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STUDENT, FACULTY AND STAFF HIGHER EDUCATION PLATFORM New York State Budget, Fiscal Year 2026

CUNY and SUNY are critical engines for NY's economy and for racial and economic equity.

Governor Hochul has proposed small increases in funding for CUNY and SUNY and to freeze tuition rates, but her Executive Budget falls short of the reinvestment needed to make up for a generation of disinvestment. That historic disinvestment, coupled with mounting federal threats, leaves our students, faculty, staff, and institutions hanging in the balance. Our coalition shares a vision for free and fully funded public higher education. As a step toward achieving that goal, we urge the Legislature to expand the Governor's Opportunity Promise Scholarship to offer free tuition for students starting at age 18 at any SUNY or CUNY college offering degree programs in the designated high-demand fields. Increased funding for public university systems and financial aid is the surest way to change lives and strengthen the economy. New York needs a *New Deal for Public Higher Education*.

Increase State Investment For A New Deal for CUNY. Since the introduction of the New Deal for CUNY bill in 2021, \$500M in new operating money has been allocated to CUNY. We've made great progress. But CUNY is still vastly understaffed and there is much more to do to realize the dream of a fully funded, free and quality CUNY in the next five years. Funding the New Deal for CUNY will reverse years of disinvestment and empower CUNY to fulfill New York's most pressing economic and social needs. The Legislature should pass the **New Deal for CUNY legislation (S.2274/A.1727)** and increase CUNY Senior College operating budgets by **\$198.5 million to hire full-time faculty, academic advisors and mental health counselors and fully fund CUNY's mandatory needs and unfunded operating support.**

Fully and Fairly Fund SUNY State-Operated Campuses. We appreciate recent increases in funding and the Governor's proposed \$114 million increase in operating aid. However, the majority of state-operated campuses—17 out of 29—still have budget deficits due to SUNY's inequitable allocation of state funds. We urge you to **directly allocate \$102.1 million to the 17 distressed campuses** within the budget. This equitable distribution based on campus need will give campuses the resources they need to succeed and prevent further unnecessary cuts to academic programs, faculty, and staff. We also request an additional **\$110 million across the SUNY system** to support program enhancements and to cover the costs of recent enrollment growth.

Support Students' Basic Needs, Including Free Student MetroCards. With the cost of living skyrocketing, tuition and fees are not the only financial barriers to a college degree. We urge the Legislature to enhance programs that support student success, including: **\$1 million for the CUNY University Student Senate (USS) Student Free MetroCard pilot program; \$20 million to maintain and expand campus child care centers, support campus food pantries, increase SNAP/WIC enrollment, bolster services for housing insecure or homeless students, and hire more life-saving mental health counselors (especially counselors of color) at CUNY and SUNY.** The Legislature should also fund the **State Education Department's program to enhance services for students with disabilities (\$6 million) and increase support for mandatory disability funding (\$4.1 million at CUNY and \$10 million at SUNY).**

Stabilize and Increase Community College Funding. Community colleges are the first entryway to higher education for many New Yorkers and a critical part of the state's workforce development. While Governor Hochul has proposed flat funding and a modest program to provide free tuition and textbooks for enrollment in certain community college majors, the needs of the community colleges and their current students are broader and last year's funding level was insufficient. The Legislature should create a stable minimum funding floor for community colleges at 100% of the 2019-2020 funding level to offset pandemic-era impacts (**\$11.7 million for CUNY and \$12.4 million for SUNY**). Additionally, it is time for the state to meet its statutory obligation to fund 40% of the community college operating budgets. An investment of **\$101.7 million at CUNY and \$100 million at SUNY** would bring the State closer to that obligation.

Expand Financial Aid and Opportunity Programs. TAP is the state's top financial aid program, allowing access to education to hundreds of thousands of students. The Legislature should build on improvements last year to meet the needs of today's students. TAP should be reformed to **restore awards for graduate students (S.3810) and cover graduate student employee fees, extend eligibility for students with intellectual disabilities (S.3369), expand award time limits from four to six years (S.3779), increase the maximum TAP award to SUNY tuition rates, and make aid available in the summer and winter.** Funding for Bundy Aid for independent institutions should be increased to previous levels of **\$100 million**. Although Opportunity Programs such as SEEK, College Discovery, CUNY LEADS, the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC), and Higher Education Opportunity Program (HEOP) increase college retention and completion rates, funding for these programs was removed from the Governor's Executive Budget. **The Legislature should reverse cuts to these programs totaling \$9 million and increase funding by 20%.**

Provide Capital Investments and Permanent State Support to SUNY Hospitals. SUNY's public teaching hospitals at Downstate, Upstate, and Stony Brook have long suffered financial neglect by the state and need a restoration of financial support. Thankfully, the State's plan to close the University Hospital at Downstate last year was resoundingly rejected by the community. This year, Downstate needs a capital investment (**\$1B+**) to modernize the hospital. It is critical that the plan forward for SUNY Downstate is based on **community healthcare needs and maintains core inpatient services** and the emergency department. In addition, **Upstate University Hospital requires a capital investment to build a new emergency department**, as the current one is outdated and cannot support patient volume. We welcome the Governor's \$200 million proposal to accomplish this. Finally, we urge you to **permanently cover the SUNY hospitals' debt service costs and employee fringe benefit costs**. Every other state agency entity receives these benefits, and it is time to provide equitable treatment for these crucial safety net hospitals.

Invest in Infrastructure and Fund Sustainability. Classrooms, facilities, and laboratories must be equipped to ensure students and educators can thrive, and to strengthen New York's workforce. However, only 8% of CUNY buildings are in a state of good repair, with an average age of more than fifty years and an overwhelming reliance on fossil fuels. SUNY campuses throughout the state—not just the university centers—need big capital investments. Public university campuses must be decarbonized, and should be sites of new public renewable energy projects and thermal energy networks. Investing in sustainable facilities will help mitigate climate change, improve the health of our communities, and create high-paying construction jobs. We urge the Legislature to **directly allocate funds to support CUNY and SUNY capital requests**.