

**New York State Legislature Joint Assembly & Senate Legislative Public Hearing:
Higher Education: Fiscal Year 2018-2019 State Executive Budget Proposal
Testimony of Francesca Royal
Student, Hunter College, City University of New York -CUNY
Vice Chair for Fiscal Affairs, CUNY University Student Senate -USS
January 23, 2018**

Greetings members of the New York State Legislature,

My name is Francesca Royal, I am a junior at Hunter College at the City University of New York, double majoring in Economics and Public Policy with a concentration in Education Policy. I am a proud member of 19th assembly district represented by Assemblymember Edward Ra and 5th Senate district represented by Senator Carl Marcellino. I have the privilege of serving as the Vice Chair for Fiscal Affairs for the City University of New York University Student Senate, also known as CUNY USS. USS is the elected student governance organization responsible for representing the interests of the 500,000 students that attend CUNY. We are charged with preserving the accessibility, affordability, and excellence in higher education.

On behalf of USS we thank you for providing us this opportunity to share the student experience. We are here today to articulate the needs and concerns affecting CUNY students, and how initiatives outlined in Governor Andrew Cuomo's Executive Budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2019 directly impacts the accessibility, affordability, and excellence in higher education at campuses in the CUNY system. I will begin by providing an update on the state of student affairs across our system. At the end of my testimony I will share USS' recommendations that will offer you ways to address the issues. Then my colleagues will share the experience of students at community colleges and at senior colleges. We hope these testimonies will inspire you to take immediate action to ensure CUNY remains an engine of social mobility to achieve the american dream in the land of opportunity.

In 2017, Governor Cuomo took steps to advance the conversation of improving higher education when the governor proposed a plan that would make CUNY and SUNY tuition free for middle class families. In addition, the State Legislature

restored and expanded support for opportunity programs and services. We were excited about the initiatives that would make CUNY more affordable and accessible. However, it was disheartening to learn that there would be a \$200 tuition increase for students at senior colleges, that the Maintenance of Effort bill, would be vetoed by the governor and part-time scholarship for community college students would not be made available on time. These issues increase student debt, hinder student success, and impact the quality of services provided by CUNY faculty and staff due to the lack of funding to support students needs.

Although CUNY is considered one of the most affordable universities in the country, students still face barriers which hinder student success and stifle social mobility. Cost of living in New York City is expensive, there aren't enough healthy and affordable food options, and transportation is costly, unreliable and inadequate. College students should not face shelter and food insecurities, which has led to health issues.

This legislative session, Governor Cuomo is committed to expanding food pantries services to all CUNY campuses to address food insecurities. We are excited that CUNY has been in the forefront of this educational initiative by providing food pantries and food vouchers at various colleges for several years. This additional support will help CUNY serve more students. Students are frustrated about the continuous increases in tuition. We are looking forward to the expansion of the Excelsior Scholarship and implementation of the Part Time Scholarship for community college students. During this session we would like to participate in discussions to improve the Excelsior Scholarship and other financial aid programs.

We are disappointed with the performance of the federal government, which has led to a government shutdown. We can not depend on the federal government. The state of our union is under attack. We need the state of New York to act swiftly to protect our democracy and members of immigrant communities and enact the State DREAM Act. We need leadership in the state now, more than ever.

The University Student Senate is eager to work with members of the Legislature and Governor's Office to improve the quality of life for all new yorkers. On behalf of the 500,000 CUNY students, USS requests that the New York State Legislature

take the following actions to restore and enhance the accessibility, affordability and excellence in higher education at the greatest urban university in the world.

1. Reject the proposed \$200 tuition increase and provide \$31.3 million to support a tuition freeze for the 2018-2019 academic year.
2. Restore funding to support opportunity programs and services to ensure CUNY remains diverse and fully inclusive.
3. Pass the New York State Dream Act.
4. Provide the necessary funding to support capital projects to ensure CUNY facilities are hospitable.
5. Adopt an enhanced Maintenance of Effort to adequately fund CUNY's operating budget.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

**New York State Legislature Joint Assembly & Senate Legislative Public Hearing:
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Testimony of Wali Ullah
Student, Bronx Community College, City University of New York -CUNY
Delegate, CUNY University Student Senate -USS
January 23, 2018**

Greetings members of the New York State Legislature,

My name is Wali Ullah, I am student at Bronx Community College at the City University of New York, majoring in Political Science. I will transfer to the City College of New York to pursue a Bachelor's in Political Science & Economics, with hopes of pursuing a career in grassroots organizing and public service. I am a proud resident of the 80th State Assembly District, which currently does not have an elected representative and the 34th State Senate District represented by Senator Jeffrey Klein. I have the privilege of serving as the Bronx Community College Delegate in the University Student Senate. I also serve as the Executive Officer of Legal & Legislative Affairs of the Student Government Association at Bronx Community College.

I would like to extend the warmest of gratitudes to CUNY for providing the opportunity for me to serve in student government, the students who elected me as their representative and the New York State Legislature for allowing me to testify today. In my testimony I will share my experience and the experience of other students at Bronx Community College also known as BCC. As we all know community colleges play a vital role in our economy. Community College is the platform which offers workers, parents, the younger, older and first generation college students access to higher education. Society categorizes some of these students as non-traditional. However, these demographic of students very common at CUNY. Due to the community college 24/7 course schedule, students have the option to attend college early mornings, late nights, weekends and online, while fulfilling other responsibilities. Students prefer to attend community colleges because the tuition rate is lower than four-year senior colleges and community colleges have a more flexible course schedule.

