



Testimony on the FY 2026 Executive Budget Proposal Higher Education

The Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) represents more than 13,000 workers across the State University of New York (SUNY) System, including at SUNY Hospitals, state operated campuses, and System Administration. Our members are the backbone of the system, ensuring that SUNY continues to serve its students and the surrounding community.

Governor Hochul's Executive Budget includes several proposals that would impact SUNY and the CSEA members that work there. CSEA has taken positions on the following proposals:

- CSEA **supports** providing \$100 million in operating support and \$450 million in capital support for SUNY Downstate.
- CSEA **supports** providing \$200 million in capital support for SUNY Upstate but requests an **additional \$250 million** for critical infrastructure renovations.
- CSEA **opposes** PPGG Part Y, which expands design-build authority to all 64 SUNY campuses.

SUNY Hospital Funding

Of the 13,000 CSEA members across the SUNY System, more than 5,000 are employees of SUNY Hospitals. Our members are integral to hospital operations, working in direct care, food service, housekeeping, clerical positions. These hospitals serve our state's most vulnerable residents and play a critical role in training New York's healthcare workforce. Significant investment in the FY2026 budget is necessary to ensure that these hospitals can continue to provide quality care.

Downstate

CSEA **supports** Governor Hochul's Executive Budget proposal to provide **\$100 million in operating support and \$450 million in capital support for SUNY Downstate.**

SUNY Downstate is an essential healthcare provider in central Brooklyn, serving one of the most diverse and medically underserved communities in the state. The hospital provides life-saving care to thousands of patients each year, regardless of their ability to pay. However, years of financial strain and aging infrastructure have placed enormous pressure on the hospital and its workforce. This funding is critical to stabilizing SUNY Downstate's finances

and improving hospital facilities, which will allow the hospital to remain open and able to deliver essential healthcare services.

Upstate

Governor Hochul's Executive Budget proposes \$200 million in capital support to SUNY Upstate. However, greater investment is **necessary**. We urge the state legislature to provide **\$450 million in capital funding** for SUNY Upstate, an increase of \$250 million from the Executive's proposal, to fund a **new emergency department, an expanded burn center, and additional operating rooms**.

SUNY Upstate is the only Level 1 Trauma Center serving 14 counties across Central New York and the North Country. It is a critical lifeline for more than 1.8 million New Yorkers, providing specialized emergency care, trauma services, and life-saving treatment. However, its emergency department, built more than 60 years ago, is not equipped to meet the demands of a growing and aging population. As a result, SUNY Upstate now has the second-longest emergency room wait times in the state, putting patient outcomes at risk.

These challenges will only be exacerbated by the upcoming expansion of the region's workforce and population due to Micron's historic investment in Central New York. Micron's planned \$100 billion chip fabrication facility is expected to bring tens of thousands of new residents to the area, further increasing demand for medical services. Without immediate and substantial investment in SUNY Upstate's infrastructure, the hospital will be unable to meet the needs of a rapidly growing community. The state must act now to ensure that SUNY Upstate has the capacity to provide high-quality emergency and trauma care for both current residents and the region's future workforce.

PPGG Part Y – Design Build for SUNY

CSEA strongly opposes the Executive Budget proposal to grant carte blanche authority for all 64 SUNY campuses to utilize design-build.

Design-build is a project delivery method where a single entity is responsible for both the design and construction of a project. This approach consolidates control and accountability under one contractor, which often leads to reduced transparency and subpar construction quality. Without separate design and construction phases, there are fewer checks and balances to ensure that projects are completed on time, within budget, and meet the needs of the public.

Each SUNY campus already has design-build authority through the SUNY Construction Fund. This proposal would expand this authority so each campus can utilize this authority. This broad expansion undermines the authority of the State Legislature to decide when this project delivery method is appropriate. In cases where a campus wants to use design-build, the legislature can review these requests and enact standalone legislation approving its use for specific projects. This system of checks and balances has worked, and the legislature should retain its role in approving design-build authority on a project-by-project basis.

Further, CSEA continues to worry that design-build will be used to privatize public assets. The expansion of design-build undermines the traditional role of public workers and entities in overseeing public construction projects and their management of state-owned infrastructure. Design-build often involves the outsourcing of public projects to private, for-profit companies, shifting away from public control and reducing accountability to taxpayers. The last thing New Yorkers need are public assets operated by private companies driven by a profit motive.

Conclusion

The challenges facing our public hospitals demand significant investment in this year's budget. In addition, the legislature must carefully consider the implications of design-build authority and reject efforts to expand it cart blanche. CSEA remains steadfast in our commitment to the SUNY System and the dedicated public servants who work there. We stand ready to work with the legislature to secure the funding our SUNY hospitals desperately need and to ensure that state projects remain accountable, transparent, and beneficial for all New Yorkers.

For more information:

Joshua H. Terry
Legislative Director
Civil Service Employees Association Local 1000, AFSCME, AFL-CIO
josh.terry@cseainc.org
(518) 436-8622