



HARVEY EPSTEIN
Assemblymember 74th District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

Good morning Councilmember Dinowitz and members of the Higher Education Committee. I am Harvey Epstein, NYS Assembly member from the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

I am testifying in support of Councilman Brannon's Resolution on the New Deal for CUNY.

As a sponsor of the New Deal for CUNY legislation (A5843A/S.4461A) in the Assembly, I am happy to support this Resolution.

My dad only went to college (Brooklyn college) because CUNY was free. We need to make that dream available for other New Yorkers. I am a CUNY alumni as is my wife and my daughter attends CUNY. We need to fight for CUNY.

As you all know, CUNY is an important and integral part of New York City. Its commitment to academic excellence and providing equal access and opportunity for education for upward mobility is key to many people being able to access a college education.

Unfortunately, during the City's fiscal crises in the 1970's, we were forced to make financial decisions which are now hurting our neighbors and communities. Tuition was imposed and it has been increasing every year since then. Campus buildings have fallen into disrepair and students have had to get multiple jobs just to be able to pay their college tuition.

The New Deal for CUNY bill would not only provide free tuition but increase staffing for full-time faculty, academic advisors and clinical mental health counselors and funding to increase maintenance and upgrade building systems. These are all long overdue measures and need to be



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voted on and passed this session.

Our students cannot wait any longer for assistance, especially after suffering through two years of COVID related remote learning. The Governor and Mayor are both talking a lot about an economic recovery and encouraging businesses to bring workers back to the office. We need to invest resources now which will support our high school and college students, urge them to stay involved in their communities and plan careers.

The New Deal for CUNY is one of the most important pieces of legislation in Albany now. It addresses all of our futures. I encourage all of you and your colleagues to support its passage.



KARINES REYES
Assembly Member 87th District

CHAIR
Subcommittee on Workplace Safety

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
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COMMITTEES
Aging
Alcoholism and Drug Abuse
Health
Labor
Social Services

MEMBER
Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force
Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and
Asian Legislative Caucus
Legislative Women's Caucus

**Testimony to the New York City Council's Committee on Higher Education on Consideration of
Resolution for New Deal for CUNY**

Friday, February 25th at 10 AM

Good morning, New York City Council Members, advocates and members of the general public.

My name is Karines Reyes. I am a member of the New York State Assembly, representing the Southeast Bronx neighborhoods of Parkchester, West Farms, Castle Hill, Van Nest and Unionport.

I am pleased to be here to testify in support of the proposed resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to pass legislation and the necessary investment of state funds to implement the New Deal for CUNY (A5843-A/S4461-A). This legislation and budgetary proposal would infuse \$1.8 billion, over 5 years, into the city's higher education system and turn it into a 21st Century, world-class institution that New Yorkers need and deserve.

Specifically, this proposal would reverse persistent cuts that the City University of New York (CUNY) has experienced over the course of the last few decades, while adequately serving the needs of students and faculty. Over the last 30 years, the system has seen drastic reductions in funding for student aid, which has resulted in a loss in vital services, a scarcity of full-time and tenured faculty, and a dependence on overworked and underpaid adjuncts. Further, historic cuts to CUNY and the 1975 New York City fiscal crisis resulted in the system charging tuition for undergraduate courses, just as communities of color finally started to gain access to the city's public university system. Students of color, who had been effectively barred from taking courses at CUNY due to *de facto* segregation until the mid- to late-1960s, would experience less than a decade of free tuition for undergraduate courses, when the system first imposed tuition in 1976. The increasingly prohibitive cost of higher education is a matter of dire racial and class injustice that requires our attention, as leaders and policymakers.

The New Deal for CUNY proposal would establish minimum staff-to-student ratios for full-time faculty, hire more mental health counselors and academic advisors to provide more social emotional support for students, institute a capital plan to repair crumbling infrastructure, and make undergraduate education tuition free, once again. These solutions will greatly improve student and faculty experience on CUNY campuses and make a quality, college education more attainable and affordable for students.

All New Yorkers benefit from the mission of our city university. My Borough of the Bronx has nearly 40,000 students and approximately 2,000 faculty that rely on CUNY as their ticket to opportunity. The wonders that a good college education, especially a quality CUNY education, can do in the lives of New Yorkers are present in my own personal story. In the early 1990s, after my mother and I immigrated to this city from the Dominican Republic, my mother enrolled in CUNY courses for English and accounting at LaGuardia Community College in

Queens. Many times, she took me with her. In those classes, I would copy the instructor's notes on the board for fun, but I was picking up valuable words and sayings that helped me develop English proficiency quicker. My relationship with CUNY did not stop there. I would go on to be a two-time graduate of CUNY, receiving my Bachelor of Arts in Communications from Baruch College and a degree in nursing from Bronx Community College.

