



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew Gounardes

Legislators, CUNY Rising Alliance, Faculty/Staff Union Unveil New Deal for CUNY Legislation Rejecting Cuts Proposed by the Governor, Legislators Call for \$1.47 Billion Investment in CUNY over Next Five Years

ANDREW GOUNARDES February 5, 2021

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New York—Senator Andrew Gounardes and Assemblymember Karines Reyes joined the CUNY Rising Alliance and the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) today to announce the introduction of the New Deal for CUNY (ND4C) legislation. They were joined in their support by more than two dozen legislative supporters of the measure.

Gounardes and Reyes are the prime sponsors of the [New Deal for CUNY bill](#), which restores free tuition and, over five years, establishes minimum staff-to-student ratios for mental health counselors, academic advisors and full-time faculty at CUNY while professionalizing compensation for adjunct faculty.

[Click here for video of the press conference.](#)

The total CUNY operating budget increased over five years, if the New Deal for CUNY were fully enacted, would be \$1.47 billion. The investment would transform CUNY and, in turn, enable CUNY to transform New York. CUNY's 25 colleges would provide a substantial return on the investment. City College of New York, for example, generates three dollars in tax

revenue for every public dollar it receives and generates nearly 17,000 jobs. CUNY leads the nation in enabling low-income New Yorkers to advance into the middle class and beyond.

New York's practice of funding CUNY with yearly tuition hikes has left CUNY vastly underfunded and left CUNY's student body—predominantly low-income and Black and brown students—without the support they need to succeed, the groups and legislators argued.

CUNY student leaders, community partners and the president of the PSC joined Gounardes and Reyes for a short online press conference immediately followed by a Legislators' Speak-Out where 20 more legislators added their support. Other legislators provided statements. CUNY's ability to help ensure a just, inclusive COVID recovery was part of many of the statements.

"As a proud CUNY graduate, I fully understand the importance of making public higher education more accessible. CUNY should be free for all in-state students to remove the costly barrier of entry that stops many from furthering their education. I am also aware that our students are facing unique problems that we have not seen before, and as such we must respond by providing them with the support they need. We must hire more faculty, staff, and mental health counselors. The time to invest in our future generations is now," said **Assemblymember Karines Reyes**.

"Our economic recovery from the COVID crisis relies on A New Deal for CUNY. This landmark legislation will transform New York's education system, economy and society, positioning us to recover stronger and better from this crisis. CUNY brings more people into the middle class than all the Ivy League schools combined. There is no better way to guarantee that the next generation reaches its promise and full potential than by making a world-class public higher education available for free. This generation will be our scientists,

healthcare professionals, essential workers and small businesspeople; investing in them will guarantee that our city thrives well into the future. As a CUNY graduate, I am proud to sponsor the New Deal for CUNY and will fight relentlessly to pass this legislation,” said **State Senator Andrew Gounardes**.

The ND4C would redirect current TAP funding and provide additional public funding for free tuition starting in the 2022-2023 academic year. After its phase-in, the bill would require CUNY to have 65 full-time faculty for every 1,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) students, one mental health counselor for every 1,000 FTE students and one academic advisor for every 600 FTE students. CUNY now falls far below national staffing standards; it averages 33 full-time faculty members per 1,000 FTE students, and the ratio of mental health counselors to students is closer to one for every 2,700 FTE students. Adjunct faculty would receive pay parity with their full-time faculty colleagues under the ND4C, and the state would fund 100% of CUNY’s annual critical maintenance needs.

The CUNY Rising Alliance, a coalition of community, student and labor organizations, formed in 2016, began with a campaign to defeat a proposed \$500-million cut in State funding for CUNY. The Alliance has spent the years since that successful campaign developing a vision of what CUNY should be. Members of New York Communities for Change, Alliance for Quality Education, Young Invincibles, CUNY University Student Senate and the Hispanic Federation spoke at the press event launching the bill. [Click here for ND4C Summary & more about CUNY Rising Alliance.](#)

“Hunter College is a good school, but there were never enough academic advisors to help students like me stay on track to graduate. I went several semesters without ever seeing an advisor. Appointment slots were often booked, and there were not enough advisors in general to accommodate the students. It is necessary that New York works to pass the New Deal for CUNY. It is the least state could do for CUNY students,” said Tanisha Williams,

Hunter College Class of 2020, an activist working with Young Invincibles.

