



MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Students, faculty to governor: sign bipartisan bill to strengthen state's commitment to public higher education

Students and leaders of faculty unions at the State and City Universities of New York stood united today to urge Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo to sign a bill that would strengthen the state's commitment to public higher education.

The Maintenance of Effort bill, or MOE (S.281-A/A.5370-A), would ensure increased state funding to SUNY and CUNY for inflationary and mandatory expenses such as heating and electric bills, building rentals and other costs.

Cash-strapped campuses, still recovering from \$1.5 billion in cuts and flat funding since 2008, have been forced to use revenue from tuition increases—generated by NYSUNY 2020's rational tuition policy—to cover those costs. Students cover 63 percent of SUNY's operating costs; the state picks up the rest. Students paid 42 percent of those costs in 2008-09.

"We are here today to urge the governor to turn the state's rhetoric into reality by really maintaining support for higher education," said Alex Bornemisza, a SUNY Buffalo State student and chairperson of the New York Public Interest Research Group's Board of Directors. "Stagnant state aid has not kept pace with rising costs and tuition dollars have too often gone to pay for day-to-day mandatory costs."

"College is set to start in a few weeks and SUNY and CUNY students will again be paying more for tuition and fees this year," said United University Professions President Frederick E. Kowal, Ph.D. "Now it's the state's turn to pay its fair share. This bill will ensure that the state leaves tuition dollars to be spent on enhancing and expanding academic programs and services."

Bornemisza, Kowal, and Professional Staff Congress President Barbara Bowen, Ph.D., thanked key legislators—Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, Senate Higher Education Committee Chair Ken LaValle, and Assembly Higher Education Committee Chair Deborah Glick—for spearheading and approving the legislation.

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The state Assembly and Senate overwhelmingly approved the MOE bill in June, by votes of 146-to-1 and 62-to-1, respectively.

“Everybody wins with this legislation. That’s why it received near-unanimous, bipartisan support,” said Bowen. “With stable annual funding for basic operating costs, CUNY and SUNY will be able to sustain high-quality college education, and New Yorkers in every corner of the state will have enhanced opportunity for an affordable college degree. Public universities change lives—this legislation means that CUNY and SUNY can continue to offer that possibility to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers.”

“Legislators on both sides of the aisle saw the importance of this bill and approved it by a wide margin,” said Kowal. “We urge the governor to follow their lead and sign this bill.”

Students stood with faculty leaders at press conferences in Albany, Buffalo, Manhattan, Mineola and Syracuse to urge the governor to sign the bill into law. Students are paying more for an education at CUNY and SUNY and they are getting less. That’s got to change, they said.

Mandatory costs for SUNY’s three teaching hospitals in Brooklyn, Stony Brook and Syracuse would also be covered under the MOE bill.

"This is an excellent opportunity for Gov. Cuomo to stand up for CUNY and SUNY students by strengthening the state’s commitment to public higher education in New York,” said Bornemisza.

UUP represents 35,000 academic and professional faculty on 29 New York state-operated campuses, including SUNY’s public teaching hospitals and health science centers in Brooklyn, Long Island and Syracuse. It is an affiliate of NYSUT, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and the AFL-CIO.

The Professional Staff Congress (PSC/CUNY), affiliated with NYSUT, the American Federation of Teachers, NEA and the AFL-CIO, represents more than 27,000 faculty and professional staff at the City University of New York and the CUNY Research Foundation.

The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) is New York State’s largest student-directed research and advocacy organization. Its principal areas of concern are environmental protection, consumer rights, higher education, government reform, voter registration, mass transit and public health. NYPIRG is a nonpartisan, not-for-profit group established to effect policy reforms while training students and other New Yorkers to be advocates.