These experiences would allow me to become a registered nurse in our Bronx hospitals and become a productive member of the middle-class. My story, Andrew's story, and the stories of countless New Yorkers have been heavily influenced by CUNY. We need to ensure that the system is the best that it can be, through massive re-commitment and re-investment, for current and future generations of students and faculty.

The New Deal for CUNY is central to achieving that vision and the New York City Council's resolution in support of this legislation will help the Legislature take this big step forward for our city and state.

I thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karines Reyes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karines Reyes, R.N.
Member of Assembly – District 87

NYC Council Committee on Higher Education
Hearing on Resolution 2022-0121: New Deal for CUNY
Testimony of Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson (Submitted)
February 25, 2022

For decades, the City University of New York (CUNY) has been a crucial path to opportunity and prosperity for New Yorkers of all stripes. Tens of thousands of New Yorkers earn associate, bachelor, graduate, and professional degrees at CUNY institutions every year. As of 2019, approximately 65% of CUNY students were Black and Latino.¹ However, the opportunities that communities here in The Bronx and across the City can gain from CUNY are constrained by the economic factors that many New Yorkers face every day.

For decades, CUNY schools were free to many or all of the students attending. However, once the system moved to an open enrollment model, letting in many more Black and Latino students, a tuition-based model became the standard. Moreover, while the state and federal governments provide many options for grants, aid, and loans, many current and prospective CUNY students face financial hardships in attending these schools. Instead of being a lifeline into a future career and economic stability, CUNY retains barriers to low-income individuals who often have to maintain employment in order to support their families. The New Deal for CUNY is a strong step in the right direction to solve these problems.

First and foremost, the New Deal for CUNY would make CUNY free for all in-state undergraduate students. Tuition would be replaced by public funds, from the redirection of existing financial aid programs such as TAP as well as from the allocation of additional public funds. Eliminating tuition and fees for CUNY students will provide new opportunities for students who are struggling to get by. Instead of these students having to pay thousands of dollars in tuition and fees, they would be able to spend that money supporting themselves and their families.

The New Deal for CUNY also helps students through hiring more academic advisors and mental health professionals. A college degree is the gateway to a more economically secure future. However, many students with the passion and drive to get there still need help in creating a roadmap to graduation. With so many CUNY students being first-generation college students, academic advisors are an essential resource that these students cannot necessarily find elsewhere. Navigating college life is a new experience for most of these students, and hiring more advisors will help more of them achieve their goals.

CUNY students will also benefit from more mental health professionals. College is an incredibly stressful period of life for many people – especially the young people who are often independent for the first time. Adding to this, challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, racism, food and housing insecurity, and having to maintain a job in addition to schoolwork are all added stressors. Mental health professionals on campus can prove to be an essential lifeline for students who may be struggling. Getting the ratios of mental health counselors and academic advisors in line with national standards will be an important step forward.

Lastly, the New Deal for CUNY also provides more justice to the hardworking professors who make CUNY a world-class system of higher education. Right now, far too many CUNY educators are hired on an adjunct basis, earning lower wages and with less job security. These jobs should be converted to full-time permanent positions. Raising the ratio of full-time faculty to students to be more in line with national standards will elevate the student experience while also giving the current adjunct faculty the status and compensation that they've earned.

Overall, I am deeply supportive of the New Deal for CUNY. As a proud alumna of Baruch College, I know firsthand the benefits a CUNY education can provide. The Council should pass Resolution 0121 under consideration today supporting the passage of the New Deal for CUNY in the state legislature. I commend Councilman Justin Brannan for his leadership in sponsoring this resolution as well as the

members of the Bronx delegation in the council who have cosponsored. I also commend all the members of the Bronx delegation in the state legislature who have sponsored the legislation, including prime sponsor Assemblywoman Karines Reyes. Together, we can work to ensure that CUNY students are getting their fair share and create the strongest opportunities for them to succeed.

ⁱ http://www.cuny.edu/irdatabook/rpts2_AY_current/ENRL_0015_RACE_TOT_PCT.rpt.pdf

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BUDGET & REVENUE

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FINANCE
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SENATOR
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Testimony for the New York City Council Higher Education Hearing

Friday, Feb 25, 2022

My name is Andrew Gounardes and I'm the State Senator for the 22nd district, representing southern Brooklyn.

I want to ask that the New York City Council Higher Education Committee vote for a resolution in support of the New Deal for CUNY ([S4461A/A5843](#)). The New Deal for CUNY is a five-year framework to reverse decades of disinvestment in CUNY colleges. It would inact free undergraduate tuition, set minimum staff-to-student ratios for full-time faculty, academic advisors and mental health counselors, require pay parity for adjunct faculty and rebuild CUNY's neglected infrastructure.

