

Good evening everyone.

My name is Kevin Adams. I am a Higher Education Officer at Medgar Evers College and proudly serve as a HEO delegate in the Professional Staff Congress.

It is my honor to be here today and testify as to why it is important for the Board of Trustees and management in the City University of New York to come to the table and bargain a fair contract.

Thousands of members have signed a bargaining petition. The union passed this much needed and ambitious bargaining agenda in February. But yet, the University has not come to the table to bargain for a new contract.

CUNY must set a regular schedule of bargaining sessions so that our demands are heard and met! We can speak to the demands that are most important to us, and why CUNY must begin to bargain now.

In particular, I am here to speak about the continuation of remote and flexible work. Not just for a new extension of the soon to expire agreement, but for remote and flexible work to be codified in the contract.

Over the last three years, we have demonstrated time and time again our ability to remotely serve our students. When COVID-19 forced companies all over the world to have their employees work virtually from home, remote work had a big moment. While the moment was sudden, what quickly became apparent is that employees could be productive and focused when not in the office — in many cases, even more so.

The average one-way commuting time in the U.S. is 27.1 minutes — that's nearly an hour each day spent getting to and from work, and it really adds up. But losing time commuting is just one of the downsides of getting to and from work.

More than 30 minutes of daily one-way commuting is associated with increased levels of stress and anxiety, higher cholesterol, elevated blood sugar, and increased risk of depression. Healthier employees are happier and better functioning employees. These very same employees are then able to deliver higher quality service to our students.

Add in the lack of a commute, and remote workers typically have more time and fewer distractions, which leads to increased productivity — a huge benefit of working from home for both staff and the University alike.

In addition, remote work supports a variety of sustainability initiatives including climate change and responsible consumption. One of the fastest, cheapest ways we as a University system can reduce our carbon footprint and affect climate change is by reducing commuter travel. We all saw a markedly reduced pollution, congestion, and traffic during the pandemic response, and being able to experience the results firsthand should be a driver of remote work for everyone involved.

When done right, remote work allows employees and companies to focus on what really matters — performance.

Industries across the globe began to understand that remote work really works and made the necessary investments for it to flourish. I have shared with you a few of the benefits of remote work. And these reasons and more are why I encourage you to extend the remote work agreement beyond June 30 and codify it in the new contract.