

**Testimony to the Joint Legislative Public Hearing on
2025 Executive Budget Proposal: Higher Education**

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

Good morning Chairpersons Krueger, Pretlow, Stavisky, Hyndman, and members of the Senate and Assembly and staff. On behalf of Fordham University President Tania Tetlow, it is my pleasure to share progress that Fordham has made over the past year in pursuit of our mission – in particular, our commitment to being an open and diverse campus committed to both excellence and opportunity.

Our values as a Jesuit institution call upon us to do ever more; with your increased support for programs that are proven to create upward mobility, Fordham and our colleagues can build upon our record of student success and further amplify visionary work for the benefit of our campus communities.

Colleges and universities nationwide are navigating significant change. Even prior to recent Executive Orders and other directives from the Trump Administration, many campuses had to develop action plans in response to the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2023 rollback of Affirmative Action. Fordham University implemented an extraordinary plan in accordance with SCOTUS guidance and we are proud to share that 50% of all first-year students in the Class of 2028 identify as an underrepresented minority; 27% of all first-year students are first-generation. This achievement is possible because of investments championed by the Senate and Assembly. Specifically, over the past 50+ years, New York State’s suite of “opportunity” programs – Bundy Aid, Liberty Partnerships Program, Higher Educational Opportunity Program (HEOP), Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (CSTEP), Science and Technology Entry Program (STEP), and others – have collectively helped hundreds of thousands of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a proud HEOP and CSTEP alum, I can attest to the transformational power of these programs.

All cuts proposed in the Executive Budget should be restored and investments increased to ensure that New York State meets the challenging nature of this historic moment.

The students, faculty, and staff of Fordham University respectfully request that the following items be included in the Senate and Assembly’s one-house budget proposals and negotiated into the final SFY25-26 Enacted Budget.

- Increase **Opportunity Program Funding by 20%**, specifically for New York’s life-changing Higher Education Opportunity Program (to \$57.9M), Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program (to \$19.5M), Science and Technology Entry Program (to \$25.8M), and Liberty Partnerships Program (to \$19.9M).
- Restore **Direct Institutional Aid (Bundy Aid)** funding levels and investment at all universities to ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds can pursue a degree at any institution of their choosing.

- Restore the **NYS Higher Education Capital Matching Grant Program (HECap)** which ensures the construction of new facilities that support New York’s students, workforce development, and sustainability goals.
- Raise the **Max Award for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)** to \$7,070 per student.
- Raise the **Enhancing Supports and Services for Students with Disabilities** for Postsecondary Success Program (to \$10M).

Clean Energy and Sustainability Workforce Development and Entrepreneurship

Further, to ensure the successful implementation of New York State’s visionary goals to create a just and equitable green economy, that requires an unprecedented investment in workforce development and entrepreneurship. Fordham will be a committed partner in preparing and training the next generation of green economy workers, reducing unemployment rates in the Bronx, and helping create pathways to well-paying careers.

Fordham University respectfully requests that the Enacted Budget include investments that support the growth and creation of new community-based workforce development programs in the areas of clean energy, energy efficiency, sustainability, urban agriculture, and more.

In Closing

Fordham University is grateful for the Senate and Assembly’s unwavering support of New York’s students, and appreciates your steadfast leadership. Just as Fordham is the campus for so many students from across New York State, it is also your campus. We would be happy to welcome you to campus to meet some of our amazing students and get a first-hand experience of their work and the opportunities we are creating. Please contact me directly at any time to arrange a visit or if there is anything our team can be helpful with as this year’s budget process proceeds.

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