The CUNY system has suffered from decades of austerity and disinvestment, and the per-student state funding for CUNY has fallen 38% since 1990 and 18% since 2008 — causing tuition hikes, reduced services, over reliance on underpaid adjuncts and shortages of full-time faculty and staff. I have heard stories from my own constituents, who have experienced ceiling tiles falling on their heads and students who have to hold down multiple jobs, making it difficult to finish school.

As we are looking to find ways to support our economic growth and expand job prospects for youth in this City, we must look to A New Deal for CUNY as a key part of this solution. The CUNY system serves the highest percentage of working and middle-class students in New York City (60% of its students have family incomes below \$30,000), and its student body is one of the most diverse in the nation. 79% of CUNY students work full time in our state after graduating, paying an estimated \$4.2 billion in state income taxes in 2019, [according to a recent report from the NYC Comptroller's office.](#)

While In her executive budget proposal last month, Governor Hochul committed to investing roughly \$120 million to CUNY operations, The New Deal for CUNY, when enacted, would direct \$1.7 billion in new operating aid to CUNY alone.

Taken together, the CUNY New Deal represents a comprehensive approach to improving the student experience at the City University: providing the academic, social and emotional supports students need to stay on track to graduate while reducing the need for them to seek outside income to cover tuition and other expenses.

I am proud to be a CUNY graduate. I know first-hand what a truly accessible, high-quality institution it is that has afforded all New Yorkers the chance to go to college. In the decade and a half since, New York

CHAIRMAN

State has made the conscious choice to disinvest from CUNY. Today, we have the chance to do better: to re-invest in our students, and re-invest in our city. The moment for a New Deal for CUNY is now.

CIVIL SERVICE & PENSIONS

FINANCE

HIGHER EDUCATION

INSURANCE

Sincerely,



Andrew S. Gouardes
Member of Senate



SENATOR
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23 February 2022

Dear City Council:

As BMCC CUNY Language Immersion Program (CLIP) instructors, we are writing to bring the following urgent matter to your attention and to respectfully ask for your support for all CLIP programs across CUNY campuses

Our program, which consistently retains, prepares, and propels immigrant students into BMCC academic programs, is facing a crisis of underfunding. Unfortunately, the budget for our program, which is down 18 percent from that of the previous year, has not been increased to accommodate our contractual salary raises. This shortfall has resulted in staffing and operations cuts that negatively impact our wonderful program in a variety of ways. For example, we can no longer provide supplemental tutoring for our students. We have also been forced to reduce our counseling, tech support and office services, as well as to forego the purchase of a variety of instructional materials.

On top of the foregoing, we are worried that we will be unable to offer students the same number of classes next year, which would curtail our ability to serve as many students as we typically serve. We typically maintain a waiting list of students seeking to enroll in our program. It would be disheartening and very unfortunate to see our waiting list grow while the number of classes we are able to provide shrinks.

As you know, CLIP, through content-based instruction, helps prepare immigrant students to meet the challenges of college-level English classes and college more generally. Former CLIP students have gone on to become successful lawyers, medical professionals, computer programmers, and community leaders. A 2019 study conducted at BMCC concluded that 58 percent of CLIP students matriculate into BMCC academic programs. In short, **money for more CLIP classes is money that goes directly toward increasing enrollment at BMCC.** In addition to the 58 percent of CLIP students who matriculate into BMCC, many CLIP students matriculate into other CUNY schools and workforce programs that lead to significant economic and career gains in their lives.

At a time when meeting enrollment goals is challenging, reducing access to success programs like CLIP will discourage even more students from matriculating. During the fall 2021 semester, CLIP at BMCC was unable to register approximately 120 students due to limited capacity. These students were left either to wait for a future semester or to attend CLIP at a different site. A budget that does not permit CLIP to accommodate so many students will likely lead to many being discouraged from matriculating at BMCC at all.

Recently, Governor Hochul spoke of the crucial role that CUNY community colleges provide in assisting low-income immigrant students in realizing their educational and professional goals. CLIP, as the point of entry for many of these students, is critical to their success, having served as their springboard to college for 27 years.

We hope you will do whatever you possibly can to help support our wonderful program with an adequate budget so that we can continue providing excellent preparation to students who are en route to study at BMCC. Please let us know if you have any questions or would like to meet with us for further discussion.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this urgent issue.

Best,

Raoul Calleja
Kyra Cubukcuoglu
Jasna Dobrila
Catherine Grillo

Gretchen Irwin-Harada
Laurel Kallen
Mary Poole
Iris Shickerling-Georgia

Joshua Stark
Erik Stowers
Louise Stracke

Statement by HTC President Rich Maroko regarding Res 0020-2022

February 25, 2022

The Hotel and Gaming Trades Council (HTC) is proud to stand alongside Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, the CUNY Rising Alliance, Finance Chairman Brannan and Higher Education Chairman Dinowitz in supporting the New York City Council's resolution encouraging the state legislature to pass the New Deal for CUNY.

