Dear Trustees,

I would like to open my brief remarks with a powerful quote by Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor:

“Until we get equality in education, we won’t have an equal society.”

Education inequality is at the root of the profound and deepening social crisis that is in full and open display today: from heath care disparities, to systematic racism and police brutality. Sixty-six years after the Supreme Court landmark decision to end racial segregation in schools, the United States has yet to fulfill her promise of equal educational opportunities for all. As you all well know, CUNY began as a noble experiment to make academic excellence accessible to all New Yorkers.

But let’s be honest. We are never going to achieve this goal, without adequate funding. Students, faculty, the union, public intellectuals, and progressive politicians have repeatedly called attention to the growing disinvestment in CUNY and public education in general. CUNY and SUNY are already struggling to meet the needs of their students. Without funding to support the growing demand of academic programs and desperately needed social and economic services, more students are likely to fall off the college pathway.

More than 2100 CUNY faculty of all disciplines, ranks and colleges signed a letter sent to Governor Cuomo calling on him to reverse course and fund CUNY. Like others I signed this letter because I love CUNY and all it represents, and I believe funding CUNY is a top priority. Investing in CUNY is a matter of racial justice and economic justice. Now, more than ever, is the time to address the ongoing inequalities that affect our students and their communities daily, struggles that have been made even more severe by the ongoing pandemic.

I am here to ask you, as I asked Governor Cuomo, to change course and commit to funding the public higher education our students, our city and our state— truly deserve.

Thank You,
Marcella Bencivenni
Professor of History,
Hostos Community College