



Office of the University Student Senate  
555 West 57th Street, 1420  
New York, NY 10019  
Tel: (646) 664-8844  
Fax: (646) 664-8863

**2025 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Transportation**  
*Testimony of Yaddy Valerio*  
**University Student Senate (USS CUNY)**  
**February 6, 2025**

Good Morning,

My name is Yaddy Valerio, and I am a current graduate student at the CUNY School of Public Health and Health Policy. I am testifying in support of the CUNY USS initiative for free MetroCards for CUNY students.

When I was an undergraduate student at Lehman College, I often found myself walking to school from Washington Heights to Bedford Park Boulevard because I could not afford transportation. As I was approaching my final year at Lehman, I found traveling to school more challenging. I started missing classes. In my final year at Lehman, amidst a global recession that severely impacted my household income, I had to walk this route almost daily for an entire year. Whether on freezing winter days, sweltering summer days, or during springtime when I struggled with seasonal allergies, I made this journey on foot. Not getting to school due to not having transportation impacted my grades. As a student with limited resources, I constantly wished I could afford to take the bus or train. I do not want current and future CUNY students to go through this situation.

Now imagine if I had lived even farther away—would I have been able to continue my education? I strongly believe the answer is no.

Providing free MetroCards to students would eliminate a significant financial barrier for those who are already dealing with limited resources. Many students face the additional burden of rising living costs, including rent, food, and healthcare.

Beyond financial relief, free MetroCards would promote student success by ensuring students can consistently attend classes, access campus resources, and participate in extracurricular activities that enrich their education. Reliable transportation is critical for creating a supportive environment where students can thrive academically and personally.

Free MetroCards are more than a convenience—they are an investment in student success and an acknowledgment of the challenges CUNY students face every day.

Respectfully,  
Yaddy Valerio