Our union represents almost 40,000 hospitality workers who have been deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with over 50% of them still unemployed and no longer receiving unemployment insurance. New York hotels have been the source of incredible, middle-class jobs. For many of our members, these jobs enabled them to not only afford their bills, but also put money in savings for the first time, including savings accounts for their children's college tuition. Unfortunately, the economic crisis caused by the pandemic has temporarily changed that for thousands of hotel workers, leaving them with limited income and putting access to higher education further out of reach.

More than ever, we need to prioritize providing access to free and high-quality higher education to New Yorkers. Our members know the value of public higher education because many of them and their family members have attended CUNY, which has been a ladder to the middle class for generations of low-income students, immigrant students and first-generation college students.

A fully-funded public higher education system in New York City is essential to our economic recovery as our communities continue to heal from the pandemic. But CUNY's funding issues pre-date the COVID public health and associated economic crisis. There has been a 38% decline in the state's per student financial commitment to CUNY's senior colleges since 1990. After years of disinvestment by the state, CUNY needs a more full-time faculty, advisors and mental health counselors. CUNY students need infrastructure that supports safe learning and teaching. And CUNY should be free—and well-funded—as it once was.

There is no time to waste and we urge all members of the council to support the New Deal for CUNY resolution.



**TESTIMONY OF THE
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP
BEFORE THE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
ON
OVERSIGHT: CUNY START AND DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION
FEBRUARY 25TH, 2022
New York, NY**

Good morning, my name is Ayesha Schmitt and I am the Higher Education Coordinator for NYPIRG, the New York Public Interest Research Group. NYPIRG is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, research and advocacy organization. Consumer protection, environmental preservation, higher education, mass transit, and civic empowerment are our principal areas of concern. We advocate for a free and quality public higher education to make one of the most important institutions in New York State accessible to all and to boost racial and economic equity. Today, we share our support for the City Council resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to pass the New Deal for CUNY. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

During the past decade, New York State passed budget after budget that provided stagnant funding for higher education, while raising tuition costs and leaving too many students ineligible for financial aid programs. And while there is a lot to like in the Governor’s executive budget for SFY22-23, the overall increase in state aid will not reverse the decade-long state divestment in CUNY.

Now, CUNY is experiencing an existential crisis of dropping enrollment, resulting in dropping revenue which, in turn, undercuts CUNY’s ability to bolster services that attract new students. The pandemic triggered enrollment losses at CUNY that exceeded 21,000 full-time undergraduates when comparing Fall 2019 and Fall 2021. It will take major new investments to right the ship – and it will be money well budgeted. The research into the economic benefits of investing in higher education have been overwhelmingly positive, with CUNY graduates working in New York paying an estimated \$4.2 billion in State income taxes, and the average bachelor’s degree holder contributing \$278,000 more to local economies than the average high school graduate through direct spending over the course of a lifetime.¹

¹ Rothwell, Jonathan. “What colleges do for local economies: A direct measure based on consumption.” Brookings, July 28, 2016, www.brookings.edu/research/what-colleges-do-for-local-economies-a-direct-measure-based-on-consumption/.

CUNY is a critical engine for NY's economy, for racial and economic equity, and can power New York's COVID recovery. Not only that, but college has benefits that extend well beyond individual economic returns. A primary function of postsecondary education is to develop college students' involvement in the nation's civic life and democratic processes, engender a sense of social responsibility, and develop an appreciation and respect for differences across cultures and peoples. College students are more likely to vote and volunteer, in addition to paying more in taxes upon graduation.

NEW DEAL FOR CUNY TO PHASE OUT TUITION AND SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

Beginning in 2011, nearly constant hikes have raised tuition rates by more than 42%. When factoring inflation, the automatic tuition hikes at CUNY have far exceeded the growth in the economy. These significant increases in tuition have resulted in students shouldering more and more of the costs of running NY's public college institutions. While New York's substantial financial aid and opportunity programs have shielded some students from these hikes, there are many who fall through the eligibility cracks or who cannot apply for reasons outside of their control.

New Deal for CUNY legislation (S.4461/A.5843 Gounardes/Reyes) would support CUNY students by phasing out tuition, setting better student-to-teacher ratios so that students can get the classes they need to graduate and receive adequate individual attention. These policies together will make CUNY attractive and attainable for prospective new students.

NEW DEAL FOR CUNY FOR EXPANDED CAMPUS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The need for added mental health resources at college campuses could not be clearer. With limited counselors on campus, students may experience long wait-times for services or difficulty being connected to other resources. Whether it is grief counseling or help needed for juggling classes, work, and other responsibilities, students are struggling to schedule appointments with mental health experts on campus when they need them most.

