

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Laura Tanenbaum; I have taught in the English Department at LaGuardia since 2007 and have been an active member of our PSC chapter throughout, currently serving as vice-chair.

In those years, I have witnessed many things. I have worked with incredibly talented young people who have gone on to attend some of the most prestigious universities and graduate schools in the country; I have seen them become journalists, writers, artists, activists, teachers, and nurses.

Unfortunately, I have also heard countless stories of eviction and homelessness, hunger, abusive bosses at jobs they can't afford to quit, harassment by the police, and mental health struggles. During the start of the pandemic, many of our students were living in the global epicenter in the neighborhoods of Corona and Elmhurst. Every week I received messages from students I'd met only briefly before the shutdown noting they had lost a family member, or were themselves sick, or had lost a job, or had run out of money for groceries.

Too many of our students have been ill-served by various institutions and services in a city that has become increasingly difficult to live in for all but the wealthiest. (Which includes almost none of the faculty and staff working here). With these cuts, CUNY threatens to become another institution failing these students. While CUNY can not single handedly fix all of these problems, having well funded schools, properly maintained buildings, small class sizes, adequate academic and personal counselors are invaluable. As an open admissions school, LaGuardia and are fellow community colleges are those rare place that takes students where they are, which can mean offering childcare, a food pantry, and immigration help along with the academic resources of a world class university. None of this is possible with the preemptive cuts this board has called for, at a time when need has never been higher. And the refusal to bargain is having a damaging effect on faculty morale.

CUNY is invaluable not only for giving students the opportunity for an education they could not otherwise have access to, but for producing the graduates who will serve the communities that make this city work. If we can't train nurses, who will care for us? Our shirts say "Everyone loves someone at CUNY" and this is not just a slogan - every time I wear it, or every time I tell people what I do, someone on the street or at the coffee shop or bodega will tell me about how CUNY changed their life, or their brother's, or about how their daughter is about to start there, the first in the family to go to college, and how proud they are. Or they ask whether it's true their mother can learn English or get a GED or help with her citizenship there.

I love telling our story and hearing other's CUNY stories. I love talking about CUNY. But I will admit to some frustration in having to tell these stories to you in order to persuade you not to follow through with destructive, pre-emptive cuts. Our students face enough obstacles without having more put in their way but those who should be their biggest advocates . I urge to revoke these destructive, preemptive and unnecessary mandates for cuts and to bargain in good faith. Thank you for your time.