



PRESS RELEASE

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For more information:

Ryan Carson, (508) 649-9528

rcarson@nypirg.org

Esperanza Rosenbaum, (914) 715-3206

erosenbaum@nypirg.org

**NEW YORK STATE COLLEGE STUDENTS, FACULTY, ELECTEDS, AND ADVOCATES
DELIVER NO CUTS TO HIGHER EDUCATION PETITION FROM 5,000 STUDENTS
REPRESENTING 64 CUNY, SUNY, and PRIVATE COLLEGES**

(New York) Over 5,000 New Yorkers from 64 CUNY, SUNY, and private universities called on Governor Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Assembly Speaker Heastie to pass a final 2021 State budget that stops years of divestment in a petition delivered on Wednesday.

The virtual event featured student leaders, elected officials, and faculty members who spoke on their experience studying and teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Advocates discussed the progress made in the recently released Assembly and Senate one-house budgets.

Since 2011, the State has underfunded mandatory costs at CUNY and SUNY, slowly starving the institutions and pushing increased costs onto the backs of students and their families—tuition has jumped 42% in that time. NYPIRG found that students have paid over \$2.5 billion in additional tuition dollars to CUNY and SUNY while state support has stagnated and costs have risen.

The public health and economic fall-out from the COVID-19 pandemic has placed even more strain on students, their families, faculty, and our colleges. Balancing the state budget must not add to the crushing financial burden students and their families are experiencing right now. Investing in a college-educated workforce and citizenry is key for supporting a just recovery for individuals and nurturing an economy burdened by COVID-19.

"While working on this petition, I listened to students that are food insecure, their well-being at an all-time low, while trying to stay socially active during these unprecedented times. During NYPIRG's petition campaign, I learned how to do outreach work, organize events, talk to people who are suffering, tell my own story, while renewing my love for public speaking. Today we demand a New Deal for CUNY and SUNY; we demand that the state invest in higher education," said **Abdullah Mohiuddin, City College student and NYPIRG Higher Education Campaign Project Leader.**

"Now more than ever it is time to pass a budget that reflects the working class individuals in New York." said **Juwanie Piquant, Chairwoman of the CUNY University Student Senate (USS).**

The petition called for added revenue to CUNY, SUNY, and non-profit independent colleges, and to reject the cuts proposed in Governor Cuomo's executive budget. Specifically, the petition calls upon legislative leaders to:

- Stop public college tuition hikes;
- Fully fund CUNY and SUNY operating budgets and close historical campus budget gaps to support on-time graduation and safe and quality educational experiences;
- Increase TAP's financial assistance to cover the full-cost of public college tuition and expand TAP to part-time students, graduate students and incarcerated individuals, and making the aid available during winter and summer sessions;
- Stabilize and protect community college funding to withstand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Protect Bundy Aid for independent college students from budget cuts; and
- Expand NY's proven Opportunity Programs to more students.

"The PSC is proud to stand with NYPIRG and the 5000 students who are demanding a State budget that will invest in their future. Our union is in full support of the Legislature's plan for a budget that rejects the Governor's cuts to CUNY funding, closes the TAP Gap, freezes tuition and increases CUNY funding. But CUNY students need more full-time professors, more mental health counselors and advisors. They need adjuncts who are paid fairly and all of New York needs CUNY to be tuition-free again. We urge the Assembly and the Senate to be even more ambitious for CUNY this year; we ask you to raise more revenue through ending tax breaks for the rich, add funding for the professors and counselors students need, and pass the New Deal for CUNY," said **Barbara Bowen, President of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC)**.

"CUNY is the economic engine of the city. Investing in CUNY now will ensure that New York City will fully recover from the pandemic's economic crisis. Over the last 12 months New York's wealthiest residents grew their wealth by over \$150 billion. NY must tax them and invest in the public institutions that serve those most impacted by the pandemic: low income Black and Brown students," said **Lucas Sanchez, Deputy Director, New York Communities for Change (NYCC)**.

"In the last recession, the state turned its back on college students by disinvesting in our state's financial aid system and universities — resulting in a ballooning student debt crisis, and weakened support systems that leave our state's most vulnerable students behind," said **Marissa Muñoz, Northeast Regional Director of Young Invincibles**. "We must not repeat the mistakes of the past. An equitable recovery from COVID-19 demands New York to invest in the next generation and ensure that all students can benefit from higher education — not just those with financial resources and family support."