, NYU nationwide. Everyone knows
22 the answer. The question is why we have built that
23 system because it's not--Jumaane Williams say, like
24 Council Member Williams say it's not that we have to,
25 you know, back the system. The system has been made

2 with a purpose like, you know, when a person--when a
3 human don't have--doesn't have a--a pipeline to say
4 that they can be able to be in a good high school, be
5 prepared to be in college. And some of you have done
6 good research in those lines. We will be over this
7 rally (sic), and I think that this concept, and I
8 agree with the--with the Chairman of this committee
9 saying that this, you know, be as a dream. We need
10 to work on this, and having CUNY also coming on board
11 in support of the creation of this task force and
12 institution such as you that have a nationwide,
13 citywide, statewide reputation. I just hope that we
14 don't waste any time that we definitely come on
15 board. I hope that we can move this bill, and I also
16 would like to add my name to--on this bill, too. So
17 thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you, Council
19 Member. Just a few closing points. Ms. Nugent, you
20 said that Tennessee now has free tuition at
21 community. When did they implement that? How many
22 years?

23 MALLORY NUGENT: I believe it was 2014.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Oh, so it's recent.
25 Okay.

2 MALLORY NUGENT: Yeah, it was.

3 [background comments]

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And--and

5 MALLORY NUGENT: [interposing] It is
6 fairly recent.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And did they see a
8 significant increase in enrollment--

9 MALLORY NUGENT: [interposing] Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: --when they did this
11 that?

12 MALLORY NUGENT: I--I know--I want to say
13 somewhere like 90% or something like extreme.

14 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: So even though there
15 was a significant in enrollment they were still able
16 to see the benefits of providing free tuition for
17 those students who came?

18 MALLORY NUGENT: Yeah.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Okay, and if you
20 have any further data, if you'd like to share that
21 with the committee we would appreciate that, and
22 finally, Ms. Martin if you could just elaborate on
23 what you said was the most important point that you
24 wanted to leave with us regarding the fact that

25

2 actually the higher income persons would benefit more
3 than the lower income based on the fact of the--

4 CARMEL MARTIN: Well, if--it depends on
5 how the program is constructed. I believe the--the
6 CUNY officials who were here gave you cost estimates.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Uh-huh.

8 CARMEL MARTIN: My understanding of their
9 cost estimates is they assume that these wouldn't--
10 that the--this initiative would not be first dollar.
11 It would be what we call in financial aid probably
12 its last dollar. And essentially what that means is
13 that the institution would apply federal student aid
14 to the student's cost or tuition first, and then this
15 new initiative would pay any difference. So Pell
16 Grants are--I think it's \$5,600 right now. If you're
17 the--the max--a maximum program recipient you get
18 \$5,600. At many of the CUNY institutions they would
19 cover tuition. So if they apply that there then
20 there's no cost. So it's a way to bring down the
21 cost of this free tuition initiatives, but I mean
22 that student gets no benefit from this initiative.
23 Whereas, a student making \$500,000 a year if it's
24 free for everybody would get a 50--if the tuition at
25 the given campus is \$5,600 they get a new \$5,600--

2 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Right.

3 CARMEL MARTIN: --benefit.

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Got it.

5 CARMEL MARTIN: So, I--I don't--that
6 doesn't mean you can't do free tuition.

7 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

8 CARMEL MARTIN: What I'm saying is make
9 this first dollars so that Pell eligible student can
10 use their Pell Grant towards living expenses because
11 that student needs it for that purpose because
12 tuition isn't enough--

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Right.

14 CARMEL MARTIN: --for that student. The
15 gentleman who testified from CUNY said many--many
16 students don't borrow. They take two or three jobs.
17 That's--that's admirable, but that's why we have such
18 low completion rates. It's too difficult for people
19 to focus on their students.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Right.

21 CARMEL MARTIN: So I think we--our goal
22 needs to be particularly for low-income families or
23 first generation college goers. We really need to
24 make it free cost of attendance, not free tuition for
25 those students. People in middle-class families or

2 upper income families they can handle some cost, but
3 the lowest--

4 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: [interposing] Okay.

