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February 6, 2017

Sen. Cathy Young
428 Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Sen. Young,

Enclosed please find the required 10 copies of testimony that we request to be submitted during the higher education budget hearings. This testimony includes some information about On Point for College, a college access and success non-profit program based in Syracuse, NY with a satellite office in Utica, NY and partnerships in Manhattan and Bronx, NY.

On Point for College received funding in the 2016 New York State Budget, and the purpose of this testimony is to request funding in the 2017 State Budget. We are grateful for your assistance and wish you all the best.

Sincerely,



Samuel Rowser
Executive Director
(315) 374-4104

February 2017

New York State Legislature Higher Education Budget Hearing

Testimony from Executive Director Samuel Rowser, On Point for College

Thank you very much for your interest and investment in On Point for College, your leadership is appreciated. I'm Sam Rowser, the Executive Director of On Point. Ginny Donohue, the Founder of On Point for College, started out as a volunteer helping young people from a homeless shelter get into college for eight years. In 1999, it stole her heart and she left her corporate job and started On Point for College. Shortly after, I joined On Point as her first employee. It's been 17 years and we've now placed 6,800 people in more than 200 colleges and universities. Our biggest bump in size came in 2012 when HESC gave us funding. It was federal College Access Challenge Grant funding that moved through HESC, which made us a single source provider and we became a HESC partner. On Point was able to double in size in Syracuse, open an office in Utica, and partner in New York City with Goddard Riverside Community Center in Manhattan and New Settlement Apartments in the Bronx to give them both funding and guidance on how to do a college success or retention program.

I just want to explain how we're different. There are a lot of college access programs in the state. We work with people 17-29. We receive a lot of referrals from the high schools, but we don't work in the high schools, we only work in community centers. We work in 27 community centers, Boys and Girls clubs, settlement houses, refugee centers, libraries, municipal housing. 60% of the students we meet are not in high school. Most are high school graduates and or obtained an education somewhere else so they don't have a guidance counselor available to them. 30% of our students have no parent in their life, and so they're very, very vulnerable. They are older youth and young adults who may have been in foster care, raised by aunt or grandparent, more refugee, or have a dependent child themselves. But, despite all of these obstacles that they're facing, 70% of On Point students—and most of them are community college students—return for their second year of college, which is clearly 10% above the average community college student, despite all the obstacles they're facing.

I just want to tell you about a couple of services that we do that most programs **do not**. We conduct an orientation that teaches them the ropes before they go to college because most of them have been the first person in their family to go. On Point gives them some college supplies. We provide transportation in New York State all the way through college, with a bus ticket or through transportation by 75 mentors—including ex (Syracuse) Mayor Tom Young—we drove 190,000 miles last year to take inner-city youth to and from college. At the beginning of every semester, we visit 70 different colleges. We sit across from our students in the cafeteria; and we make sure they've purchased their books and their food; and we introduce them to the campus angel, a volunteer that helps them on campus. We partner with a dentist who does pro bono root canals, we provide winter coats, and eyeglasses. We've had so many students that were

homeless, that our Founder, Ginny, went to her alma mater, Le Moyne College, which has opened its dorms to our students for the last 15 years—not just students from Le Moyne, but even students from Utica and New York City—to live there for free for the summer if they have nowhere else to live. We provide job placement, we help people with certificate programs, and (Syracuse) Police Chief, Frank Fowler, has said that there is no organization in the city of Syracuse that has decreased the violence like On Point for College.

I want you to know that we've been good stewards of the funding that was given to us through HESC. We leveraged more than a million dollars from national foundations. We're instrumental in teaming up with three community colleges and SUNY Oswego to bring \$2.8 million in the US Dept. of Education First in the World grant. We're the only community-based organization in the country that received funding for that. Since we received funding from HESC, we've placed over 4,000 students in college. We enrolled them in college, which brought over \$17 million in tuition to SUNY and CUNY—remember most of these students **were not** in high school so they would not have enrolled any other way—and also brought \$22 million worth of PELL. Over their lifetime, if our students earn an associate's degree, it'll bring \$1.5 billion of taxable income, or with a bachelor's, \$2.1 billion. The funding for this grant ended in August of 2016 and are so very grateful for the \$400,000 of the \$1.2 million shortfall allocated by the State of New York through the Assembly in the current budget year. On Point for College is asking for your support to help us replace the \$1.2 million dollars for Syracuse, Utica and New York City so that we can continue our essential work.. Due to this reduction in funding we were forced to cut important services to our students including college supplies, clothing, and math-science grants. On Point for College knows now how to replicate. We're reaching young people that no one else is reaching, and we're open, given additional funding, to share our unique program model and replicate to other locations. Thank you for the opportunity to share our work and ask again for your support.