



NEWS RELEASE

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NYPIRG STATEMENT ON PASSAGE OF THE NEW YORK CITY BUDGET

Budget Priorities Highlight Student Issues Including CUNY Funding and Mass Transit

NYPIRG applauds the City Council and Mayor for a final budget which prioritizes college student initiatives. This year's budget increases NYC funding to CUNY's Campus Children's Centers and services by \$600,000 to \$1.1 million dollars — the first time funding has been increased since the 1980s. This investment is a critical step in addressing student parents' child care needs, and we urge that it be paired with an ambitious plan to promote these services to students and the broader NYC community to encourage enrollment.

Funding for the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) was increased by \$42 million (\$86.4 million total) – part of a multi-year plan to increase enrollment to 25,000 students by 2018. Considered a national model for “free college,” the City and State should look to scale ASAP to reach every CUNY student.

This year's budget maintained the City's support for CUNY's community colleges, likely avoiding a tuition increase, and for the NYC Council Merit Scholarship (\$14.9 million). We are concerned that the anticipated growth in enrollment may decrease the scholarship's per-student allocation. We urge the Council and Mayor to guard against award erosion for future budgets so that students continue to reap the full benefits of this important initiative.

This year's budget added \$500,000 to the CUNY Citizenship Now! program (\$2.5 million total). Citizenship Now! provides much needed immigration legal services to CUNY students and throughout New York City. This past year, nearly 4,200 students and community members have been assisted by this initiative.

Lastly, NYPIRG applauds City Council Speaker Corey Johnson and Mayor Bill de Blasio for prioritizing the needs of low-income transit riders in this year's budget by funding Fair Fares. Public transportation serves as New York City's great unifier. But, for hundreds of thousands of low-income New Yorkers, including tens of thousands of students, income has served as a barrier to entry. Many low-income riders have been forced to turn down jobs, refused doctor's appointments, or skip class because the price of a MetroCard has been cost-prohibitive. With the inclusion of Fair Fares in the budget, CUNY students will have greater access to New York City's transit system.

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