5 CARMEL MARTIN: --income folks need more.

6 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much.

7 Thank you for coming, and providing your testimony.

8 CARMEL MARTIN: It was a pleasure. Thank
9 you.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: And we'll be in
11 touch.

12 CARMEL MARTIN: Thanks for having us.

13 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you.

14 [background comments, pause] Ms. Martin? We'll now
15 call our third panel, and this is a very, very
16 important panel, perhaps those most directly
17 affected. This is a panel of students. So we have
18 John MacFarland from Brooklyn College, CLAS. We have
19 Amanda Lomson (sp?) from NYPERG and we have Chica
20 Onyejiukwa from University Student Center, if they
21 would come forward. [background comments, pause] If
22 you would raise your right hand, please. Do you
23 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing
24 but the truth in your testimony before the committee,
25 and to answer all questions honestly?

2 I do.

3 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: You may begin.

4 CHICA ONYEJIUKWA: Greetings Council

5 Member Barron and members of the Committee on Higher
6 Education. My name is Chica Onyejiukwa, and I serve
7 as the Vice Chair for Legislative Affairs at the CUNY
8 University Student Senate, and I'm the President of
9 Hunter College's Undergraduate Student Government. I
10 am here to express the USS leadership support for the
11 proposed local law that would establish a temporary
12 task force to review proposals for restoring free
13 tuition at the City University of New York. Last
14 year we testified before this committee about our
15 support for President Obama's Free Community College
16 Proposal, and encouraged the City Council to take
17 ownership of the President's vision, and explore ways
18 of establishing free community colleges. We commend
19 this committee for taking concrete measures to ensure
20 the vision of a tuition free CUNY becomes once again
21 a reality. CUNY was established to provide free
22 quality higher education for all New Yorkers
23 regardless of ethnic, racial or socio-economic
24 status. For 129 years that unique proposition was a
25 live and well in the form of the greatest experiment

2 in public higher education, a tuition free CUNY. The
3 free tuition policy managed to accommodate an influx
4 of immigrants in the late 19th Century and early 20th
5 Century, and endured two world wars, and the Great
6 Depression without compromising quality. All 13
7 Nobel Peace Prize graduates were from the tuition
8 free era. A tuition free CUNY served as a support
9 system, safety net and springboard for thousands of
10 New Yorkers pursuing the American dream. However, 40
11 years ago in the fall of 1976, tuition was imposed at
12 CUNY. Since then, our state and local governments
13 have disinvested from CUNY, and financial aid
14 programs resulting exponentially increasing tuition
15 fees. Accordingly, CUNY is at risk of departing from
16 its unique mission, and leaving behind those who are
17 most in need. This legislative session provide an
18 opportunity for New Yorkers to demonstrate our
19 commitment to protecting CUNY and an affordable
20 education. Students, faculty, staff, alumni, elected
21 officials, concerned parents, and future CUNY
22 students joined to successfully fight back against
23 the Governor's proposed \$485 million budget cut to
24 CUNY. The groundswell of public support was a
25 reaffirmation that public higher education remains a

2 top priority. While the state government continues
3 to explore alternate funding source--proposals for
4 our public higher education system, now is the right
5 time to review plans for restoring free tuition at
6 CUNY. The Independent Budget Office upon request of
7 Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams has laid a good
8 foundation about the total cost of eliminating
9 tuition and potential pitfalls to avoid like ensuring
10 students retain access to state and federal grant
11 programs that are crucial to offset ancillary costs
12 like rent, textbooks, transportation, and food. CUNY
13 estimates the total cost of attendance is \$9,592 for
14 students living at home, and \$20,295 for independent
15 students. We are confident, however, that if
16 established this task force will take these factors
17 into consideration. We are also pleased that the
18 task force will be comprised of a diverse group of
19 members representing a wide array of constituencies,
20 idea and experiences. There is only one concern
21 that the University Student Senate has with the
22 appointment process proposed in the draft law.
23 Section 1(b)(5) of the policy currently states that
24 the Speaker of the City Council would appoint to the
25 task force among members one member who shall

