

The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

January 13, 2022

Dear Governor Hochul:

We write to you as New York labor leaders who know the vital importance of the City University of New York, an institution which many of our members and members' children attend. We ask that you include the CUNY administration's request - backed by the Professional Staff Congress, AFT Local 2334 - for \$313 million in your executive budget, and that you work with the legislature this spring to pass the New Deal for CUNY (S4461/A5843).

CUNY's budget request is the perfect complement to the New Deal for CUNY. The budget request would enable 1075 new full-time faculty hires (500 of which would be available for conversions of existing adjunct positions), as well as increased staff support for students, including mental health counselors. Importantly, CUNY administration has not requested a tuition increase. Fully funding this request in your executive budget will set the stage for passing the New Deal for CUNY in conjunction with the legislature.

The Free Academy of the City of New York, which later became City College, was founded in 1847, and provided free higher education to all New Yorkers. CUNY and its constituent campuses are an expression of the value our great city and state place on economic stability and mobility for those who are not born wealthy. New York must renew its commitment to funding CUNY's mission. The disinvestment of the last decade must be reversed.

Sadly, the state's fidelity to a free, high quality public higher education waned just as the CUNY's student population became majority minority, and in the following years, tuition increased as real wages for working people declined. It is a story that many union members know all too well. CUNY was free and decently funded when the student population was white, but the same educational resources were suddenly too costly when Black and brown New Yorkers sought them in greater numbers.

This year, with a relatively modest commitment from the state, we can reverse decades of racism and classism, and make CUNY the national paradigm of public, urban higher education that it once was.

The New Deal for CUNY (S4461/A5843) phases in over five years, ultimately mandating a ratio of 65 faculty for every 1,000 students, one mental health counselor for every 1,000 students, and one academic advisor for every 600 students. A recent report from the CUNY University Faculty Senate showed that across both CUNY and SUNY campuses, colleges serving large percentages of students of color, have fewer full-time faculty per student. According to the study, white students at New York's public senior colleges have "substantially greater opportunities for full-time instruction" than Black and Hispanic students. This is structural racism in a nutshell, but the defunding of

CUNY harms all working people in New York City, regardless of race. No one person today means for this inequity to persist, and yet it is happening. But the state can fix it.

The New Deal for CUNY also makes CUNY free once again. Tuition-free CUNY worked for more than a century when the student population was majority white, and it can work again, for New York's more diverse working and middle classes that today characterize the student population. And as the NYC Comptroller reported earlier this year, CUNY is a good investment for the whole New York economy and for state revenues. CUNY creates individual and family mobility and stability, but the institution does economic good for all of us.

Funding the CUNY administration's \$313 million dollar budget request could essentially cover the first year of the New Deal for CUNY. Passing the bill will demonstrate the state's commitment in the years ahead to make CUNY all that it once was.

Let's do this together.



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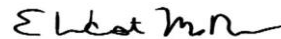
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