The ND4C introduction comes a day after CUNY administrators, unions, student groups and others testified at a state budget hearing about the Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2022, which begins April 1. The Professional Staff Congress called for an end to tax breaks for the rich and funding for the first year of the ND4C. The Governor's budget would cut CUNY by \$42 million and raise tuition by \$200 per year. "Even the Governor's best-case scenario, which would fill the state's entire \$15 billion budget shortfall with federal stimulus money, would leave CUNY starved of funds", said PSC President Barbara Bowen in her [testimony](#).

"In the depth of the Depression, New York came up with the money to invest in three new CUNY colleges: Brooklyn and Queens Colleges were founded during the 1930s, and Lehman College's beautiful campus was built by the WPA. Where is that vision now? We believe it still exists, and we are counting on legislators to be its spokespersons within State government. The current crisis demands visionary solutions, not defensive austerity. Austerity will not revitalize New York. A free and beautifully staffed CUNY will. The PSC is seeking \$154 million in new State investment to launch the New Deal for CUNY this year. That amount is well within reach if the revenue enhancements are passed," said PSC President Barbara Bowen.

More than a dozen legislators joined the New Deal for CUNY Legislators' Speak-Out or offered written statements:

"CUNY is a vital part of the fabric of New York and unleashes opportunity for so many. We must invest in its future and ensure New York remains home to a vibrant, world-class public university system that is accessible to all," said State Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris.

"I want to commend Sen. Andrew Gounardes and the Professional Staff Congress for their exciting, bold vision for CUNY. When the Free Academy (CUNY's precursor) was established 174 years ago, the founders had that same foresight: free tuition for immigrants. A New Deal for CUNY shows us a pathway to the future, where we can focus on the direction of public higher education in the years ahead. I hope we can return to a policy where there is no tuition, more full-time faculty and sufficient support services. We must continue to 'think big,'" said State Senate Higher Education Committee Chair Toby Ann Stavisky.

"CUNY is an integral part of the higher education system in New York State. Knowing that over a thousand of my constituents are currently enrolled and thousands more have benefited from CUNY's quality education, I truly appreciate the dedicated efforts of its administration and faculty. During the ongoing NYS budget negotiations, I look forward to protecting, as well as improving, the essential curriculum and programs offered by CUNY, creating a brighter future for it and its students," said State Senator Joseph Addabbo Jr.

"In the State of New York, access to quality and affordable higher education should be a right, not a privilege. The New Deal for CUNY is an important framework for how we can provide the best educational and emotional support for our city's students – by fully investing in faculty and mental health resources, and publicly funding free tuition for all in-state undergraduates. We can no longer afford to short-change our students and our dedicated educators – I look forward to fighting alongside my colleagues to build the public higher education system our communities deserve," said State Senator Alessandra Biaggi.

"A stable economy and a thriving democracy both depend on universal access to quality education. These trying times should leave no doubt about the urgency of investing in a New Deal for CUNY," said State Senator Jabari Brisport

“CUNY is integral to ensuring New York is an equitable and thriving city. By providing an affordable education to over 500,000 New Yorkers a year, CUNY is a reliable path into the middle class. In fact, a recent Brookings Institute study highlights CUNY as a national leader in social mobility, noting that CUNY sent almost six times as many low-income students into the middle class as all the Ivy League colleges combined. This was accomplished despite a generation of austerity at CUNY.

“As we call on CUNY to do even more during this unprecedented moment, we need a New Deal for CUNY. This reform legislation would finally provide adequate funding, make important investments in our faculty and facilities, and importantly make CUNY free once again. I believe a fair recovery in New York will rely on CUNY and its mission to educate and empower the next generation,” said State Senator Brad Hoylman.

“It is critical for CUNY students in our communities like the district I represent, who face significant academic and economic challenges, to have adequately funded public universities. At this moment, we must face these challenges with bold ideas, with a vision that will allow us to meet the benchmarks of modern education for a diverse society. And this is why I support A New Deal for CUNY legislation. Because at its best, CUNY is among the most critical resources Black and Brown communities have, a vehicle that will develop future leaders. We must dare; there is no greater vision than to invest in our NY by committing to a New Deal that will take the public university to a better future!” said State Senator Robert Jackson.

