

To Whom It May Concern,

We are UAlbany YDSA, YDSA Binghamton, University at Buffalo YDSA, and College Socialists SBU, which are SUNY socialist student clubs, and we are organizing a campaign against the proposed tuition hikes and for free tuition. We would like this email to be used as Written Testimony for the Higher Education Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Monday, February 27th at 11:30 AM.

Petition

SUNY YDSA Chapters, SBU College Socialists, and socialist students across the SUNY system stand against Governor Hochul's proposed tuition hikes. Raising tuition reinforces educational stratification and restricts the free inquiry and expression of all students. New Yorkers deserve a SUNY system that is robust and free, we call for the elimination of all tuition and fees across all educational programs in NY.

Quotes from Petition Signatories

1. I decided to attend a SUNY school to save money but it is increasingly becoming unaffordable. These tuition increases will take money away that I could be using to cover several bills I am responsible for.
2. I am an out of state student. The tuition is already an ungodly amount for students like me, and any further increase would make it even harder to continue going to school here.
3. As an out-of-state student I have already been struggling with paying tuition. If the tuition increase occurs I may not be able to finish my education
4. I am not eligible for the tuition waiver so this increase would directly come out of my stipend. Everything is more expensive and my stipend doesn't go as far as it used to. This increase would significantly increase my financial stress and negatively impact my mental health.
5. This will affect my ability to attend college
6. It's already expensive and I barely get any help from fafsa, TAP, or excelsior.
7. I am going to be in more debt
8. I won't be able to finish college.
9. I wouldn't be able to complete my education or make something of myself
10. This will affect me by putting more unnecessary pressure and stress on paying off student debt.
11. I'll need to take out more loans which puts me into further debt than I'm already in.
12. The main reason I came to stony Brook is because it was my cheapest option as a transfer.
13. College is difficult to pay for as it is, an increase would be devastating
14. I will be extra extra poor
15. I have no parental support. You're charging me more to put me in more debt for what I have to pay back yet not offering me anything new.
16. I'm struggling with paying my current tuition as it is due to how there are so many on campus jobs but never hires.
17. I am already struggling to pay tuition as it is and only one person in my family is working. I cannot afford higher tuition.
18. It'll make my budget tighter
19. Our family got into a situation where we lost hundreds of thousands of dollars last year. This tuition increase might make it unaffordable to keep going to college.
20. I am paying for school with a combination of scholarships and loans. I am already in debt, and I missed the window for Biden's debt forgiveness. I don't think I'd be able to crawl out of this I debt if it gets even higher. It's unthinkable. How would I ever make enough money to even pay that off??? Will it stop if I'm homeless, or will they ask for my minimums by taking my cold sandwiches?

21. For me, a 6% increase means an \$2400 increase in annual tuition. My family is already going into debt for my education, and the last thing we want is even more debt.
22. My mom was widowed during the pandemic and has been working tirelessly to help me with college and get a degree in hopes of me having a better life than her. We have managed to scrape by since but the proposed tuition changes would make it extremely difficult to do. There's no reason to privatize the ability to learn and have a better life to the point where people are unable to improve themselves.
23. I will genuinely have less money to eat, less money for gas, etc. This will put a strain on me financially.
24. More money means more debt
25. It would trouble my family even more including me
26. Placing me further in debt
27. I can barely afford tuition as is. I'm taking out every loan that's being offered and can still barely manage to play the remaining out of pocket cost that isn't covered by FAFSA/TAP
28. I won't be able to afford school at all like no question. I pay for my tuition myself as a 20yr old undergrad.
29. When I'm not at school, I'm at work. I am barely making ends meet covering my tuition and other responsibilities. University scheduling does not provide adequate time for a full time job or an additional part time job. Where is the extra money coming from? Student loans that loom over our heads for years after graduation?
30. I pay for my own tuition with minimum wage and hard work, I barely make enough to cover it as is.
31. My family has very irregular income, so it is not known if we will make 5,000 in 4 months for tuition. Adding \$2k would further strain my family's money management.
32. The increase of tuition affects me due to the already high tuition already in place. Thankfully if it wasn't for financial aid and awards given from the state, I don't know if I would be able to make it at SBU.
33. They affect me and everyone because once it is increased, it will continue to. It is price gouging. And it will further create less access to education to people who can't afford it. Education shouldn't be something for the elite.
34. I am from a low income family and the tuition here is higher than my family income. I can only come here because of FAFSA and TAP. But I still have to pay 15K after that
35. I will be broke and won't be able to afford the necessities.
36. I will no longer be able to afford on campus housing. I will be a 2 hour commuter. Please god.
37. Literally will not be able to afford school, let alone on campus housing
38. I am poor. I can barely afford tuition.
39. further in debt
40. State schools are meant to be affordable institutions that make a quality education accessible to everyone. To raise the tuition even further than it already is is unjustifiable especially as many schools continue to decrease student amenities and increase cost. While I am graduating this year I have a sister who will be attending Binghamton University for at least another 3 years and for the tuition to be increased further would burden her with more debt than she will already have with the way the system currently stands. Free Suny tuition would change the course of her finances for life and give so many students the opportunities and relief they need and deserve.
41. They will prevent my children from growing a career that will allow them to live securely and happily
42. I currently receive the excelsior scholarship so I am not paying for tuition out of pocket. However, I must stay in New York State for 3 years after undergrad or else the scholarship becomes a loan. I can't afford to have a loan increase by 6% if I decide to leave after graduating.
43. I'm already having to take out thousands of dollars in student loans each semester. By increasing the tuition another several thousand dollars, university will be borderline unaffordable. I may have to drop student housing to cover costs.
44. Unable to rise up in the social ladder

