

Statement by Dr. Guillermo Linares
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To the
New York State Senate Finance Committee
and
New York State Assembly Ways and Means Committee

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Good afternoon Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Stavisky and Glick, and all my former colleagues in the Senate and Assembly. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the Governor's 2022-2023 Executive Budget recommendations that impact the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC). I am Dr. Guillermo Linares, President of HESC.

In 2020-21, New York State's higher education institutions educated nearly 1.2 million students, nearly one quarter (or approximately 300,000) of whom received HESC-administered State financial aid.

The 2022-23 Executive Budget recommendations reflect Governor Hochul's strong commitment and support for higher education programs and offer a comprehensive plan that will both continue to make higher education in our State more affordable and accessible and help two-thirds of New Yorkers earn a post-secondary credential by 2030.

Building on the more than two dozen financial aid and college access programs that, in 2020-21, provided more than \$900 million to support the higher education costs of approximately 300,000 New Yorkers, the 2022-23 Executive Budget proposes to expand TAP eligibility for students enrolled in college part-time, authorize the use of TAP for workforce credential programs, and removes financial aid barriers to once again allow incarcerated individuals to get critical job skills.

Expanding Access to Part-Time TAP

The Executive Budget includes \$150 million to expand TAP to students enrolled in six or more credits at a SUNY, CUNY or not-for profit college located in New York State. The Executive recommendations remove the requirement for a year of prior full-time study, which currently makes the program largely unavailable to students studying part time, allowing the State to annually support 75,000 additional New York State students in their pursuit of a college degree.

Expanding TAP for High-Demand Workforce Credential Programs

Post-secondary education is crucial for economic success, with 70 percent of new jobs requiring some post-secondary credential. But roughly 2.4 million New Yorkers between ages 25 and 44 lack a post-secondary degree or credential, putting them at risk of being left behind as the job market continues to trend toward more skilled hires.

To make the State more responsive to these post-secondary workforce needs, the Budget further expands part-time TAP to cover students enrolled in non-degree workforce credential programs in high-demand fields at CUNY and SUNY community colleges.

To ensure the program focuses on the highest-growth areas, Empire State Development and the State's Regional Economic Development Councils will recommend which courses of sequence would be eligible for State funding, based on an analysis of regional industry trends, workforce needs, and existing program offerings.

Restoring the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) for Incarcerated Individuals

Since 1995, New York State law has prohibited incarcerated people from being eligible to receive state financial aid. The 2023 Executive Budget proposes to reverse this ban and expand educational opportunities within correctional facilities and help incarcerated individuals get critical job skills. This legislation repeals the prohibition against awarding TAP to otherwise eligible incarcerated individuals.

Closing

Governor Hochul has proposed a whole new era for New York, one in which we work together to ensure that New Yorkers have both access to a college education and an understanding of their financial aid options to support their pursuit and attainment of a postsecondary degree or non-degree credentialing.

Under the Governor's leadership, New York continues to lead the nation in expanding access to a quality and affordable college education. The Executive Budget includes a \$619 million increase (or 8.3 percent) in funding for higher education.

The Governor's recommendations for higher education continue to fund programs that enable the neediest of New York's students to pursue their educational goals regardless of financial situation. HESC is pleased to be an integral player in helping New York's students attain the economic and social benefits that accompany a college degree or non-degree credentials in high-demand fields.

Thank you, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.