Currently CUNY only has one mental health advisor for every 2,700 students.² Students like Randy Garcia, a sophomore at the City College of New York, struggled to schedule an appointment with a counselor when they felt stressed and burnt out, sometimes having to wait weeks or months to get an appointment. Anna Compton, a student at Hunter College, was continuously referred off

² Professional Staff Congress - CUNY, Executive Budget Testimony, February 4, 2020, <https://nyassembly.gov/write/upload/publichearing/001101/002253.pdf>.

campus despite asking for on-campus assistance, which then led to longer wait times for a counseling session.

Students are also struggling receiving proper advisement to be able to graduate on time. Melissa Dominguez and Anna Compton, two seniors from Hunter College both ran into trouble with long wait times and miscommunication when trying to schedule appointments with advisors to enroll in classes needed to graduate. Both were later caught off guard when they found out that they are a few credits short for graduation. This only then adds to stress and time it takes for students to graduate.

That's why NYPIRG supports the City Council resolution calling for the State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, the New Deal for CUNY.

Thank you.

February 29, 2020

**Testimony presented at Higher Education Committee of City Council
by Lorraine Cohen PhD, LaGuardia Community College, CUNY,
February 25, 2022**

My name is Lorraine Cohen, I am a Professor of Sociology in the Social Science Department at LaGuardia Community College I have taught at CUNY for approximately 25 years of my professional career. During that time, I have been a witness to the dramatic decline of investment in public higher education. As a faculty member of a community college, I am especially cognizant of the impact of budget cuts made by the State to the budgets of community colleges. We believe our students deserve not just an “adequate education,” but a first- class education. I hope the Governor can be persuaded to act on these values.

While the Governor has increased funding on a state level, community colleges rely on City Funding. We are part of the Coalition NDC that is fighting for free tuition, more money for professionals trained in mental health counseling, money to increase the full time ratio of faculty to students including lines lecture lines that would be open to current part timers on.

I can point to the many cuts that have been made in important services to students including cuts in library hours and staff members, the Writing Center, College lab technicians, Tutors etc. Counselors, Tutors, etc. Faculty who received reassigned time to coordinate and evaluate academic programs have experienced cutbacks in the reassigned time they receive for doing this labor- intensive work.

A long- standing issue is investment in developmental education and ESL.I want to focus particularly on the current plan implemented by the Central CUNY administration regarding the placement and testing of students in remedial reading, writing, and English as a Second Language. The state and city have a long history of resistance to providing the necessary funding to support developmental education, otherwise known as “remediation,” and English as a Second Language. It goes back to the implementation of Open Admission in 1969. The changes in policy I am referring to is the implementation of a policy that requires community college faculty who teach developmental reading, writing, math, and ESL to replace the instrument that they have used for many years to determine placement in developmental courses and ESL with an algorithm, a number based on weighting certain factors, approved by CUNY administration.

I contend that the decision to replace the CUNY Assessment Test in Writing, (the CATW), with an is motivated in large part by budgetary concerns, rather than doing what is educationally best for our students. Large numbers of students who come to CUNY require additional work in basic skills, reading, writing, and math. Many are relatively recent immigrants they need to strengthen their language skills. This should not be a surprise. The majority of our students are Black, Latinx and Asian. They are older,

working, and often parents. They have attended public schools that are ethnically and racially segregated, with fewer resources than middle class schools. Their parents often have not attended college. Until the conditions that lead to unequal educational experiences change there will be students who require additional academic preparation.

The administration decided to substitute an algorithm for the CATW. This algorithm weights certain factors regarding such things as GPA, number of absences, Regents scores etc. The CATW, is a test designed by CUNY faculty. Historically faculty have been compensated for reading and assessing the level of competence of these students. I have spoken with many faculty and Department Chairs who teach developmental skills and ESL, They are very concerned about the ability of this algorithm to accurately place students. They believe that the algorithm cannot adequately identify students who need ESL and accurately judge which students require remedial reading and writing. Students who are older adults, who come from abroad or attend specialized high schools, cannot be assessed using this instrument. It is unclear what has happened to these students, but it is possible that their disappearance is one of the causes of lower enrollment in some of the community colleges. CUNY central has implemented a policy to end free standing remedial courses in writing and ESL. There has already been a large drop in in ESL courses throughout the community colleges.

What has happened the students who need remediation and ES? CUNY Management has decided to place almost all students who require skills and language development into Continuing Education programs, this policy is conveniently cheaper than paying full time faculty and adjuncts from the credit bearing academic departments. Continuing Education teachers many of whom are part time, are paid much less than academic faculty and have fewer benefits and job security. This is yet another example of exploiting a part time labor force.

Meaningful consultation with faculty who are specialists in developmental education and ESL has not taken place. Normally when such a huge change is being planned a pilot program put into place to objectively evaluate the claims that its proponents make about the efficacy of the new instrument. At CUNY this has not been the case.

While CUNY Start and the other Continuing Education language programs may serve the needs of some students, one size does not fit all. There are good academic reasons to keep most of these courses in the credit bearing academic side of the college. Students can receive credits in courses they are taking along with developmental courses so that they see themselves advancing towards a degree. They are not separated from the other students. They are treated just like any other college student.