2 represent students at the City University of New
3 York. The wording of this clause does not require
4 the appointed member representing the students to be
5 a CUNY student. Based on this current language
6 anyone would be eligible to represent the students at
7 CUNY. Thus, USS would like to respectfully recommend
8 the aforementioned line to be amended to read: The
9 Chairperson of the CUNY University Student Senate or
10 their designee who shall represent students at the
11 City University of New York. Since USS chairperson
12 is already elected to represent all CUNY students
13 before various levels of government, it would only be
14 appropriate for out elected students representative
15 to be and ex officio voting member of the proposed
16 task force. In closing, I would like to emphasize
17 our support for the proposed local law, and urge this
18 committee and the City Council to adopt the bill with
19 our recommendation. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next
21 panelist, please.

22 Good afternoon. My name is Amanda Roman
23 and I'm a College of Staten Island student, and a
24 member of the New York Public Interest Research Group
25 Board of Directors. NYPERG is the state's largest

2 non-partisan student advocacy organization. We
3 appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective
4 on the creation of a task force to explore free
5 tuition for CUNY. Today, students are burdened with
6 the ever-increasing cost to attend college. On top
7 of mounting textbook, housing and transit costs, that
8 State's so-called rational tuition policy has jacked
9 up the cost of tuition at public colleges that were
10 30% since it was passed in 2011. At the same time,
11 state funding has remained largely flat, and funding
12 for financial aid programs has stagnated. The
13 combination has eroded college affordability for too
14 many college students. A college educated workforce
15 is in demand. A recent Georgetown University study
16 found that by 2018 nearly two-thirds of New York jobs
17 will require a post-secondary education. What's
18 more, college educated workers still earn more than
19 their high school educated peers. In fact, by an
20 average of \$17,500 per year for--for millennial. As
21 wages increase, so do tax revenues, which support any
22 number of public services. While a college education
23 is a smart investment for long-term earnings, recent
24 wage stagnation may be affecting the ability for some
25 to even enroll in college or to finish our degree

1 now. A recent survey study found that from 1979
2 through 2011 the wealthiest 1% of New Yorkers saw an
3 income growth of 241%. The wealthiest 1% of New
4 Yorkers saw an income growth of 241% while the bottom
5 99% saw an income growth of only 8.5%. Moreover,
6 wage stagnation was more pronounced among the lowest
7 income earners. Free tuition would help to balance
8 this inequality. Small businesses are the back bone
9 of New York City's economy representing 98% of all
10 New York City businesses. As the city--as the city's
11 Small Businesses First Report notes, these small
12 businesses employ more than half of New York City's
13 private sector workforce, and often provide a first
14 chance for the economic self-determination and a path
15 to the middle-class for their owners. However,
16 studies have shown that students--students who are
17 burdened with student loan debt are far less likely
18 to start a small business. Laudably, CUNY
19 institutions rank better than the state average when
20 it comes to student loan debt levels. However, it is
21 still a burden endured by a fair amount of its
22 students. For example, according to the Institute
23 for College Access and Success, in 2014 50% of CUNY
24 Brooklyn College graduates had student loan debt
25

2 averaging \$12,500. This is compounded by the high
3 cost of living in New York City as rent, food,
4 insurance premiums and other costs not widely covered
5 by current financial aid such as Metro Cards and
6 textbooks. Current debt enhancing will grow, the
7 effect being even greater for low-income students as
8 well as students of color. In closing, just as the
9 City invests in kindergarten through 12th grade,
10 because full and equal education opportunity is a
11 public good, expanding investment to higher education
12 will benefit New York City's economy as well as
13 communities at large. For these reasons, we support
14 the establishment of the task force to analyze ways
15 to eliminate CUNY--to eliminate tuition at CUNY, and
16 we would welcome an invitation to sit on such a body.
17 Thank you for holding this hearing today, and
18 providing us an opportunity to share our reviews.

19 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next
20 panelist.

