

**TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL FABRICANT, PSC FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
PROFESSOR, HUNTER COLLEGE
BEFORE THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

October 16, 2017

CUNY is an imperiled public university. No matter how we choose to represent recent budget decisions made by Albany and NYC decision makers, a few facts remain clear. To begin with, CUNY relies on tuition increases and an expanding census of students to sustain its operations. Public investment, particularly by the State of New York, lags further and further behind the basic operational needs of the University to increase part-time faculty salaries, the number of support staff, and full time faculty. Finally, CUNY's addiction to tuition increases for students and a cheap, exploited part time faculty labor force, is unconscionable.

We do have an opportunity in this moment to correct for these unfortunate trends. The Senate and Assembly passed an enhanced Maintenance of Effort Bill in the spring of 2017 to pay for year over year cost increases like heat, maintenance and increased labor contracts. This bill passed almost without dissent in the Republican Senate and Democratic Assembly. It will reach the Governor's desk in the next two months. We implore each of you to advocate for the Governor to sign it. As trustees and CUNY administrators, it is your duty. The legislation would invest 200 million dollars into an essentially starved CUNY system. A system that educates 75% of the City's high school graduates who attend college. A system that, as a recent Stanford study indicated, moves more poor students into the middle class than every ivy league college plus the U of Chicago, MIT and Stanford combined. CUNY is indispensable to the Black and Brown communities of this City, more largely to the economic health of the City. To do right by students, faculty and staff, however, the State and City need to invest in a CUNY that assures access and quality of education. The present underinvestment has many consequences.

Too often because of underinvestment, students receive their education in overcrowded classes and physically deteriorating physical structures, can't meet with faculty outside

of the classroom, and can't register for oversubscribed classes needed to graduate on time. Faculty are less able to do the teaching and research required of a top notch higher education experience. Finally, staff are overworked and underappreciated for the many ways they assist students.

The Board of Trustees signed on to be the stewards and advocates for CUNY. If you are not publicly advocating for the Governor to sign the MOE enhanced legislation, you are not doing your job. You have individual and collective political capital. You must use it now. I will circle back to where I started. CUNY is fiscally imperiled. You must step up publicly and privately to press the Governor to do the right thing for working class and poor students and families across this City. If you don't act now, then when will you act? If you don't use the political capital you have accumulated for poor students of color whose best shot at a middle class life is CUNY, then for whom will you use it.

We understand that pressing the Governor on this issue does not come without political risk. But you accepted positions as the stewards of this precious resource, CUNY. Now is your time to publicly advocate for CUNY to receive the state investment in year over year cost increases that it deserves. This is not a radical proposal but a bipartisan minimal investment necessary to keep CUNY whole. You must do it with passionate commitment to keep this university healthy; and you must do it now!