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Association of Program  
Administrators for  
CSTEP and STEP, Inc.

Testimony to the New York State Assembly Ways and Means and  
Senate Finance Committees-Higher Education Hearing  
Submitted by: Michael A. Molina, President

Monday, February 7th, 2022

Legislative Office Building

Albany, New York

On behalf of CSTEP and STEP programs and students throughout New York State, I thank you for convening this important hearing and for the opportunity to address you this afternoon.

First, I would like to thank the Legislature for its leadership in providing CSTEP and STEP and all of the opportunity programs with a much-needed 20% increase in funding for this current fiscal year. We are grateful for your continued support of the 18,000 CSTEP and STEP students that are served in 114 programs in SUNY, CUNY, and independent 4-year and 2-year colleges and universities.

The Proposed Executive Budget calls for a 10% increase in funding for CSTEP and STEP for 2023. We request an additional 10% increase in funding for a total increase of 20%. Our STEP and CSTEP community of programs continue to play an important role in bridging gaps in instruction, academic support, counseling and technology for our students and their families across the state. We need more funding to better serve our students and their specific needs amidst the continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our programs are highly effective and efficient, but funding for each project is limited by an enrollment-based funding formula that is outdated and obsolete. This formula has been utilized for the past two funding cycles (ten years) and has not kept pace with cost-of-living increases and the increase in fringe benefit rates. We request that any increases in funding be directed to increase cost of living adjustments (COLA) for existing STEP and CSTEP projects. To provide quality services to our students it is essential that projects retain talented and committed professional and instructional staff.

Second, we request that budgetary language indicating the legislative intent of any and all additional funds for CSTEP and STEP be included in the approved 2023 State Budget. While the current year 2022 State Budget included a 20% increase in funds for CSTEP and STEP programs, not one single current CSTEP program received any of these additional funds. The NYSED decided they would solely fund additional programs from a list of applicants it maintained, contrary to the clear intent by the Legislature that current programs be adequately supported.



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Third, we are requesting funding to pilot a CSTEP component that will provide support for CSTEP students enrolled in graduate degree programs in STEM, health, and licensed fields. We also want to enroll and support CSTEP graduates who complete four-year programs of study and then take “gap year(s)” to gain experience before applying to graduate and professional degree programs of study. Current NYSED enrollment guidelines do not allow for this category of students to be supported by CSTEP. Our programs need to grow and develop in order to meet the needs of our students.

For STEP, we request funding to expand our "Summer of Science" program for middle school students conducted jointly by Stony Brook University and Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL). This statewide program currently provides 25 students with the opportunity to participate in a specially designed curriculum taught by BNL scientists and secondary school teachers. Students are introduced to basic concepts and principles of scientific research and learn about the research projects and state-of-the-art equipment used at BNL. Students live on the Stony Brook University campus during their participation in this program and are mentored by current CSTEP students.

CSTEP and STEP programs continue to position New York State as a nationally recognized leader in preparing and directing students to careers in STEM, health, and licensed fields. We have a demonstrated record of success and are among the most effective and efficient educational programs in the nation. CSTEP and STEP are a past recipient of the National Science Foundation Presidential Medal of Excellence for Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring. During 2021, Adelphi University, Fordham University and Brooklyn College were recognized with the “2021 Inspiring Programs in STEM Award by Insight into Diversity Magazine. Examples of program success during 2020-202 include:

#### STEP

- 11,00 STEP students enrolled in 56 programs
- 1,142 students participated in research and internship activities totaling 36,200 hours

#### CSTEP

- 7,000 students enrolled in 58 programs
- 2,103 students participated in Research and internship activities totaling 209,883 hours

70% of CSTEP and STEP graduates pursue professional degree programs of study in STEM, health, and licensed fields.

Emphasis in additional funding should be placed on developing and expanding current programs. CSTEP and STEP continue to be among New York State's most successful education programs. This past year, our programs continued virtually and in-person to continue to serve our 18,000 students and provide them with the support they need to continue their journey



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towards academic and career success. STEP and CSTEP programs continued to meet their mission to increase minority and disadvantaged student representation in STEM, health, and licensed fields in New York State. CSTEP programs provide academic enrichment and support, mentoring, academic and career counseling, internships and research opportunities, standardized test preparation, and career activities and services. STEP programs provide academic enrichment in science, mathematics content areas. They also provide academic, career and financial aid counseling, standardized test preparation, college admissions counseling, and research training and internships. Among our graduates are Rhodes and Fulbright Scholars.

As New York State continues to build its STEM-centered industrial base, increased CSTEP/STEP funding will help produce the STEM professionals critical to our state's economic vitality. Your consideration and support of our requests will help us to support current programs and their students better and provide them with the resources and services they need in their journey towards academic and professional success.

Respectfully submitted,

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