21 JOHN MACFARLAND: Good afternoon. My
22 name is John MacFarland and I am a Brooklyn College
23 graduate from City Council District 48. I recently
24 served as the Tech Adviser to CLAS Student Government
25 Office. I am here on behalf of that office to

2 support the establishment of a task force to review
3 proposals for restoring free tuition at CUNY. I'm
4 here to tell a more personal story. Like many New
5 York City residents, I come from a single-parent low-
6 income home. My mother struggled to put a roof over
7 my head, and often had to sell her jewelry just to
8 make ends meet. When I was 17 I dropped out of high
9 school and got my GED. For many young men in New
10 York City, that's the beginning of a downward spiral
11 into crime and eventual incarceration. My mother
12 fought to make sure that didn't happen, and thanks to
13 CUNY I had access to affordable education that gave
14 me opportunities I wouldn't other--I wouldn't have
15 had otherwise. Now, as a computer science graduate,
16 I can say with certainty that CUNY saved my life.
17 Thanks to CUNY I won't need to struggle as hard as my
18 mother did because I was able to go get an education.
19 Instead of becoming a criminal, I became a productive
20 member of society. I'd like call on the Council to
21 adopt this proposal but with more representation with
22 CUNY students. The member who represents students at
23 CUNY should come from or be the designee of the CUNY
24 Student Center. It would be more responsibility of
25 this Council to establish this task force and to

2 explore every available option in restoring free
3 tuition to CUNY. To do otherwise is a disservice to
4 the community and to the state.

5 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you so much
6 for coming and giving your testimony. I also want
7 to acknowledge other representatives from USS. We
8 have Joseph Awaje (sp?) and Luca El Monte and we
9 appreciate all the work that all of your groups are
10 doing, and we want to look forward to your continued
11 participation as we go forward in this venture.
12 Thank you. And we will call our final panel. These
13 are the last three persons who have submitted a
14 request to present testimony. Michael Fabricant from
15 PSS, Joseph Briar from CUNY faculty. Oh, was did I
16 say? Steven Briar. I'm sorry and James D. Hoff. So
17 if those person would come forward. [pause] If you
18 would raise your right hand, please. Do you affirm
19 to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but
20 the truth in your testimony before this committee,
21 and to answer all questions honestly?

22 PANEL MEMBERS: [off mic] (in unison)
23 Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. You may
25 begin. Give us your name and your testimony.

2 JAMES HOFF: Hello, thank you. My name
3 is James Hoff. I'm professor at the Borough of
4 Manhattan Community College. I want to thank
5 Chairman Barron for holding this committee and for
6 her proposal. So, I'll just read my statement.
7 Again, my name is James Hoff. I'm a member of the
8 Professional Staff Congress CUNY, a proud graduate of
9 the City University of New York Graduate Center, and
10 Professor of English at the Borough of Manhattan
11 Community College where I teach many of the most
12 socially and economically disadvantaged students in
13 our system. I'm also a proud member of Socialist
14 Alternative, one of the organizations that helped to
15 build last year's National Million Student Marches in
16 the fall and the spring, which mobilized tens of
17 thousands of students at hundreds of campuses across
18 the country to demand free college tuition, an end to
19 student loan debt and a \$15 an hour minimum wage for
20 all campus employees. I'm here today to stand with
21 the thousands maybe even hundreds of thousands of
22 CUNY students, faculty and staff who support the
23 return to open admissions and free tuition, and to
24 strong urge the City Council to not only create a
25 committee, to look into the possibility of free

2 tuition to CUNY, but to act with the utmost haste to
3 return the university to its original mission as a
4 university of the people free and open to all. In my
5 15 years at CUNY I have taught at many campuses
6 across the University system, and I have seen how
7 tuition, debt and low wages crush the hopes and
8 dreams of my students. I have seen students drop my
9 classes because they could not afford tuition, or
10 because their--their financial aid was denied or
11 taken away from them. I have seen students struggle
12 to find time to study for my classes because they are
13 forced to work 30 or 40 hours a week at minimum wage
14 jobs just to pay for tuition and books. I have
15 watched students take on huge course loads that they
16 were unable to handle because they could not afford
17 to pay for addition semesters. I have talked to
18 students who are afraid to take out loans because
19 they do not know how to they will ever be able to pay
20 them back, and do not want to begin their adult lives
21 under the crushing weight of massive debts. During
22 this same period, I have watched with disappointment
23 and anger as Albany has continued to subject CUNY to
24 decades of deficient budgets and consistent budget
25 cuts that have led to skyrocketing student tuition

