

CUNY Board of Trustees Public Hearing Testimony | May 12, 2025

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My name is Jenna Tipaldo and I'm currently a PhD student at the CUNY School of Public Health. I'm here to ask the Board of Trustees to partner with other universities and our government representatives to maintain or restore funding for research and research training programs here at CUNY. I did my undergraduate degree at Hunter College, where I now teach as an adjunct. When I was an undergraduate, I was a fellow in the National Science Foundation REU program at Baruch under Professor Mindy Engle-Friedman, who sadly passed away last month. With financial support to work as a research assistant, attend conferences, and gain insight into the world of research with invaluable mentorship, that program launched my academic career. Since then I started my program at SPH and completed an advanced certificate from the Graduate Center. I worked as a research assistant for the New York Retirement and Disability Research Center, which in February received an abrupt work order on its multimillion dollar 5-year contract from the Social Security Administration and had to halt research and lay off staff and student research assistants. Training programs like the NSF REU and the summer training that some of my Hunter students received through the NY RDRC support CUNY students who tend to come from working class backgrounds and might not otherwise have access to some of these opportunities. Additionally, funding for research supports a better understanding of the world around us - I study health and environmental issues. The past few months I've watched my peers lose funding and work opportunities, not to mention countless hours of time and effort on projects that may not be seen to completion, projects that studied communities such as Asian Americans and LGBTQ older adults, and topics such as disability, aging, HIV, and health disparities. My fellow students are in peril - lost research funding means that some of them may be unable to complete their studies, for various reasons, and some are considering leaving academia or even the country for more stable opportunities. I see faculty members across my various institutions uncertain of whether they will be able to continue their important work studying topics such as health, migration, and mortality due to environmental hazards, including disproportionate impacts on

frontline and environmental justice communities. Please prioritize efforts to help sustain research at CUNY. CUNY celebrates our researchers who do exciting and innovative research, who do tedious work in their labs on topics like cancer, climate change, and to tackle societal issues. CUNY students from community college students through PhD students participate in research activities, building skills. CUNY graduates tend to stay in New York and a lot of research at CUNY is New York-focused and engages our local communities to help make New York, our country, and our world better. Please consider partnering with other universities and our congressional, state, and city government representatives to protect research and research training programs at CUNY. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.