

Testimony of Pamela Stemberg, CUNY Board of Trustees December 5th, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Pamela Stemberg; I'm an adjunct assistant Professor teaching at both City College and Hostos Community College. I will be speaking on the budget request.

First, I want to thank you for forming an emergency management office. In 2012, when Sandy hit NYC, CUNY's response was difficult to navigate. Many of our students were directly impacted by the storm, and we weren't prepared for a disaster at that level. We were unable to respond to our own needs, let alone those of our students.

There have been many disasters since then, and although we might be getting better at responding, we need a dedicated team to plan for the next ones so that our responses aren't thrown together in the heat of the moment. I want to suggest that all university stakeholders be a part of that team, as students, faculty, and staff are most vulnerable to impact from disasters, whether it be a storm, pandemic, or violence.

I ask that there be enough money in the budget to conduct regular university-wide tests for different scenarios and that we make a commitment to ensure that we are all protected to the greatest extent possible.

The impact of climate change on NYC will grow, and our responses to disasters, both natural and man-made, must rise to meet the challenges of a changing landscape.

Secondly, our students deserve a learning environment free from the struggles that so many of their family's face. We have replicated the environments many of them are trying to rise above by continuing to allow our schools to be underfunded. They shouldn't be learning in unheated schools with leaking ceilings and overcrowded classes. We are trying to give our students a different perspective. Underfunding is unfair and unjust to our community.

Next year, we will have many colleges whose budgets will have a large gap. At City College, our gap is predicted to be over 10 million, and several other schools predict the same. We can't allow this to happen. We can't let our schools fail, and we can't impose draconian measures to make up for the deficits because that will only put the schools on a "death spiral," increasing class size, cutting critical infrastructure, and, therefore, increasing retention loss.

We need a vision of a university system that supports students in their endeavors for a better life. This budget request, the first without the pandemic monies, is one of the most important you will make. We need to value our community, our workers, and our students. The money you request for our university shows the value you place on our institution and the NYC community it serves. Make the request with all the community members in mind.