45. I'm already taking out all of the federal loans I can, and private loans to cover the cost of going to Binghamton as an out of state student. The tuition hikes are just going to put me further in debt for a school that already has terrible resources and little student support.
46. My family struggles as it is to send me to school and these tuition increases threaten my ability to attend my school. I went to a state school to have an affordable education, yet it seems that every year I am being gouged for more money.
47. I might have to drop out because I'm barely able to pay my tuition and if it increases that much I won't be able at all to pay for it
48. I will no longer be able to afford my education which is the reason I can go to a state school.
49. I grew up in a poor household, and my siblings continue in abject poverty. These tuition rises could add difficulty to them getting the education they desire and deserve.
50. As a minority from the South Bronx with a single parent, tuition will feel almost impossible to pay for...I'm already struggling now and will be moving off campus next year for not being able to afford living on campus, AND it's so difficult to get a job upstate when you don't drive. Since I'm from the city I always relied on transportation so it might mean I'll even need to get a permit, license AND car...what else does the state want from us ...
51. I feel like going here would be a waste if the tuition is going to be similar to that of a private school. I most likely couldn't afford the debt and would just drop out to be honest.
52. Being an out of state student, Bing was already out of my price point which is ridiculous for a state school. The only reason I am able to attend Binghamton is due to my academic scholarship i was awarded after years of hard work in high school. As a student on a 2+4 track at Binghamton, if the tuition is increased, it would seriously jeopardize my ability to attend this institution in the future. I already have so much to worry about while going here, and I shouldn't have to worry about whether I can even afford to come back to a place where I've met great people and have had an amazing experience thus far.
53. Tuition hikes will make college more unaffordable for me. I am a working student who struggles being able to afford going to Stony Brook between the tuition and supplies needed for school.
54. It will make it harder to afford school and basic necessities.
55. feels like holding my breath
56. I will have to work more both during the semester and after and not have time to relax or study
57. I may not be able to attend the school
58. I won't be able to have enough money to go home to see my family. And when I inevitably graduate, I'll never make it to a point where I am able to repay my debt
59. I'm already paying 3x the in-state tuition and obviously it's totally UNFAIR. STOP BEING GREEDY.
60. I will be unable to continue my post secondary education because I'd be paying student loans all my life.
61. My parents already can't afford my tuition and neither can I. We're taking out massive loans just to give me the opportunity of an education, which is insane considering most classes are self taught.
62. As an out of state student, it will become more difficult to remain at this school as tuition is already high for me as is.
63. I am already on financial aid and don't want the increased stress of a raised tuition
64. The tuition increase is very inconvenient for my family and I as we have trouble making full payments in time. As well as this we receive minimal aid/loans.

Full Statement

Governor Hochul's 2023 State of the State program included a proposal to increase the tuition at SUNY and CUNY schools with the rise in the Higher Education Price Index, or about 3% every year. On top of this, the plan included a provision for a 6% rise in tuition at SUNY's four university centers (Stony Brook, Albany, Buffalo, and

Binghamton) over the next five years, ending in a 30% rise in tuition for the tens of thousands of undergraduates in these universities. This will amount to an increment of over \$2,000 for in-state students and over \$5,000 for out-of-state students. This robbery is described by Hochul's document as "reasonable tuition flexibility", with the "reason" hinging on the universities' rising costs. [1, 2]