I urge CUNY administrators to consult with faculty in the community colleges who have expertise in these areas and hear what they have to say. The needs of our students must

come first. We urge the Governor, the Mayor and the state and city legislative bodies to significantly increase their investment in CUNY, restore funding for developmental education and ESL to achieve the goals that have been outlined in New Deal for CUNY.

February 24, 2022

Dear Committee Members,

I am an associate professor at Queens College, CUNY. I direct the MAT CHED 1-6 programs. The programs I direct prepare more graduates to become public New York City education teachers than any other institution in the New York Metropolitan area. Many of our graduates also go on to become school administrators and educational leaders.

Prior to entering higher education, I was a New York City public school teacher for 15 years. In fact, in 1996-97, my third grade class was featured in a nine-part year-long series in *The New York Times* called “Class 3-223: Mr. Kesler’s Struggle.” (You can read the entire series of articles at www.tedsclassroom.com). Despite earning an Ed.D, becoming an associate professor, authoring a professional book, numerous national and international presentations and publications, I have actually taken a pay cut by joining the full-time faculty at CUNY. Yet, I have turned down offers at private institutions that offer much better salaries and benefits out of my commitment to New York City public education and CUNY’s mission. In addition, since joining my department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education in fall, 2007, I have seen our full-time faculty depleted. Full-time faculty have retired with no new replacements. Currently, we have no full-time faculty for math or social studies education! Each year, at least half of my expenses for conference attendance and presentations are out-of-pocket. I have the same desktop computer in my office since 2012.

A New Deal for CUNY is sorely needed. I indicated above why we need to open more lines for full-time faculty. In addition, CUNY needs state funding to:

- Make CUNY free again (5 years – \$796 million).
- Increase mental health and academic counseling services for students (5 years – \$40 million).
- Invest in capital projects to renew CUNY buildings for greater safety and capacity.

These funds are [some of the best uses of tax-payers money, as a strong CUNY directly benefits all New Yorkers](#). It’s a long-term investment that more than pays off. Please do the right thing by making A New Deal for CUNY a reality.

Sincerely,

Ted Kesler, Ed.D.

TESTIMONY OF DR. JAMES DAVIS, PRESIDENT
PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
FEBRUARY 25, 2022

Oversight - CUNY Start and Developmental Education and
Res 0020-2022 on The New Deal for CUNY

Good morning, Chair Dinowitz and members of the committee. It is good to be with you for this inaugural hearing of the Committee of Higher Education under its new leadership. I am James Davis, President of the Professional Staff Congress, the union representing 30,000 faculty and professional staff at CUNY. I am joined today by Dr. Lorraine Cohen, Professor at LaGuardia Community College, and Dr. Felicia Wharton, Lecturer at the Brooklyn Educational Opportunity Center and the PSC Treasurer. We are grateful to the committee for holding this important hearing.

CUNY Start and Remediation Programs at CUNY

Remediation programs, such as CUNY Start and the CUNY Language Immersion Program, are essential to students' ability to gain the vital skills to succeed in college and to graduate. According to a 2018 study by CUNY, the number of students who need remediation is significant - approximately 80% of New York City public high school graduates enter CUNY's community colleges in need of remediation.¹ This need, it is safe to assume, has grown during the pandemic.

Every semester, CUNY welcomes new students with high school diplomas or the equivalent who lack some of the academic skills needed to succeed in credit-bearing college classes. For students with major remedial needs, CUNY has established pre-matriculation programs that provide full-time academic support and immersive skills-development curricula. As you'll hear from my colleagues, the positive impact that remediation programs make on the path of a student's academic career is profound.

Over time the process by which students are placed in programs has changed, shifting students away from a more rigorous academic experience to a lesser one. Additionally, in the past our members who taught these courses were full-time faculty and now, many are contingent faculty, paid hourly or on a contract basis. This shift exacerbates wage disparities at the university and deprofessionalizes the work, which is unfair to students and our members.

The PSC welcomes the committee's review of remediation programs at CUNY. We look forward to working with you to strengthen them in ways that support students and offer our members the resources to provide students the services they deserve.