2 and fees, which have in turn made the university
3 increasingly unaffordable for the working class and
4 students of color it was originally founded to serve.
5 In less than three decades, annual tuition at CUNY's
6 four-year colleges has increased by an astounding
7 400% from \$1,250 in 1989 to \$6,330 today. And the
8 unelected CUNY Board of Trustees is considering yet
9 another round of multi-year increase that could raise
10 tuition every year for years to come. Meanwhile,
11 the percentage of the university's budget that is
12 covered by the state and city has sunk to historic
13 lows. Currently, only a little more than 50% of the
14 university's senior college budget is funded by the
15 state. Much of the remaining percentage is funded by
16 student tuition and fees, which often hit working
17 class students and students of color the hardest. It
18 is clear, ladies and gentlemen, that CUNY is faced
19 with a stark choice: Either restore open admissions
20 and free tuition and return to its original mission
21 or lose its public character entirely. CUNY was
22 founded to serve the people of the City of New York,
23 but thanks to rising tuition and that confusing and
24 wasteful bureaucracy of financial aid many of these
25 people are increasingly being shut out of the

2 university, and cheated out of their right to an
3 education. I urge the Higher Education Committee to
4 approve the establishment of the task force to
5 consider proposals for free tuition at CUNY, and I
6 urge the members of this committee and their
7 colleagues in the City Council to make a free and
8 open CUNY a part of their political platform, and to
9 engage their constituencies, and urge them to
10 organize and fight for that demand along side them.
11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. Next
13 panelist.

14 Thank you for the opportunity to testify
15 on this important subject of establishing a proposed
16 task force to consider a free tuition policy at CUNY.
17 My name is Steven Briar. I'm a historian, and a
18 professor in the Urban Education PhD Program at the
19 CUNY Graduate Center where I teach the history of
20 public education. I appreciate the efforts of this
21 committee and especially its Chair Council Member
22 Inez Barron with whom I had the privilege of sharing
23 a police van and an adjoining jail cell earlier this
24 year when we were both arrested for peacefully
25 protesting Governor's Cuomo's anti-CUNY policies.

2 I'm pleased that you're willing to consider
3 establishing--re-establishing New York City's
4 longstanding free tuition policy for our public
5 colleges. I think a little bit of historical context
6 might also help this discussion. So I--I will try to
7 say this briefly and--and hopefully it will be
8 helpful in the considerations. We've already about
9 the founding of CUNY in 1847, the free tuition that
10 lasted until the Fiscal Crisis of 1976-77. We
11 rightly celebrate this historic public commitment to
12 provide free-tuition-free public higher education to
13 our citizens. But we also need to be cognizant of
14 the fact that the historic embrace of a free tuition
15 policy by the four original municipal colleges,
16 CUNY, Hunter, Brooklyn and Queens also helped to
17 assure that the overall institution especially in the
18 first few decades after World War II remained
19 increasingly exclusive academically and
20 overwhelmingly White and increasingly middle class.
21 This occurred in the 1950s and 1960s because the
22 municipal colleges were brought--which were brought
23 together under the CUNY umbrellas only in 1961 when
24 CUNY was created, had failed to broaden their
25 admission policies in response to the city's changing

2 demographics in these years. In effect, they chose
3 free tuition over expansion and open access. Tens of
4 thousands of the city's African-American and Puerto
5 Rican high school graduates sought access to
6 affordable higher education in the 1960s, a surge
7 that CUNY was unable to fully accommodate because of
8 its limited size and its restrictive admissions
9 policies. Only with the student uprisings in the
10 spring of 1969, which began at CCNY, and then rapidly
11 spread across the CUNY system, did the Board of
12 Higher Education finally agree to institute an open
13 admissions policy with assured public higher
14 education access tuition free to any New York City
15 public high school graduate. Open admissions led to
16 the dramatic expansion of the CUNY student body,
17 which numbered a quarter million by 1972. Sadly,
18 that policy would last barely seven years, a casualty
19 of the 1976 Fiscal Crisis, which proved to be the
20 opening shot in the neo-liberal counter-revolution
21 that has done so much to undermine and even destroy
22 public programs and institutions. I would argue that
23 a commitment to free tuition while important to re-
24 establish especially for the hundreds of thousands of
25 poor and working class CUNY students, most of their