The public university system, we are thus meant to believe, should function like a private enterprise, whose role is to sell job training as one would sell any other commodity. The universities should cover their own costs because, perhaps, the free market is the only way of deciding these things? Needless to say, this "reasoning" is antithetical to the existence of a public university system (for what defines SUNY and CUNY is precisely freedom from the private model of education). There is no reason why the entirety of SUNY's \$1.6 billion in revenues from tuition and fees or SUNY's entire \$12 billion budget could not be drawn from an increase in the state's \$220 billion budget. [3, 4]

Costs levied on those at the beginning of their adult lives are obviously not a simple and equal affair. Their effects are widely varied according to different students' economic circumstances, the economic circumstances inherited from their families. Rich families send their children to school and pay the cost without hesitation or difficulty. Poor families are forced to endure hardship and contract debt, to scrounge and seek out every opportunity for help. Poor students, especially those whose families cannot contribute to their education, are forced to spend their most precious years working for low wages in order to make ends meet. In 2020, 40% of full-time and 74% of part-time undergraduates were employed. This particularly affects people of color because in New York their poverty rates are double that of white New Yorkers. The rich remain rich and the poor remain poor; in all cases, a student's four years of college are not just an education in this or that subject, but more importantly an education in their class position. [5, 6]

This is papered over by a vague belief that it all works out in the end, that those from rich families will pay and those from poor families will be covered by TAP, Excelsior, and Pell Grants if the need arises. First, in a time where there is over \$1.7 trillion in American student loan debt, this is patently false. The average CUNY student is \$16,000 in debt at graduation and the average SUNY student has \$27,000. This debt is the residue not paid by either scholarships or "parent grants". Second, these scholarships exchange one set of demands (for money) for another. Students receiving benefits must be enrolled for a certain number of credits, confined to their specific field of study. New York State in this way ensures that it gets its money's worth, never minding that the same students receiving benefits are also the ones most dependent on holding down a job to pay the remainder of their costs, and thus those for whom the requirements cause the most hardship. And there are always uncovered costs, because, in addition to tuition and fees, the universities also act as landlords, extracting rent from the students for their dormitories as ruthlessly as any capitalist. [7, 8, 9]

So one might ask: why not cut this whole knotted mess, and make university free for everyone? We students do not want class to define all our interrelations. We want the freedom to study without the uneven and arbitrary imposition of labor requirements, without worrying whether unforeseen events could lead us to void our state funding. We want to start our careers as equals, to collaborate with the brightest and most hardworking people in our respective fields, rather than let talent rot and mediocrity thrive as we are all filtered based on inherited wealth and poverty. Making college education free for everyone and ending the universities' landlordism are our simple demands. Why have these not already materialized?

In short, because we live in a capitalist system, in which the wealth needed for operating a modern university system is not held equally, but is privately owned as capital. If the burden is to be shifted off the backs of poor students, it must be taken up by capital, and the capitalist class demands payment for its consent. This payment is partially extracted through the universities' function as training grounds for the kinds of employees currently in demand. We are taught by them to accept the current capitalist system as inevitable, rather than learning how to overcome it. The same tribute is paid to the capitalists when we are forced to slave away during the best years of our lives to pay for our miseducation, whether it is done immediately or deferred through debt. The capitalists represented by the New York government also reap the reward for their loyalty when the state enforces their sectional interests against other capitalists. Hence the requirement that the Excelsior Scholarship recipients must

reside in New York, not only during their period of study, but for a certain period afterward, to give the first pick of graduates, and thus a competitive advantage, to the New York capitalists.

All of these manifestations – shifting the burden of education onto the shoulders of students, destructive competition along the obsolete lines of states, and the corruption and restriction of education itself – are the attempts of an over-ripe capitalist system to survive through parasitism and decay. The capitalist class is under the illusion that we cannot see them through Hochul’s proposals, and in this, they are grossly mistaken. We do not accept the increase in tuition. Nor do we accept the very existence of tuition and fees. Quality education should be afforded to everyone, not just those who were born wealthy. The ruling capitalist class has never given up such concessions without a fight. Thus, we call upon our fellow students and all New Yorkers to join us in our call for the abolition of tuition and fees. Only through mass action can we make education free for all.