¹ During the study period, approximately 80 percent of fall freshmen in associate degree programs required remediation in at least one subject area. Starting to Succeed: The Impact of CUNY Start on Academic Momentum - [gateway_brief_final.pdf \(cuny.edu\)](#)

A New Deal for CUNY

We are grateful to the members of this committee who support the New Deal for CUNY resolution. This is a pivotal moment for CUNY, and your yes vote on the resolution introduced today will show our state legislators that public higher education is a critical priority and a smart allocation of the state's resources. Fully enacted, the New Deal for CUNY will reverse the current enrollment trend and enhance educational quality, offering students the support they deserve by:

- Hiring more advisors, mental health counselors, and full-time faculty
- Achieving pay parity for adjunct faculty and racial diversity in the professoriate
- And funding overdue capital improvements on our campuses
- It will also return CUNY to a tuition-free institution, as it was for more than 100 years

Our students have a distinctive profile:

- Over 80 percent of incoming CUNY undergraduates are New York City high school graduates.
- Half of CUNY students come from households with annual incomes below \$30,000, and 36% have reported food insecurity.
- 80% are people of color.
- 44% are in the first generation of their families to attend college.
- 13% are supporting children.
- 35% are foreign-born.

Investing in CUNY pays clear dividends for New York State - according to a report issued last March by the New York City Comptroller.²

- Nearly 80% of CUNY graduates stay in New York State.
- CUNY graduates working in New York State in 2019 earned a combined \$57 billion (\$67,000 on average), \$28.6 billion more than they would have earned without a post-secondary degree.
- Those same CUNY graduates paid an estimated \$4.2 billion in state income taxes.
- CUNY graduates represent 10% of the private workforce in New York State.

I don't need to tell you that this is a unique moment in Albany, and we need your support to help realize CUNY's promise as the People's University.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

² [Comptroller Stringer Analysis: CUNY Graduates Earn Combined \\$57 Billion Annually. Highlighting CUNY's Significant Contributions to Local and State Economies](#), March 2021



**New York City Council Committee on Higher Education
Preliminary Budget Hearing
Submitted by Lia Guzman Genao, Junior, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Friday, February 25, 2022**

Good Morning everyone. My name is Lia Guzman Genao, I am a Junior at John Jay College of Criminal Justice majoring in Law & Society. I would like to thank the New York City Council and the Committee on Higher Education for the opportunity to testify at today's hearing. I am here today to share my story on the financial struggles I and many other CUNY students have experienced throughout our college careers.

As a first-generation immigrant student, I received little to no guidance or support from anyone when entering college. I was left to figure out the difficult financial aid processes by myself. This, along with many other circumstances that were out of my control resulted in my inability of getting any federal or state aid in my first year of college. Needless to say, anxiety built up inside of me because I knew that neither I nor my parents were going to be able to cover these costs. I also knew that if I wanted to succeed and build a future for myself, I needed to attain a college degree. This left me with no other option than to take out a student loan for my first year of college. Last semester, I had to resort to having two jobs while also being a full-time student on top of extracurricular activities in order to cover my expenses. This not only had a negative impact on my academics but on my mental and physical well-being as well.

This experience is not unique to me. In fact, many of my peers are experiencing these issues. CUNY students come from many different backgrounds, a lot of us come from low-income households, some students are parents and others are full-time workers. Tuition costs are only rising, and we are not receiving the financial support we need in order to thrive in college. Affording tuition is just one of our expenses, we also must cover costs like rent, food, transportation, healthcare, and more. CUNY students are also experiencing mental health issues, housing, and food insecurity at concerning rates.

As a collective, we must work toward the betterment of all CUNY students, a way to do that is by alleviating the financial burdens we are facing. The New Deal for CUNY provides free undergraduate tuition and many other investments which would empower students. This investment into students will provide a huge relief for us, we no longer will have to worry about the rising tuition costs. Free tuition means that students will be able to invest more time into their academic and professional development. For many students, free tuition means that they will not have to choose between paying rent or paying tuition. Passing the New Deal for CUNY is essential if we want to ensure the social and economic mobility of students.

YOUNG INVINCIBLES

I am asking that the committee urges the New State Legislature to pass the New Deal for CUNY for a brighter and better future for all CUNY students. Thank you for your time.

Board of Trustees Testimony: Teddy's House

I am Susan DiRaimo an Adjunct Lecturer from Lehman since 1995 and CCNY from 1981 in English and English As A Second Language .

I am also a retired Registered Nurse and Nurse Practitioner receiving my education from both CCNY in Languages and BSN and NP from Lehman. I worked at Visiting Nurse Service of New York for 25 years on the weekend while teaching as an Adjunct during the week.

I come to you today to ask you for a State and City budget that takes into account the needs of the students and workers at CUNY. For too long CUNY has not been adequately funded. We need to get back to No Tuition For Students. We need more faculty and counselors at CUNY.

I want to tell you about my students and my Business Writing Class I taught in the Fall of 2020 in the Bronx. Students have to write a Business Proposal. One student's proposal was Teddy's House.

My student's son was murdered outside of his high school in the Bronx. Now my student has been working hard on a proposal to help young people in the Bronx by tutoring high school students and preparing young people for college. Her son was ready to graduate from high school but instead there was a fight and he got stabbed to death. My student has had to work very hard to pay for her tuition all the while trying to get funds for her project: Teddy's House. We should be able to fund both community colleges and senior colleges.

