



PROFESSIONAL STAFF CONGRESS/CUNY

TESTIMONY

EXECUTIVE BUDGET:
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, FY 2027
JOINT HEARING, NEW YORK STATE:
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

February 24, 2026

Delivered by Dr. James Davis, President
Professional Staff Congress/CUNY

Good afternoon, Senate Chairpersons Krueger and Stavisky, Assembly Chairpersons Pretlow and Hyndman, and all members of the committees. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your critical support for public higher education.

The Federal Government's Attack on Higher Education

We raised the alarm last year about the federal government's assault on the agencies and services that PSC members and students need. As you know, the scenario in many ways, has only gotten worse. Higher education and public-sector labor unions are among the most consistent targets of this administration, so our members have felt under siege. Federal grants have been cancelled halting years of research - including lifesaving medical research - by our members and opportunities for our students. Litigation by the AFT and other national advocates has prevailed, but much damage has been done; the current estimate of loss for NIH and NSF grants alone is \$83 million in New York State. Research is of course at the heart of what we and our students do.¹ The hideous actions of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement in our communities have a profound impact given the number of our students who are first generation college students or were not born in the United States. PSC remains committed to fighting for immigrant students and their families and looks forward to partnering with legislators to protect them and the future of CUNY.

PSC Budget Request: Making a New Deal for CUNY a Realty

Operating budget

Governor Hochul's Executive Budget this year, like her past budgets, recognizes CUNY's great strengths and contributions to the economy. With the legislature's support, CUNY has begun to dig out of years of austerity and the challenges of the pandemic.

The new CUNY Reconnect program is enrolling thousands of new, non-traditional students in our community colleges. Essential segments of the workforce will undoubtedly be bolstered by this worthy and successful program. CUNY excels, for example, at training educators and health care professionals. Overall, CUNY enrollment has increased by 20,000 students since 2022. However, placing more students in an already understaffed system requires additional resources so our members can continue providing our students the best education possible.

We request:

- \$92 million to hire 1,000 full-time faculty next year. That investment would make tangible progress toward a long-term goal that 70% of CUNY classes are taught by full-time faculty. As research shows, full-time faculty are an essential component to students graduating on time. Due to attrition, our full-time faculty count remains below pre-pandemic levels, even after the state's recent welcome investment in full-time faculty

¹ Grant-witness.us

positions. Compared to Fall 2019, our Senior Colleges have 141 fewer full-time faculty, and our Community Colleges have 256 fewer full-time faculty.

- Equally important are essential services provided by advisors and mental health counselors. \$16 million would hire 55 new, culturally competent advisors and 40 new full-time mental health counselors. The demand for services continues to increase not only with enrollment. CUNY's first-generation students, working students, and student parents need guidance when selecting classes and managing the challenges of college; much more so than their counterparts at private institutions who generally enjoy access to these services.
- Last spring, PSC members ratified our contract that expires in 2027. We expect the state's portion of the contract cost to be fully covered in the enacted budget, as has been the practice since Governor Hochul took office. So, we join the CUNY administration in requesting \$36.5 million to ensure this year's salary increments are covered as they were last fiscal year.

Capital budget needs and environmental challenges

- We echo the CUNY administration's capital budget request. The vast majority of CUNY buildings cannot pass the "state of good repair" test. Their fragility was evident in this month's cold snap, when burst pipes forced students and employees at BMCC, Hunter, and Medgar Evers College to temporarily relocate.
- Last December, PSC members told the CUNY Board of Trustees about dangerous conditions at several campuses. Among them was a Medgar Evers College staff member who said:

"While remediation carries an initial cost, this expense is often outweighed by the long-term costs of neglecting facility health. The expenses associated with remediation escalate dramatically the longer these issues are ignored. The library should be a safe haven for learning and intellectual growth. [...] It has become a source of illness, fear, and resentment. Students study in subpar conditions, staff members continue to risk their health to serve the college community, and valuable resources are being damaged."

- The chair of our union's Workplace Health and Safety Committee, an industrial hygienist at the CUNY Graduate School of Public Health, said just last week, "In the 10+ years I've been doing [this work] with the PSC, I've never encountered workplace hazards related to deteriorated infrastructure at the level our members are now experiencing. [...] Many chapters [...] are seeing only denial rather than any intent for improvement. We need to move awareness of this crisis beyond CUNY." That is what I am doing in my testimony today.

