

CUNY Board of Trustees Public Hearing, May 8, 2023

Testimony of James Davis, PSC/CUNY President

Good evening, I am James Davis, president of the PSC. Trustees, you'll hear this evening from members of the CUNY community concerned about their jobs and those of their colleagues, and the quality of the education we offer. We call on the CUNY administration to revoke the college savings plans and lift the hiring freeze!

The union waged a sustained campaign for state funding for CUNY. Our members were in the streets and in legislative offices. The result is a final state budget with far more operating aid for CUNY than the Governor's executive budget included, and \$100 million more than last year. The state committed to a major new investment in CUNY, not just in the coming fiscal year but in the following two years. Now, that gain must be reflected as the administration reevaluates the college savings plans. The cuts should be rescinded! The VRB should be suspended!

Tomorrow, you have the opportunity to testify before the City Council Committees on Higher Education and Finance. Make the most of that opportunity - defend CUNY against Mayor Adams' proposed cuts and demand additional resources. The Mayor already slashed CUNY's FY2024 budget in the PEGs implemented in November and January. We didn't hear anything from CUNY to challenge the PEGs! Now the Mayor plans to eliminate 211 additional full-time pedagogical staff positions from CUNY community colleges, on top of all the vacancies left unfilled this year.

The Mayor's proposed cuts total \$41 million in FY2024, after the more than \$18 million reduction this year. This is not ok! Chancellor Matos and Chair Thompson, you know Mayor Eric Adams a long time. What has he heard from you about student success and learning conditions at CUNY? What opposition have you raised with his budget director, Mr. Jiha, to show that investing in CUNY will yield economic dividends and other benefits for the City, while cutting CUNY means throttling the engine of mobility the city relies on?

Neither the IBO nor the Finance division of the City Council support the Mayor's dire fiscal projections. For example, the [Finance division projects](#) \$5.2 billion more than the City Office of Management and Budget in tax revenue for FY2023 and 2024 combined. The Mayor's claims that the City is on the verge of a fiscal cliff must be called out as fear-mongering. CUNY should not accept cuts from a Mayor who boasts two CUNY degrees. Those degrees helped to propel him from a working-class Queens community to prominent roles in state and city government. Thousands of young people in that

neighborhood and others like it need the opportunity that he was afforded, and that is what's at risk in this city budget.

We expect you to fight for every dollar. We expect you to revoke the pre-emptive savings plans and keep our members employed. And we expect you to suspend the VRB so our campuses can recover from the pandemic with the full complement of faculty and staff that our students need to thrive.