

PROPOSED RESOLUTION #4 FOR 2010 NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

ENOUGH!

NYSUT WILL NOT TOLERATE FURTHER BUDGET CUTS TO PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION

Whereas, New York State, as a center of national and international political, cultural and intellectual life, should have a preeminent public higher education system; and

Whereas, New York State made a promise to all of its children, following the 2007 resolution of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and powerful advocacy by NYSUT, to provide them with a public education that prepares them well for college or a career; and

Whereas, New York State is breaking that promise and betraying its children by demanding that they be prepared for college and then failing to support SUNY and CUNY, the colleges that most of them attend. For example, 70% of the 34,879 first-time freshman enrolled at CUNY in 2008 were graduates of New York City public schools; and

Whereas, CUNY and SUNY have suffered decades of forced austerity due to chronic disinvestment in public higher education by New York State—from 1991 to 2008, state funding of CUNY senior colleges fell 14%, and State funding for SUNY fell by 4.8% in per-student, inflation-adjusted dollars; and

Whereas, in June 2008 the State’s own commission, the New York State Commission on Higher Education, issued a final report which found that New York State’s funding policies for CUNY and SUNY had been short-sighted, and recommended increasing State investments in public higher education, arguing:

The Commission has grave concerns about our public institutions, SUNY and CUNY. While making progress on many fronts, they face a chronic problem: too little revenue, too little investment. . . . Revenue shortages have forced campuses to compromise academic quality, especially with respect to full-time faculty; and

Whereas, “SUNY and CUNY have been cut disproportionately, more than any other single State agency,” as Executive Vice President Alan Lubin said in his October 13, 2009 testimony to the New York State Senate; and

Whereas, over the past two years alone, CUNY and SUNY have seen their funding deeply cut: SUNY has been cut \$410 million over the last 18 months and CUNY lost \$112.9 millions; and

Whereas, in the midyear Deficit Reduction Plan passed by the State Legislature in December 2009, the Legislature rejected all proposed cuts to K-12 public education but imposed further cuts on public higher education, agreeing to a 5% cut in operating funding for CUNY and a 5.5% cut in base aid to SUNY and CUNY community colleges, and tacitly supporting the governor’s previous cut of 5% to SUNY operating aid [details may be refined]; and

Whereas, CUNY and SUNY have pursued the strategy of charging students more and more for tuition to fill the hole in funding left by the State, and then cramming more and more students into already overcrowded institutions in order to boost revenue further; and

Whereas, the result is that the quality of education suffers—students and their families pay more and get less: classes are increased, course offerings are reduced, facilities are in dire need of repair, full-time faculty are too few, part-time faculty are over-used and underpaid, and damage is being done that will take a generation to repair; and

Whereas, student enrollment has skyrocketed while State support has fallen—CUNY enrollment levels increased in the 2009-2010 academic year by 6.4% in the senior colleges and 11.7% in the community colleges; and

Whereas, now more than ever, New York State should be *investing*—not disinvesting—in SUNY and CUNY; investment in public higher education has the highest multiplier effect of any investment the State can make—every dollar invested produces 24 dollars in increased tax revenue; and

Whereas, even in the current severe budget crisis, there are better choices the State can make—such as ending waste, using reserve funds, closing loopholes, and reforming the tax structure—rather than making senseless cuts to public higher education; and

Whereas, in 2008, after serious deliberation, NYSUT withheld endorsements from legislators whose proposed budget actions on K-12 education would have had the result of devastating education funding, and whereas that decision helped to change State policy on education support; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the NYSUT Board announce that public higher education has suffered enough and that NYSUT will not tolerate any further cuts in State support in FY 2011 to the operating funds of CUNY, SUNY or the public community colleges; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the NYSUT officers seriously consider informing legislators that they will recommend to NYSUT's endorsement committees that they withhold endorsement from any elected official or candidate who fails to support full funding by New York State in FY 2011 to the operating budgets of CUNY, SUNY or the public community colleges.

Passed by PSC Executive Council, December 2009