CUNY Helps to Make New York Affordable

We appreciate the Governor's expansion of CUNY Reconnect to now include 120 degree programs.² New Yorkers are participating not only because the program is free but also because it provides an excellent education. CUNY graduates are essential to the city's economy. Countless studies document the impact of CUNY degrees on economic mobility. But our graduates are also the backbone of the city economy. The vast majority of CUNY graduates remain in New York City generating billions of dollars for the local economy.³

We encourage the legislature to continue building on the success of Reconnect by eliminating the age restrictions to include students coming out of high school and permitting students to complete 60 credits at any CUNY or SUNY college, not just community colleges.

It's Time for Rich New Yorkers to Pay Their Fair Share

The necessary investments in capital and operating costs at CUNY will not happen unless New York State implements more sensible and fair tax policies. While the Federal government gives \$12 billion in tax breaks to the wealthiest New Yorkers, the rest of us should not struggle to pay for public college, childcare, exorbitant rents and transportation costs. The claim that the wealthiest are fleeing New York City because of taxes is inaccurate. We are most at risk of losing middle-class New Yorkers.⁴

PSC members, like the strong majority of all New York voters, support increasing taxes on wealthy corporations and the super-rich.⁵ PSC urges you to enact the following bills:

- (S1622/A1281) Senator Jackson's and Assembly Member Meeks' Progressive State Income Tax would raise \$10 billion by expanding the existing personal income tax brackets in New York State, and more than doubling the top marginal tax rate
- (S8577/A8953) Senator Liu and Assembly Member Souffrant Forrest's Fair Share Act would permit NYC to charge an additional 2% on incomes over \$1 billion bringing in \$4 billion for NYC
- (S953/A1971) Assembly Member Kelles' Corporate Tax on the Most Profitable Corporations would increase the tax rate to 8% for corporate income over \$2.5 million, 12% for corporate income over \$10 million, and 14% over \$20 million, totaling \$7 billion more in annual revenue

² <https://www.cuny.edu/admissions/reconnect/>

³ CCNY's \$3.2 billion impact on New York economy, August 26, 2024.

and Comptroller Stringer Analysis: CUNY Graduates Earn Combined \$57 Billion Annually, Highlighting CUNY's Significant Contributions to Local and State Economies, March 12, 2021.

⁴ Fiscal Policy Institute, Latest Census Data, Combined with FPI Analysis, Reveal New York Losing Working and Middle Class, December 19, 2023.

⁵ Lewis, Rebecca, November 3, 2025. New poll shows that taxing the rich is very popular. *City and State*.

- (S1419/A898) Senator Liu's REPAIR Act would amend the state constitution to end property tax breaks for the wealthiest private universities and re-direct approximately \$300 million to CUNY.

Protecting Immigrant New Yorkers

PSC members are a reflection of New York. Among our faculty and professional staff are renowned academic experts from other countries, people who came to New York as economic and political refugees, first-generation immigrants, and international graduate students. The appalling policies of the Trump Administration hits our members and students particularly hard.

Our growing Immigrant Solidarity Working Group is a resource for members and students in the ever changing landscape of Trump's unconstitutional attacks. More than 350 members and allies have been trained to participate with the PSC in supporting immigrants in the courtrooms. Members have made nearly 800 discrete visits to support our immigrant neighbors during their immigration court appearances since May. On campuses, we have circulated thousands of know-your-rights cards, provided advice on syllabi, and organized members for demonstrations large and small. PSC's work was recently featured at the AFL-CIO's 2026 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Civil and Human Rights conference.

We urge you to pass the New York for All Act ([A3506/S2235](#)). Local funds should not be used to assist with mass deportation efforts.

Conclusion

The vision and commitment that New York State's legislature and Governor have shown in recent years for the students who attend our public universities and the faculty and staff who support them on their journeys has helped us all to weather the Covid pandemic aftermath and the onset of a highly adversarial federal administration. We are grateful for that support. We are deeply concerned, however, about the future of our institutions and the families and communities we serve. Our request to our representatives in Albany is to remain steadfast on the path to increased operating aid to improve student outcomes and provide for our amazing academic workforce, to enhance our research infrastructure and opportunities for students, and to provide capital funding so our students' learning environment and our working environment is fully safe, healthy, and welcoming.