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2025 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Transportation
Testimony of Davia Willis
University Student Senate (USS CUNY)
February 6, 2025

Good Morning,

My name is Davia Willis, and I am a Criminal Justice major at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, with plans to graduate in Spring of 2027. I chose to attend CUNY because of their diverse programs and affordability. As a First-Generation College Student, my career goals are to become a defense attorney and a politician with hopes of being in congress and erecting my own firm. My experience at CUNY has been both positive and challenging. Being an international student has precluded me from the flexibility of participating in a variety of opportunities, resulting in financial strain that has been a major issue as this is also associated with commuting. Currently, I commute to campus using both subway and bus, which costs me approximately \$132 per month. This expense adds a significant financial burden, especially for students already struggling with tuition, rent, and basic living costs. Many students are forced to skip classes, limit extracurricular involvement, or turn down internships because they cannot afford to travel.

To address these issues, I urge the Legislature to FUND FREE METROCARDS for CUNY students. Ensuring free fares for students would:

- Reduce financial barriers to education, allowing students to focus on their studies instead of worrying about transportation costs.
- Improve access to academic and professional opportunities, ensuring students can fully participate in their education.
- Promote retention and graduation rates, as students with reliable transit options are more likely to complete their degrees on time.

As students, we should not have to choose between our education and our ability to afford the transportation needed to access it. I strongly encourage the Legislature to invest in equitable transit solutions that support student success.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Davia A. Willis
John Jay College of Criminal Justice