I began my journey at BCC as a part time student. I have not been able to enroll full-time due to lack of financial resources and other external obligations. I receive no financial aid as my parents are undocumented and have had difficulty paying taxes in the past due to their immigration status. I do not work either as many of the job opportunities I have sought thus far require a higher level of experience. My story is that of many community college students, as nearly as 40% of all CUNY community college students are part-time students, according to the CUNY Office of Institutional Research. Most students that attend part-time would love to take more classes however, there isn't enough financial aid for students that attend part-time. In addition, due to lack of funding for on campus child care services students are forced to work more hours to cover cost for child care services off campus. I would like to thank Governor Andrew Cuomo for his efforts to make BCC more accessible and affordable. In 2017, Governor Cuomo created a part-time scholarship to provide aid for students enrolled at CUNY Community Colleges. Students were excited to learn about this new level of support that would help them earn their degree sooner. However, we were unable to apply because the application was not available in the fall. This prevented some students from enrolling in the Fall 2017 and Spring 2018. The Excelsior Scholarship is great for students who have the ability to enroll full-time. We need support to help part-time students.

Next, I would like to talk about the Accelerated Studies in Associate Programs, otherwise known as ASAP. ASAP is a program available in every CUNY community colleges, which provide students resources such as metrocards, book vouchers and smaller class sizes to better meet student needs. The ASAP model has received praise nationwide as it has doubled three-year graduation rates. Community college student request that the ASAP model be expanded to all CUNY senior colleges to ensure current ASAP students have a seamless transition when they transfer to earn their bachelor's degree.

We thank CUNY for leading the effort to address food insecurity by offer food pantries at community colleges and we thank the Governor for wanted to expand this program. We appreciate all the support we have received from the Legislature. experience for students at CUNY community colleges. Despite the apparent strides recently made in the advancement of higher education in New York State, there

remains much ground to be covered. We must not forget about the needs of the diverse community we serve.

The University Student Senate is eager to work with members of the Legislature and Governor's Office to improve the quality of life for all new yorkers. On behalf of the 11,000 BCC students I request that the New York State Legislature take the following actions to restore and enhance the accessibility, affordability and excellence in higher education at the greatest urban university in the world.

1. Reject the proposed \$200 tuition increase and provide \$31.3 million to support a tuition freeze for the 2018-2019 academic year.
2. Restore funding to support opportunity programs and services to ensure CUNY remains diverse and fully inclusive
3. Pass the New York State Dream Act.
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Thank you for your time and consideration!

**New York State Legislature Joint Assembly & Senate Legislative Public Hearing:
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Testimony of Jasper Diaz
Student, Baruch College, City University of New York -CUNY
Delegate, CUNY University Student Senate -USS
January 23, 2018**

Greetings members of the New York State Legislature,

My name is Jasper Diaz, I have the privilege of serving as in Baruch College Delegate in City University of New York University Student Senate (CUNY, USS). I am a proud resident of the 72nd state assembly district represented by Assemblymember Carmen de la Rosa and the 31st State Senate District currently represented by State Senator Marisol Alcántara.

I am pursuing a Bachelor's of Science in Public Affairs at Baruch College's Marx School of Public and International Affairs, with a minor in political science and certificate in survey research. I have aspirations of attending graduate school and pursuing a career in public service to address the needs of members in my community.

My experience at Baruch College has been rewarding yet challenging due to lack of an enhanced Maintenance of Effort also known as MOE. This has negatively impacted the quality of services at senior colleges; buildings and classrooms are overcrowded and there aren't enough faculty and staff members available to address student needs. The quality of our educational experience has diminished because our professors are overworked, teaching several courses with-in highly populated classes. The student service lines are long, students can spend hours waiting to see an academic advisor, career counselor, financial aid specialist or tutor. Furthermore, the continuous trend of tuition increases has put our students under stress. Tuition has increased by at least \$250 annually in the last 7 out of 8 years. We have made tremendous sacrifices to complete our studies. Students deserve at least a two-year break.

We are thankful for the Excelsior scholarship. We still need aid to cover book expenses. We still need aid to cover living expenses. We still need aid to cover

transportation expenses. It would be wonderful if we were able to get a reduced fare metrocard to ensure we can get to class throughout the semester. Our students are not able to adequately use the college library and labs because students can not afford to come to campus on days they don't have classes. Food insecurity is a crisis that is affecting students as well. Over the past several years CUNY has begun to address this issue at community colleges. However, there aren't enough resources to support the expansion at all CUNY senior colleges. We thank Governor Andrew Cuomo for addressing the growing and rampant issue of food insecurity on college campuses by mandating that every public college in NYS establishes a food pantry. We would like to thank the NY State Legislature for fulfilling capital budget allocations for the FY 2017-2018. Finally initiating the first five year phase of bringing Baruch College's 1929 Lawrence and Eris Field Building at 17 Lexington Avenue into the 21st century. We must make sure CUNY has state-of-the-art facilities to offer students an environment they learn in.

CUNY senior colleges need more support to assist students in earning a college degree. The University Student Senate is eager to work with members of the Legislature and Governor's Office to improve the quality of affordable public higher education for all New Yorkers. On behalf of the 15,000 Baruch College students I request that the New York State Legislature take the following actions to restore and enhance the accessibility, affordability and excellence in higher education at the greatest urban university in the world.

1. Reject the proposed \$200 tuition increase and provide \$31.3 million to support a tuition freeze for the 2018-2019 academic year.
2. Restore funding to support opportunity programs and services to ensure CUNY remains diverse and fully inclusive
3. Pass the New York State Dream Act
4. Provide the necessary funding to support capital projects to ensure CUNY facilities are hospitable

Thank you for your time and consideration!