2 immigrants and students of color should not blind us
3 to the very real and ongoing material problems that
4 CUNY faces including a sharp decline in the full-time
5 teaching workforce through the growing use of
6 contingent but adjunct faculty, decaying and
7 overcrowded classrooms and buildings as attested to
8 by the recent front expose in the New York Times.
9 And an ever-growing and highly paid administrative
10 bureaucracy, which has little impact on classroom
11 instructions--instruction. Those endemic problems
12 cannot and will not be solved by reinstating a free
13 tuition policy alone, however desirable that policy
14 would be, and how much it would improve the
15 educational experiences of CUNY's poor and working
16 class students. CUNY has been savagely underfunded
17 by the state of New York for decades now, a policy
18 that has continued both Republic and Democratic
19 governors including current occupant of the
20 Governor's office. One major example of this
21 consistent underfunding is the fact that 20--the
22 25,000 strong faculty and staff members at CUNY,
23 members of the PSC CUNY have been without a new
24 contract and thus without any salary increase for
25 almost six years now. We all--we will only bring

2 CUNY back to its earlier educational glories if we
3 not only reinstitute free tuition, but also directly
4 confront the neo-liberal attacks on higher education.
5 We need to remember that public higher education is a
6 public good that the State of New York needs to
7 recommit substantial economic resources to if CUNY is
8 to remain a world class public university system.
9 Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you and our
11 next panelist.

12 MIKE FABRICANT: Good morning, Chair
13 Barron, and I'm Mike Fabricant, Vice President of the
14 Professional Staff Congress. I bring you greetings
15 from Barbara Bowen and the rest of our negotiating
16 team. We've been locked in a room for 36 hours
17 straight trying to get to a settlement. On behalf of
18 the 25,000 faculty and staff CUNY represents, I'm
19 speaking on behalf of the 25,000 faculty and staff at
20 CUNY representing represented by the PSC, and I think
21 you for the opportunity. One, I would say that it
22 makes good sense [coughs] to establish or appoint a
23 task force of stakeholders and experts to undergo a
24 careful analysis of what it would take to make CUNY
25 free again, and we support the development of such a

2 task force. The task force is charged. It's outlined
3 in the legislation. Let's present a report to the
4 Mayor and Speaker, which covers, but is not limited
5 to an analysis of existing and potential sources of
6 revenue that could replace tuition at CUNY.

7 Obstacles preventing the elimination of tuition,
8 recommendations for how such obstacles could be
9 addressed, and steps the city could take to address
10 them. We would respectfully recommend adding to that
11 list of charges an analysis of existing and potential
12 sources of revenue that could provide resources
13 beyond replacing tuition, given the university's
14 serious and long-term underfunding, which has had
15 consequences for quality of education. And that this
16 does represent frankly an opportunity to join free
17 tuition to the question of quality of education, but
18 it requires a political will, which I know you share
19 to promote this other part of the investment.

20 Obstacles beyond tuition to students' abilities to
21 succeed in college and obtain a degree.

22 Recommendations for how such--such obstacles should
23 be addressed, and steps the city could take to
24 address them. As I've noted, replacing tuition
25 revenue although necessary, is not sufficient. If

2 every dime of CUNY's tuition revenue were to replace
3 right with federal funding or money from some other
4 source, CUNY would still be drastically under-
5 resources. There would be a shortage of full-time
6 faculty, adjunct faculty who currently teach half the
7 courses at CUNY and work for low wages without job
8 security or adequate teaching conditions. CUNY
9 students most of them low-income New Yorkers, people
10 of color and immigrants would still be squeezed into
11 crowded classrooms in buildings that need significant
12 repair. And CUNY students face many challenges that
13 you've--we've heard about today, and we know about
14 that go beyond tuition. If we can imagine a return
15 to a CUNY education, we must also imagine and fight
16 for a paradigm of shifting investments in
17 relationship to a CUNY education, which means
18 increasing the number of full-time faculty, improving
19 advisement, and expanding student supports so that
20 we're not only assuring access and affordability, but
21 we're also assuring quality and a future that goes
22 along or is joined to that access. When he unveiled
23 his proposal for free community colleges, President
24 Obama cited CUNY's ISAP program as a model. I don't
25 need to recall all of the many features of that

