

**TESTIMONY OF THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY
CUNY BOARD OF TRUSTEES BOROUGH HEARING
June 19, 2017**

Delivered by Dr. Barbara Bowen, President

Good afternoon, faculty and staff colleagues and members of the Board of Trustees who are in attendance.

As president of the PSC, I speak in support of the testimony you will hear today from PSC officers and members, many of whom will speak about the urgency of addressing the substandard wages of adjunct faculty and of implementing the teaching load reduction to which you agreed as part of the recent contract.

At the root of both of these issues is funding, and for that reason I shall concentrate on an opportunity that exists *this week* to secure a permanent, recurring increase in the major public funding for CUNY. CUNY faculty, staff and students are united in support of the legislation pending in Albany that would provide for annual State funding to CUNY covering—at a minimum—the amount provided the previous year plus the cost of all inflationary increases in mandatory costs, all collective bargaining increases and all fringe benefit increases.

I call on you to commit yourselves right now to doing everything in your power to make sure the legislation passes and is signed into law. As trustees appointed to safeguard the best interests of the University—the interests of the *University*—you should do nothing less.

The legislation, introduced by Assemblymember Deborah Glick and Senator Kenneth LaValle (A934A and S1596A), would gradually but profoundly transform the fiscal condition of the University. It would provide ample funds to implement the contractual teaching load reduction and would allow for progress on adjunct salaries and other needs. The legislation is very close to passing, but its passage is not yet secure. The legislative session ends in two days: what have you done to make sure that the legislation passes? What have you done to ensure that the Governor gives his support to the bill and does not repeat his veto of 2015? The PSC and our statewide affiliate NYSUT are working intensively to support the bill. Is CUNY management willing to take a public stand and demand that the legislation be enacted?

If the legislation were in place now, CUNY senior colleges would have \$157 million more in State funding this year alone. Each subsequent year new funds would be added to cover mandatory costs, and the spiral of budget reductions would stop. Without such legislation in place or with only the current stripped-down version that is in place now, CUNY's base budget may be maintained, but mandatory cost increases—including collective bargaining increases—are not covered. The University digs deeper and deeper into academic programs or students' pockets to cover the cost. The result is an education that costs more and may be worth less.

Here's the proof: CUNY's operating funds from New York State have fallen by 17 percent since 2008, when adjusted for inflation and enrollment increases. During the same period, CUNY senior college tuition has risen by 58 percent. In the current era of politically motivated demands for fiscal austerity, we can see what will happen without a true maintenance-of-effort provision. Every year the funding allocation will be lower than the previous year's funding in real-dollar and real-cost terms, and CUNY management will accommodate by self-cannibalization. The University will increasingly rely on cheap, academically unsound solutions masquerading as innovation, such as cut-rate online MA degrees and whole schools where 94 percent of the instructors are adjuncts, as they are in SPS.

There is an alternative, and it requires the political courage to oppose the false logic of austerity. Chairperson Thompson recently gave an interview during which he affirmed several times that what the Governor wants with regard to CUNY is to be supportive. That is welcome news. The Governor has presented himself as a national policy leader on higher education with his Excelsior Scholarship. But Excelsior supports a certain number of middle-class families; it does not support CUNY. The way for the Governor to support CUNY is available this week: make a commitment to maintaining current programs by maintaining funding. I call on you to request publicly that the Governor announce his support for the Glick and La Valle legislation and his promise to sign it into law.

The PSC leadership is well aware of the Governor's political decision to impose a 2-percent agency spending cap. We are also aware of the recent State revenue returns and the potential impact of federal budget cuts. But real leadership on higher education demands real investment. The 30,000 members of the PSC call on the Board of Trustees and CUNY management to call on the Governor to demonstrate that leadership by announcing his support for the MOE legislation.