



CCSD

CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities

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Good evening, distinguished members of the state legislature.

My name is Lennyn Jacob, and I serve as Chair of the CUNY Coalition for Students with Disabilities (CCSD), a group that represents the interests of thousands of students with disabilities at the City University of New York.

In addition to being a student leader, I am most proud of being a loving mother of a neurodiverse son with autism.

For 12 years, I served as a Teaching Assistant for children with disabilities at the New York City Department of Education; and then chose to further my education at Bronx Community College, where I am pursuing a degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences. My hope is to transition to a senior college within CUNY in pursuit of a Disability Studies degree.

The last two years have been difficult for all of us. The pandemic has caused hardships for millions of New Yorkers, not to mention for people all across the globe.

However, the pandemic has been particularly challenging for many people with disabilities. Students with disabilities are no exception.

Many students with disabilities have taken a break from their studies during this time.

Additional supports and services are required in order to help retain and recruit students with disabilities at CUNY, and other institutions of higher education throughout New York State.

CCSD therefore urges the state legislature to pursue the following investments in college and university students with disabilities:

First, Increase funding for the State Education Department's program to enhance supports and services for students with disabilities.

Thanks to your efforts during the 2021 legislative session, SED finally has a line in its base budget dedicated to enhancing services for college and university students with disabilities.

\$2 million was far from our goal, but the support came during a very difficult budget year... and we are extremely grateful!

However, the reality is: for every \$7 million that this program receives from the State, only about \$1 million is invested in CUNY students with disabilities.

The students who I represent need funding for this program to grow exponentially for it to truly make a difference in the services and supports they receive.

CCSD supports the State Education Department's request for a \$13.09 million increase for this program in FY23.

Secondly, Increase funding for the State Education Department's Readers Aid Program (RAP).

Governor Hochul's Executive Budget request includes a much-needed \$706,000 increase for SED's Readers Aid Program (RAP).

RAP provides funds to help meet the costs of notetakers, readers, and/or interpreter services.

CCSD urges the members of the state legislature to support a \$706,000 increase for the SED Readers Aid Program.

Third, Increase funding for CUNY LEADS.

The governor has also recommended an increase of \$165,000 to CUNY's operating budget for CUNY LEADS, our University's unique academic and career advisement program for students with disabilities.

CCSD would like to thank the members of the state legislature for being great champions for CUNY LEADS. We urge you to support an increase of at least \$165,000 for its budget line in FY23.

And finally...

Students with Intellectual Disabilities, who are enrolled in Federally recognized Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary (CTP) programs are eligible to apply for Pell Grants and College Work Study, but not TAP.

It's time to correct this error.

CCSD urges the passage of A3032A and S1786A, so that students with I.D. can apply for TAP.

Thank you.