



OFFICE OF THE BRONX BOROUGH PRESIDENT
THE BRONX COUNTY BUILDING
851 GRAND CONCOURSE
BRONX, NEW YORK 10451

RUBEN DIAZ JR.
BOROUGH PRESIDENT

TEL. 718-590-3500
FAX. 718-590-3537
E-MAIL: rdiazjr@bronxbp.nyc.gov

June 10, 2015

Honorable Mayor Bill de Blasio
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

It is a priority for my office to make additional state funding for the City University of New York (CUNY) available so that the University can settle its contract with its faculty and professional staff. A one-time investment of \$240 million is needed to allow CUNY to provide salary increases to its faculty and professional staff retroactive to 2010 at the same level as the increases received by other New York State public employees. It is also critically important for the Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign legislation that would provide for a consistent level of State support for CUNY and SUNY, including funds for future collectively-bargained increases. Both the one-time investment for CUNY and the ongoing support in the maintenance-of-effort bill are essential to protect the quality of education at CUNY and to resolve the contract for the 27,000 faculty and professional staff represented by the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, who have not had a contract for nearly five years.

The continued lack of a contract puts educational quality at CUNY at risk, and endangers one of the state's most productive institutions—an institution that is of special importance to the people of The Bronx.

CUNY is vital to the future of our city. The City University of New York enrolls nearly half a million students including 37,687 from The Bronx who are enrolled in degree-programs at CUNY; an equivalent number are enrolled in certificate, continuing education, and English language instruction. Of CUNY undergraduates, 76 percent are people of color, and 38 percent are immigrants. There are three CUNY colleges in borough: Lehman College, Bronx Community College and Hostos Community College. CUNY is a lifeline for hundreds of thousands of New York State residents and their communities. For many New Yorkers, it represents the only option for a college education and the chance for a better life.

An educated workforce is the foundation of a strong economy. It is the intellectual infrastructure of the city and state—especially in the emerging knowledge-based economy. CUNY plays a unique role in creating this intellectual infrastructure—at every level from workforce development to top-ranked Ph.D.

programs. The majority of CUNY graduates continue to live and work in New York State, where they earn over \$60 billion annually and make a substantial contribution to the state's tax-base and economic health.

But the quality of education at CUNY has been put at risk because of the need for retroactive pay to resolve the contract and the absence of maintenance-of-effort legislation that includes collective bargaining increases. Faculty salaries at CUNY are substantially below those at comparable public and private regional colleges and universities, and CUNY cannot compete in the national market for academic talent. Top-quality professors are now reluctant to accept positions at CUNY. Some of the University's prominent scholars have left, or are considering leaving, for positions at other colleges; and current faculty members are forced to choose between their commitment to the University and their responsibility to their own families. Ultimately, education suffers.

I share with you the belief that it would be dangerously shortsighted to undermine the quality of education at the country's largest urban university—an institution that enables working New Yorkers throughout the state to achieve their dreams. At a time when New York State is making important investments in the state's infrastructure, an investment in higher education is essential. I feel a special urgency about maintaining the quality of education at the public colleges that empower residents of the poor communities and communities of color in The Bronx to contribute to the state economy.

CUNY enrolls students from virtually every legislative district in the state. New York State is in a position to make the necessary investment in CUNY this year; the City already stands ready to do so. I encourage you to urge the Governor and Legislature that they prioritize the one-time investment of \$240 million and to support and sign into law the amended maintenance-of-effort legislation. Such an investment in would enable CUNY to continue to change students' lives and strengthen the economy of the entire city and state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ruben", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Ruben Diaz Jr.

cc: NYS Governor Andrew Cuomo
Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie
Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan