



Office of the University Student Senate  
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**2025 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Higher Education**  
***Testimony of Muhammed Tekanyi***  
**University Student Senate (USS CUNY)**  
**February 25, 2025**

My name is Dr Muhammed Tekanyi, and I am doing a master's in healthcare management major at the College of Staten Island with plans to graduate in Fall 2025. In addition to already graduating with a master's in public health degree from CUNY SPH in fall 2021, I chose to attend CUNY for a second master's degree because of its accessibility, flexible and cost-effective programs.

As a non-First-Generation College Student, I know firsthand the value of higher education and how much impact it has brought to my family. My career goals as a physician trained abroad are to pursue residency in neurology and a PhD in neuroscience to become a neurologist and clinical neuroscientist with CUNY School of Medicine. My experience at CUNY as an immigrant has been amazing and at CUNY, I have found lifelong friendships and mentors who continue to contribute to my career progression. One significant challenge I have faced is the financial constraints and logistical difficulties associated with commuting to campus from Staten Island to Manhattan when I was attending SPH. This is an experience many students are still facing while attending CUNY. Additionally, I have experienced firsthand how my sister struggled through financial difficulties in the cost of transportation and cost of books and other academic needs for almost 5 years before she could graduate with her bachelor's degree in business management. I also worked part time while going to school to enable me to meet the monthly cost of transportation to school. An experience that a free metro card could have saved me from and many other CUNY students.

CUNY has historically provided affordable, high-quality education to students from all backgrounds, but financial and structural barriers continue to hinder student success. One of the most urgent concern facing our students is the rising cost of transportation. Many CUNY students commute long distances, often spending hundreds of dollars per month just to access their education.

To address this, USS urges the Legislature to fund FREE METROCARDS for CUNY students. Reliable and affordable transportation is not just about getting to class—it enables students to participate in internships, research opportunities, extracurricular activities, and civic engagement, all of which are critical to student success. Without accessible transit, students are forced to make difficult choices between attending class and meeting their basic needs.

Beyond transportation, USS also advocates for:



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- Supporting the CUNY CARES Project to address critical student needs such as food insecurity, housing instability, and access to health and mental health services.
- Enhancing academic and career advice to better support students in navigating their academic journey and preparing for successful careers after Graduation.
- Expanding support for disability services by increasing staff, improving access to adaptive sports, assistive technology, and ensuring greater campus accessibility.
- Improving IT infrastructure and support across CUNY to enhance the learning environment and provide students with the technological resources they need to succeed.

By investing in these areas, New York State can ensure that CUNY remains a world-class institution that serves all students equitably. We appreciate the Legislature's continued commitment to higher education and look forward to working together to remove barriers that hinder student success.

Respectfully,

Muhammed