



Office of the University Student Senate
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2025 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Higher Education
Testimony of Akkeem Polack
University Student Senate (USS CUNY)
USS Vice Chair for Legislative Affairs
February 6, 2025

Good Morning,

My name is Akkeem Polack, and I proudly serve as the Vice Chair for Legislative Affairs for the University Student Senate, representing over 200,000 CUNY students across 25 colleges. I am a student at York College, majoring in Communication Technology. I'm also an international student from Jamaica.

For many CUNY students, transportation is not just a financial burden—it is a barrier to success.

- The cost of a MetroCard adds up quickly, especially for students balancing tuition, rent, food, and other living expenses.
- Long commutes—sometimes up to four hours a day—cut into time that could be spent studying, working, or participating in extracurricular activities.
- Many students have had to skip classes or even drop courses because they could not afford the fare.

We should not have to choose between our education and the ability to afford the transportation needed to access it.

That is why I am urging the Legislature to fund Free MetroCards for CUNY students.

Providing Free MetroCards for CUNY students would:

- Eliminate a major financial burden, allowing students to focus on their education instead of worrying about affording their next bus or subway fare.
- Increase access to internships and job opportunities, ensuring students can participate in professional development without transportation barriers.
- Improve graduation rates, as students with reliable transportation are more likely to stay enrolled and complete their degrees on time.
- Promote equity, ensuring that no student is forced to sacrifice their education simply because they cannot afford the cost of getting to class.



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Investing in Free MetroCards for CUNY students is an investment in New York's future workforce, economy, and communities.

CUNY has been a gateway to opportunity for generations of students, but that gateway is closing for many because of something as simple—but as essential—as the cost of a MetroCard.

I urge the Legislature to take bold action to remove this barrier and ensure that every student, regardless of income, has the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Akkeem Polack