



**Luis “Junior” Alvarez, Chair
CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities**

Testimony at 2021 Mental Hygiene Joint Legislative Budget Hearing

February 5, 2021

Good Afternoon Distinguished Members of the State,

My name is Luis “Junior” Alvarez, and I am a proud student with a disability at Bronx Community College majoring in Education where I serve as the President of the CUNY Coalition of Students with Disabilities (CCSD) BCC chapter. I am also honored to be the Chairperson of the university wide CCSD that represents more than 11,000 students with disabilities.

According to CUNY’s Office of Institutional Research, there are more than 1,800 CUNY students with disabilities enrolled in degree programs in my Borough of the Bronx. I and so many others rely on reasonable accommodations from our colleges to have an equal opportunity to succeed, especially in distance learning made necessary because of COVID-19.

The enrollment of students with disabilities at CUNY is at an all-time high, with more than 11,000 of us enrolled at our University. At CUNY, our disabled student enrollment has grown by more than 50 percent over the past two decades and yet, our State funding for crucial accommodations and support services for these students has remained flat over the past 27 years.

The CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities (CCSD) supports the New York State Education Department’s \$7 million budget request to enhance support services for students with disabilities state-wide. This new source of funding would supplement, not replace, existing college and university support for students with disabilities. CCSD enthusiastically supports the State Education Department’s budget request for students with disabilities that would be the first of its kind in the nation, allowing New York to lead the way for the rest of the country.

Thank you.