Signatory List

Author Organizations

1. College Socialists SBU
2. UAlbany Young Democratic Socialists of America
3. Young Democratic Socialists of America at Binghamton University
4. Young Democratic Socialists of America University at Buffalo

Signatory Organizations

1. Stony Brook University Research Assistants Union
2. Stony Brook University Graduate Student Employees Union

Signatories

1. Matthew Belzer
2. Han Glavan
3. anonymous
4. phoebe rinn
5. Tyler Rouse
6. Olivia Sutherland
7. Chloe Nevers
8. Anonymous
9. Anonymous
10. Victoria Komenkowsk
11. Manny Vilari
12. Dylan Lenin Santos
13. Amanda Basinger
14. Isabella Filagrossi
15. Caitrin Walker
16. Cara
17. Anonymous

18. Yuchen Zhang
19. Nathan Carlson
20. Anonymous
21. Kait Webber
22. Anonymous
23. Anonymous
24. Matthew Kenneth Porco
25. Anonymous
26. Isabella Marchitelli
27. Christine Pash
28. Anonymous
29. Alison Thomas
30. Peter Belotserkovskiy
31. Anonymous
32. Corinna Kirsch
33. Anonymous
34. George McLane
35. Anonymous
36. Anonymous
37. Erika Warford
38. Anonymous
39. Anonymous
40. Anonymous
41. Jamie Gene Kern
42. Christopher Clark
43. Jaden Baldwin
44. Anonymous
45. Emily Fredericks
46. Olivia Franzone
47. Alex Myers
48. Anonymous
49. Ahab Rizvi
50. Anonymous
51. Anonymous
52. Tripp Hayes
53. Rana Guney
54. Jahnovia Wheatley
55. Mark Vincent Guevarra
56. Mychal Wipf
57. Miranda Sharp
58. Jared Tjahjadi
59. Anonymous
60. Rachel Kravchenko
61. Kendall Sormani Chang
62. Anonymous
63. Breanna Rodriguez
64. Eddie Chen
65. Jennifer Bradley

66. Anonymous
67. Olive Koren
68. Gavriel Miller
69. Anonymous
70. Mark Koch
71. Anonymous
72. Ione Henriksen
73. Anonymous
74. Anonymous
75. Ciro Balducci
76. Brennan Lynch
77. Lauren Radicchi
78. Nathan Sommer
79. Saptaborna Barua
80. Marie Bayandin
81. Anonymous
82. Mingi Hwang
83. Anonymous
84. Anonymous
85. Aiden Foley
86. Hasan Baalbaki
87. Joseph Raskind
88. Anonymous
89. Anonymous
90. Anonymous
91. Antonio Franklin
92. James O'Meara
93. Anonymous
94. Sean Reynolds
95. Marc
96. Casimir Isaacs-Corcoran
97. Iman
98. Zhiyi Zhou
99. Anonymous
100. Anonymous
101. Anonymous
102. Anonymous
103. Juliana S
104. Anonymous
105. Anonymous
106. Anonymous
107. Olivia Hamel
108. Cody Crouse
109. Anonymous
110. Kim-Chi Ngo
111. Anonymous
112. Anonymous
113. Mario Amaya

114. Shubhangi Tank
115. Anonymous
116. Alisha Case
117. Anonymous
118. Spencer Schiltz
119. Alexander Van Geuns
120. Anonymous
121. Anonymous
122. Anonymous
123. Anonymous
124. Anonymous
125. Anonymous
126. Anonymous
127. Bekim Gashi
128. Anonymous
129. Justin Tran
130. Anonymous
131. Nafisa Tanzim
132. Alana Burghart
133. Anonymous
134. Adam Ireneo Ascione D'Elia
135. Haylie Byers
136. Anonymous
137. Joseph Won
138. Cameron Sheitz
139. David Collins
140. Noelle Dutch
141. Anonymous
142. Anonymous
143. Anonymous
144. Blake Lewinski
145. Anonymous
146. Anonymous
147. Nolan Smithers
148. Anonymous
149. Anonymous
150. Samuel Kessler
151. Dennise Laguna
152. Anonymous
153. Sasha G
154. Estelle Garrett
155. Anonymous
156. Anonymous
157. Jessica Rosario
158. Anonymous
159. Sophie Galarneau
160. Dylan Bass
161. Samantha Bogart

162. Anonymous
163. Angela Ochoa
164. Anonymous
165. Thomas Cipro
166. Hassan
167. Claudia Pascale
168. Anonymous
169. Anonymous
170. Ken
171. Anonymous
172. Anonymous
173. Anonymous
174. Anonymous
175. Anonymous
176. Anonymous
177. Edwin Wood
178. Eva Genovese
179. Sonay T
180. Anonymous
181. Xingyu Zhang
182. Anonymous
183. Anonymous
184. Anonymous
185. Anonymous
186. Anonymous
187. Ayana Jackson
188. Anonymous
189. Anonymous
190. Rachel Smith
191. Tobias Weiss
192. Josh Levykh
193. Anonymous
194. Anonymous
195. Sage Guzman

Thank you,
UAlbany YDSA
YDSA Binghamton
University at Buffalo YDSA
College Socialists SBU