

Jeff Ballerini

Testimony - CUNY Board of Trustees Hearing - April 6, 2026

Good afternoon, members of the Board of Trustees. My name is Jeff Ballerini, academic adviser for F-1 visa international students at Queensborough Community College, PSC HEO delegate, and member of our campus Health and Safety Labor Management Committee. I come before you today to advocate for the urgent redress of the persistent plethora of pervasive predicaments plaguing our public university. During my eighteen years as an employee, I have borne witness to a litany of long languishing facility failures for want of proper maintenance. In my roles as a union representative and member of our student support staff, I am here to fight for the betterment of our deplorable conditions.

Of all the dire challenges we face, perhaps the most salient is our dilapidated heating infrastructure. For the past several years, our decrepit, corroded underground steam pipes have been springing leaks constantly, leading management to repeatedly tear up the pavement in a major pedestrian artery, locate and patch the leak, and reinstall the stonework. Of course, such meager stopgap measures were inadequate to address the larger, deeper systemic issue. In mid-November 2024, an untraceable leak precipitated the Administration Building's complete climate control collapse, forcing faculty to relocate their classes to different buildings and staff to operate remotely for several days. A month later, the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York (DASNY) finally restored reliable heat by connecting the Administration Building to the Science Building's heating system via three hundred feet of aboveground steam pipes running straight through the most heavily trafficked area of campus, the Humanities Quad. Our leadership said that DASNY was supposed to replace the underground pipes by the spring of 2025 but a year later, not one iota of progress has been made and every stone has remained unturned. When the PSC raises the matter in labor management meetings, the administrators say they are beholden to DASNY and their glacial workflow.

To rectify these and many other challenges, I call upon CUNY to increase funding allocations to capital projects in their municipal and state government budget proposals so we can pay for the repairs and upgrades that are sorely needed. Furthermore, CUNY must negotiate contracts to include more robust provisions that hold DASNY or their subcontractors accountable when they fail to provide adequate service in a timely manner. In addition, CUNY must increase its operational funding requests so that we can hire additional building and grounds staff to reduce the massive backlog of work orders and keep our facilities in good condition. In their own [2023 survey](#), CUNY reported that twenty-five percent of their buildings were in a state of good repair, which is downright shameful. Through such chronic neglect and deferred upkeep, CUNY's message to its community of students, staff, and faculty is loud and clear - we don't care about you. No number of kind-hearted email blasts about belonging or one-off welcome events can drown out the crash of falling ceiling tiles, the drip of faulty plumbing, or the wind howling through the cracks in your facades. If you truly wish to make CUNY an inviting, supportive place, fix our buildings and hire the workers needed to maintain them. The denizens of the greatest city in the world deserve the best environment in which to work and learn. Thank you.