

**Testimony to the CUNY Board of Trustees Public Hearing
May 8, 2023**

I am Elizabeth Marcello, Ph.D., an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Urban Policy and Planning Department at Hunter College. I have served as an adjunct at Hunter for six semesters, and have experience at Queens College as well. I also work full time as a research analyst at the state watchdog group Reinvent Albany. I know firsthand the messiness of budgets and policymaking. I know that cutting budgets is not how we build stronger and better institutions. It's also not how we build a stronger and better New York.

I'm here with one simple message: The Board must advocate aggressively for full funding.

Full funding would mean better job security for adjuncts. Many of my colleagues have been adjuncting at CUNY for many, many years. They know CUNY students and what they need, and they are top-tier educators. The proposed cuts to CUNY target these educators, who are essential to giving CUNY students the high quality education they deserve.

Many times I have received the dreaded layoff letter from my department, only to be later asked to teach a class with very little notice. How can I plan to teach if I'm given such little notice? Importantly, how can I invest the time necessary to build a comprehensive syllabus on such short notice?

CUNY relies heavily on exploited adjunct labor. In addition to abysmal job security, adjuncts like myself juggle big class sizes, dedicate unpaid hours to advising students, and are rewarded with inadequate pay.

For two years I taught a class of 50 students. I spent countless unpaid hours on class prep, student advising, and grading. I tried my best to balance a full time job with obligations to my students. I would have liked to spend more time working with my students.

Toward this end, CUNY should be offering full-time faculty positions to more of its dedicated adjuncts, not laying them off and implementing university-wide hiring freezes.

CUNY is an essential New York institution. 80 percent of CUNY graduates stay in New York, working at businesses and nonprofit organizations, and in public service. In the Urban Policy and Planning Department specifically, where I work, students go on to work for the City of New York, serving at the Department of City Planning, the Office of Management and Budget, and so many more. Others go on to work for the state, serving in essential policymaking positions.

CUNY graduates working in New York State earned a combined \$57 billion annually (\$67,000 on average) in 2019 – \$28.6 billion more than students would have earned without a

post-secondary degree.¹ Public higher education is one of the best ways to grow the middle class and bring financial stability to so many New Yorkers.

CUNY is not just an educational institution. It's a force for equity, fairness, and justice. Now is not the time for budget cuts. Now is the time for the Board to advocate aggressively for full funding and deliver greater security and opportunities to faculty and students.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify today.

¹ See: "Wasted Opportunity," NYPIRG and NYFF:
https://www.nypirg.org/pubs/202302/Higher_Ed_Policy_Paper_Final_2023.pdf