"CUNY is our biggest ace in the hole right now during the pandemic and economic turmoil, and New York State must not only restore but greatly augment funding for CUNY. It would be foolish not to direct resources to further develop the huge competitive advantage that New York enjoys with CUNY's success. Investment in CUNY is direct investment in our collective future and I am awesomely excited to be a founding member of the CUNY

Caucus! The time for a new deal for CUNY is NOW!" said State Senator John Liu.

"As we look to build back a better New York that works for everyone, that includes making meaningful investments in our public higher education system with the goal of someday making higher education free for New Yorkers once again. It's time to tax the rich so we can see to it that we can make free and quality higher education a reality in this city, finally giving CUNY the New Deal it deserves," said State Senator Jessica Ramos.

"As a CUNY alum, I know first-hand the power this institution has to change lives. I am honored to be here today to fully support the New Deal for CUNY. This plan will open up worlds of knowledge to people who might otherwise not be able to afford college. It will improve the quality of resources for those who are already students or serve as faculty. Knowledge is power and I'm glad to stand with CUNY today," said State Senator James Sanders Jr.

"As a Queens College graduate, I know the value of the full-time faculty that was available to us in the 1960s and early 1970s. As the student body has grown over the last several years, the loss of full-time faculty has been supplanted by hardworking but poorly paid adjuncts. Students pay over 33% more in tuition since 2011. Facing a new round of tuition increases without any increase in the Tuition Assistance Program in 7 years, students are regularly asked to pay more for less. CUNY is an engine of social mobility, but it can no longer run on fumes," said Assembly Higher Education Committee Chair Deborah J. Glick.

"As a proud graduate of the City University of New York (CUNY), I offer my enthusiastic support for a New Deal for our students, faculty, and personnel. I have been an advocate for a greater investment in CUNY--through tuition-free higher education, capital improvements, increased services--all of which expand access to higher education for low-to-moderate income students. The New Deal for CUNY is a strong proposal to address decades of

systemic neglect and presents an opportunity to rebuild facilities that educate our future leaders of New York. We must invest in and support this plan," said Assemblymember Khaleel M. Anderson.

"CUNY is, and has been, instrumental in the education and development of students throughout New York. Millions of New Yorkers have called CUNY home, and we must do everything we can to make sure CUNY continues the ability to serve New Yorkers for generations to come," said Assemblymember Brian Barnwell.

"CUNY has been one of the most cost-effective educational institutions that has allowed many low-income families and disadvantaged communities to prosper and further their career options. The New Deal for CUNY is a start to enhancing some of the services in place to better accommodate the needs of college students. This pandemic has surely taught us the great value of maintaining our mental health and economic stability. With that said, enhancing CUNY's services with plans to phase in free tuition, increase mental health counselors and academic advisors and improve full-time faculty is a step towards the right direction," said Assemblymember Maritza Davila.

"We know that CUNY has been instrumental in moving New Yorkers up to the economic ladder. It's sensible policy to ensure that as many New Yorkers as possible have access to the amazing opportunities that CUNY provides. Making CUNY tuition free once again is an investment in the people of New York," said Assemblymember Harvey Epstein.

"This is the moment, the cycle, the year, to reverse the racism and austerity of the 1975 fiscal crisis, which continues to plague this state. This is the cycle to tax the rich, end tuition at CUNY, and fully fund the university so that it can better serve and engage its majority working class POC student population. CUNY is the economic engine of our city, and fully investing in CUNY is crucial to our economic recovery. I am a proud CUNY graduate and

proud cosponsor of the New Deal for CUNY," said Assemblymember Phara Souffrant Forrest.

"As the son of two parents who both received their higher education at New York City public colleges, there are few causes more important to me than preserving access to affordable higher education in New York. After decades of disinvestment at the nation's largest urban public university, it's time to re-envision a New Deal for CUNY, with a return to free tuition, adequate numbers of full-time faculty and academic and mental health counselors, professionalized pay levels for adjunct faculty, and far-sighted capital investments in this vital engine of New York's economy and workforce," said Assemblymember Richard N. Gottfried.

