



APACS

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

February 17, 2023
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York

On behalf of the 121 CSTEP and STEP projects throughout New York State and the 20,000 students that they serve, I thank you for convening this important hearing.

First, I would like to thank the Legislature for its leadership in providing CSTEP and STEP and all of the opportunity programs for its 3% increase in funding for this current fiscal year, along with budget language directing its use to support existing CSTEP projects. We are grateful for your continued support of CSTEP and STEP students in the SUNY, CUNY, and Independent four-year and two-year colleges and universities.

The proposed Executive Budget for 2024 calls for a 3% reduction in funding for CSTEP and STEP. APACS requests an increase of 20% in funding for 2024. Our programs continue to play an important role in bridging gaps in academic enrichment, personal and professional development, and providing instructional supplies and technology to our students. Our programs have also provided a community of support for students and their families as they continue to grapple with the impact of the pandemic. Very simply, we need additional funding to serve our students better and to continue to be responsive to the well-documented educational, social, and economic gaps created by the pandemic that has compromised the progress of students pursuing our targeted careers. Not being able to respond to these gaps will further exacerbate the pipeline of professionals entering STEM, health, and licensed fields.

Our programs are highly effective and efficient, and the Legislature has recognized this by investing in the growth of our network, for which we are grateful. While increased allocations have allowed the network to expand by 21 new projects over the last two years, all projects remain hobbled by an outdated and obsolete funding formula. The current funding formula devised in 2014 has failed to keep pace with the increased costs to administer our programs in 2024. There is simply less money to cover programmatic expenses (e.g., academic enrichment, instructional supplies, technology supplies, internships and research, and student travel) and personnel expenses (e.g., salaries and fringe benefits).

Essential components like our internship and research programs that are transformative for students require more funding. Summer bridge programs, where students make real progress on closing the knowledge and cultural gaps between middle school to high school and high school to college, are more expensive to conduct. The pandemic has created an extra layer of need for our middle school, secondary school students, and undergraduates that CSTEP and STEP directors and staff, and their institutions, have labored to meet. These new needs include food & housing insecurity, a reliance on students to work to offset expenses at home due to unemployment in families, increased requests for instructional and lab supplies, and increased requests for technology support to meet the everyday demands of coursework.

CSTEP and STEP need an additional 20% in funding in order for our programs to effectively respond to the aforementioned issues that interrupt or derail the academic success needed for entry into STEM,

health, and licensed fields. Expanded programming will allow us to include more students in critical program components while addressing the mental health and overall wellness of our students.

We are recognized national leaders in preparing and directing students to careers in STEM, health, and licensed fields. For over 35 years, CSTEP and STEP have had a proven record of success and are among the most effective and efficient educational programs in New York State. We are recipients of the National Science Foundation Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring. Several projects have been recognized individually for their excellent work with the Inspiring Programs in STEM Awards given by the INSIGHT into Diversity publication.

The following data illustrate the success of our programs during the 2021-2022 academic year:

CSTEP

- 8,195 students enrolled in 65 programs
- 1,946 students participated in Research and Internship activities totaling 307,305 hours

Over 75% of CSTEP graduates pursue professional degree programs of study in STEM and CSTEP-targeted fields.

STEP

- 12,209 STEP students enrolled in 56 programs
- 1,441 students participated in research and internship activities totaling 79,133 hours

Over 80% of STEP graduates pursue professional degree programs of study in STEM, health, and licensed fields.

Emphasis on additional funding should be placed on developing and expanding services of existing programs to address issues and barriers impacting academic success and achievement. As pipeline programs designed to address the underrepresentation of minority groups historically underrepresented in STEM, health, and licensed fields and students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, we ask for your support to meet the needs of our students and their families in their academic and professional pursuits.

Respectfully submitted,

Renaldo D. Alba, Ed.D., President
441 East Fordham Road
Collins Hall, 305
Bronx, NY 10458
718-817-3267