The Board of Trustees enacted tuition many years ago. For 100 years tuition was free. The state and the city must find the funds to hire more Full Time faculty. I received and still receive only an Adjunct salary. Adjuncts need to be given Full Time Lines. I teach three classes on two campuses.

Our society needs people to fulfill their dreams and not have tuition as a barrier. CUNY needs to have more Full Time lines. We have a new Governor and will have a new Mayor. The Board must ask for the billions of dollars this remarkable institution deserves.

My name is Adela Effendy and I have worked with the CUNY Start/Math Start programs at LaGuardia Community College and at our CUNY Start/Math Start Central Office, in various capacities, during the last eight years of my professional life. While I cannot substitute for the voices of our staff and students, I have had considerable time facilitating direct practice work and would like to share the essence of the CUNY Start/Math Start programs, including its level of support to students who have remediation needs.

As I'm attending one of the virtual classes I was just recently a Student Advisor for, I observed our Math Instructor expertly attend to the needs and inquires of students genuinely confused and intimidated by what they were learning – I heard what felt like self-doubt in one of our student's voice, followed by the comment "you know, I was never good at Math and at 42, I'm still learning how to do the basics; I'm sure everyone else is getting this", followed by validation from other students - "no, some of us just graduated high school and we're still learning the basics, too". In my role at CUNY Start/Math Start, I wear multiple hats – along with advising students, I also oversee our entire recruitment process and very often have individual and group conversations that include students' varied narratives about English and Math, and about how they've never felt like English and Math (more often, Math) were accessible to them – often times, during the recruitment process, the first time they may be hearing about remediation would be through our program, which can make for some challenging, initial conversation. Our level of engagement with students from the very first call is intentional and consistent – as we build in multiple layers of support for students before they even step into our first virtual, in-person or hybrid classes, they have had numerous contacts and connections with our staff members. Countless times, students have shared their multiple responsibilities of balancing home, work and school; of having to navigate housing and/or food insecurity; of having to be the first person in their family to attend college; of being survivors of intimate partner violence; of physical and/or mental health challenges; the list can go on. The challenges of navigating a huge institution like CUNY coupled with having remediation needs can and has been mitigated through a program like CUNY Start/Math Start – where students can bravely disclose what they feel comfortable with, while working on their academic basic skills, all the meanwhile multiple staff members, along with students themselves, are working behind the scenes and on the front lines to respond to and support students with said needs.

CUNY Start/Math Start is unique in that our pedagogy is inclusive of inquiry, small group work, intentional scaffolding and uplifts parts of the universal design framework to ensure that students' needs and strengths are being met. It's an intensive, yet supportive program; academically rigorous, yet confidence-building space for students; and an intentional space for students to begin owning their education. From students themselves, they have let staff in our program know the following: "I kind of like Math now!" (huge progress for some!), "I can go into my Math credit course more confidently" and "I am excited to continue college". Of course, we cannot ignore the environmental anomalies that continue to act as barriers for our students' success – much more than this idea of "safety", we aim to provide an academic and socioemotional "sanctuary" for students to truly thrive in all that they are and aim to be – in both academics and in their personal lives.

We ride the constant wave of emotions with our students through it all – from the moment they realize they have remediation to the moment they attend a highly individualized, supportive information session to engaging in healthy, supportive academic struggle in our programs to some of them returning full circle and tutoring for our programs. This is testament to the incredible resilience, strengths and skillsets that our students are coming in with. But this is also a testament to the kind of spaces that are fostered from a program like CUNY Start/Math Start – guiding students to become their best academic and whole selves. I implore you all to consider the ways in which CUNY Start/Math Start has impacted the academic landscape of new and incoming CUNY students with remediation needs, and all the ways in which it has potential impact to support students who need a strong, intentional, highly supportive program to guide them through their educational trajectory.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

02/22/2022

Good morning counsel and to whom it may concern,

My name is Abigail Delgado. I am testifying on behalf of cuny students, particularly students of John Jay College. I am a junior in John Jay College and I am here today to urge you to pass the New Deal for Cuny (s.4461-A/A.5843). After the pandemic occurred, the economy has not been well. There are jobs, but not enough hours are being made. My parents work two jobs, day and night, yet they are still struggling to pay my and my brother's tuition. My parents earn minimum wage, and these tuition fees keep increasing, making it harder and harder to pay tuition. My parents, along with others, want a good education for their children but are constantly worried about tuition. The New Deal for Cuny would allow students and parents not to be overloaded with tuition fees and focus on their education. In addition, it will provide an opportunity for the economy to get better, for there to be more hours in jobs. I hope you come to see the importance it is for students and parents who need help with tuition. Signing this bill would allow individuals to be able to be more economically stable and an opportunity for students to further their education. Thank you very much for your time and may you have a lovely rest of your day.

Sincerely,

Abigail Delgado

John Jay Student