"As a former adjunct faculty member at City College, I know the value of the City University of New York and its impact on faculty, staff, and most importantly its students. I'm proud to support this bill today for a Free CUNY as I believe that education is a human right and should not only be accessible to the wealthy. This legislation would address serious staffing needs that Professional Staff Congress/CUNY, the CUNY Rising Alliance and more have been fighting for and increase access to mental health services at a critical time when students have been most hard hit by the cruelties of the coronavirus. We cannot wait. Let's make CUNY free again," said Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas.

"CUNY emerged from a vision of providing free education to New Yorkers. Yet, after years of disinvestment from our state government, CUNY is far from free — in fact, some programs have seen over 50% tuition increases in the past decade. More than 60% of CUNY undergraduates come from families with incomes under \$30,000/yr and 80% are of color - these increases disproportionately hurt the very New Yorkers that our city is supposed to be lifting up. Raising tuition is not, and will never be, the solution — we must tax the rich and prioritize free, public education for all. A free and fully-funded CUNY is central to making

the promise of New York whole again." said Assemblymember Zohran K. Mamdani.

"Returning to a tuition-free CUNY is the change we need to move towards a world of true social, economic and racial equality. No one should be prevented from accessing education due to the lack of ability to pay, and no one should enter the professional world with a pre-existing burden of debt. It is time for New Yorkers to think big. Thank you Senator Andrew Goundares and Assembly Member Karines Reyes for introducing this crucial piece of legislation," said Assemblymember Marcela Mitaynes.

"I, myself, am a graduate of the City University of New York system, having graduated from the CUNY Law School at Queens College in 1989. The curriculum was extremely helpful for serving the needs of people from all walks of life and included clinics for us to get some real life experience before graduation. In the past 30 years, they have only excelled in improving things both at the CUNY Law School at Queens College and other CUNY schools to help more of the public earn their degrees and start their careers," said Assemblymember Michael Montesano.

"I strongly support a New Deal for CUNY. I am proud and ready to join with my colleagues in the Legislature to do all that we can to realize the true promise of CUNY by fighting for free tuition for all in-state students, to professionalize the adjunct teaching staff and ensure they are paid a decent and livable wage, and to expand on the academic and emotional support CUNY provides to its community of students. Investing in CUNY is investing in our next generation, and I want to thank Assemblymember Reyes and State Senator Gounardes for bringing us together as the CUNY Caucus," said Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal.

"CUNY continues to be an unwavering beacon and testament to the American Dream in the State of New York. For generations, its 25 campuses have served as an engine of socioeconomic mobility for millions of New Yorkers and produced some of our nation's

greatest thinkers across the professions. As a proud CUNY alumnus from Herbert Lehman College, it's important that we preserve and protect this vital institution for all New Yorkers," said Assemblyman Nader Sayegh.

"Unprecedented times call for boldness – a comprehensive plan to invest in our young people through a New Deal for CUNY. This plan would allow New York to show that it is serious about quality higher education by making it free for undergraduates, hiring more mental health counselors and academic advisors, and professionalizing adjunct compensation. This is a smart investment in the future of our city. I'm proud to stand with Assemblymember Reyes, Senator Gounardes, and education advocates to push for this critical component in New York's economic recovery," said Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon.

"As a proud CUNY graduate, I fully support the New Deal for CUNY. So many New Yorkers would not be where we are today without the opportunities CUNY afforded us, and we must do everything we can to ensure future generations enjoy those same benefits. That means removing economic barriers to education while guaranteeing CUNY has the necessary funding and resources to set our students and faculty up for lasting success. Repeated and devastating cuts have threatened CUNY's ability to carry out its vital mission to provide a world-class public education to all students, and we cannot allow CUNY to remain underfunded and understaffed any longer. I strongly urge my colleagues to sign onto this bill and make the New Deal for CUNY a reality," said Assemblymember Al Taylor.

"It is imperative that students receive a quality education from our CUNY system. We must make sure that CUNY is accessible to all. I am proud to stand with my colleagues in support of the New Deal for CUNY," said Assemblymember David Weprin.

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