2 program or its many benefits. The bottom line is we
3 know how to promote this transition. We know how to
4 move students from all--who are often underprepared
5 to highly prepared and move--movement through the
6 university. It's not a question of knowing and
7 knowledge, it's a question of investment and
8 political will. Every CUNY student deserves
9 increased public investments associates with a
10 quality higher education. This city is rich in the
11 wealthiest nation in the world, and if we can't make
12 it happen nobody can, and we should make it happen
13 and set a standard. But it will require more
14 progressive structures at each level of government,
15 elected leaders who will make quality public higher
16 education a top priority, and offer answers to the
17 naughty policy questions that have surfaced today,
18 and will need to be addressed simultaneously. There
19 are additional issues that we would urge the task
20 force to consider. We've highlighted a number--all
21 of them in our statement, but we would simply--I'll
22 simply note the questions without the elaboration in
23 the interest of time. Should tuition free college be
24 limited to community colleges or extended to CUNY as
25 a whole? It's a central question, and particularly

2 question as we look at the consequences associated
3 with simply breaking off one part of the system and
4 not offering it to another. What are the
5 consequences associated with that for the entire
6 system? How should the City define residential
7 eligibility for students seeking free tuition at
8 CUNY? If the federal--federal government doesn't set
9 the policy, the consequences of funding for those who
10 live outside the city and the incentives to attend
11 CUNY become--and particularly the community colleges
12 become far greater, and that has additional
13 consequences for the university. Should free tuition
14 at CUNY be available to all resident students
15 regardless of their personal family income? That's
16 an issue that I think we're going to need to struggle
17 with in the case of finite resources. Who should
18 this program benefit? We would argue that first in
19 line should be the poorest students, and the poorest
20 students from often the most stressed and
21 underinvested in communities across the city. We
22 encourage the city--the Council to set its sites on
23 the full cost of getting a quality college degree.
24 While even some college experiences helps students,
25 the greatest economic, civic and personal benefits

2 accrue to students who receive a degree. We
3 encourage you not only to consider the cost of
4 covering tuition, as I've noted, but also all of the
5 range of services that promote a quality education
6 and much greater capacity of leaving the university.
7 Make CUNY tuition free. We'll go--making it tuition
8 free will go a long a long way in making this
9 possible, but we urge you to make sure that CUNY also
10 becomes a beacon. First, it has been, but it would
11 become the first instance in which affordability and
12 tuition is drawn--is tied, linked to the question of
13 quality as in separable pieces, and that becomes a
14 reform agenda that, in fact, shines a very bright
15 light on what's necessary in order to create a new
16 public higher education at CUNY and across the
17 country. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BARRON: Thank you. I want
19 to thank the panel for coming and presenting your
20 testimony, and certainly I agree that we must
21 continue to mobilize. It's got to be an issue that
22 we drum up mass support for. We've got to put
23 pressure on the elected because that's what they
24 respond to. We've got to become even more organized
25 in getting students to look beyond the immediacy of

2 their day-to-day challenges and responsibilities and
3 come out in mass numbers as you talked about,
4 mobilizing them around the nation, and certainly be
5 willing where possible to be able to put our bodies
6 on the line and offer ourselves for arrest in those
7 kinds of situations should that be the case. And
8 certainly, we do need to look at making sure that as
9 a part of this task force. As one of the other
10 panelists said earlier, that one of the objectives is
11 completion so that it's not just getting students in,
12 but giving them what they need, and all of those
13 attributes that are outlined to make them successful
14 students. So we want to thank you for coming, and
15 seeing that there are no more slips that have been
16 submitted, we are going to adjourn this hearing.
17 Thank you very much. [gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date July 3, 2016