



Office of the University Student Senate
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2025 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Higher Education
Testimony of Vincent Mirabella
University Student Senate (USS CUNY)
February 25, 2025

My name is Vincent Mirabella, and I am a Political Science major at The College of Staten Island with plans to graduate in 2026. I chose to attend CUNY because it is cost effective, offers many opportunities for internships and field trips NYC, and has a strong alumni network who are willing to give back and mentor the next generation of students. As a First-Generation College Student, my career goal is to become an attorney. My experience at CUNY has been positive and supportive. Teachers care about students and foster a helpful class environment. The faculty on my campus are very friendly and kind. One significant challenge I faced was adjusting my major after my first year, and finding my path forward in the pre-law department. My advisors and peers were very supportive and helped me make the transition effectively.

CUNY has historically provided affordable, high-quality education to students from all backgrounds, but financial and structural barriers continue to hinder student success. One of the most urgent concerns facing our students is the rising cost of transportation. Many CUNY students commute long distances, often spending hundreds of dollars per month just to access their education.

To address this, USS urges the Legislature to fund FREE METROCARDS for CUNY students. Reliable and affordable transportation is not just about getting to class—it enables students to participate in internships, research opportunities, extracurricular activities, and civic engagement, all of which are critical to student success. Without accessible transit, students are forced to make difficult choices between attending class and meeting their basic needs.

Beyond transportation, USS also advocates for:

- **Supporting the CUNY CARES Project** to address critical student needs such as food insecurity, housing instability, and access to health and mental health services.
- **Enhancing academic and career advisement** to better support students in navigating their academic journey and preparing for successful careers after graduation.
- **Expanding support for disability services** by increasing staff, improving access to adaptive sports, assistive technology, and ensuring greater campus accessibility.
- **Improving IT infrastructure and support across CUNY** to enhance the learning environment and provide students with the technological resources they need to succeed.

By investing in these areas, New York State can ensure that CUNY remains a world-class institution that serves all students equitably.



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We appreciate the Legislature's continued commitment to higher education and look forward to working together to remove barriers that hinder student success.

Respectfully,

Vincent



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Testimony for the 2025 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Transportation on February 6, 2025

My name is Vincent Mirabella, and I am a Political Science major at The College of Staten Island, with plans to graduate in 2026. I chose to attend CUNY because it is cost effective, offers many opportunities for internships in NYC, and has a strong alumni network. As a First-Generation College Student, my career goals are to become an attorney. My experience at CUNY has been positive and supportive. One significant challenge I have faced is balancing school and work due to the financial burden associated with school.

Currently, I commute to campus using my car, which costs me approximately \$800-\$1000 per month. This is necessary due to the limited bus lines and lack of train lines that go to my campus. A 15 minute drive would turn into a hour and forty five minute commute which is a huge waste of time. This expense adds a significant financial burden causing me to work up to 20 hours a week at times. In order afford to get back and forth to school. I often have to miss out on club activities and events because I am working. This expense adds a significant financial burden especially for students already struggling with tuition, rent, and basic living costs. Many students are forced to skip classes, limit extracurricular involvement, or turn down internships because they cannot afford to travel.

To address these issues, I urge the Legislature to FUND FREE METROCARDS for CUNY students. Ensuring free fares for students would:

- Reduce financial barriers to education, allowing students to focus on their studies instead of worrying about transportation costs.
- Improve access to academic and professional opportunities, ensuring students can fully participate in their education.
- Promote retention and graduation rates, as students with reliable transit options are more likely to complete their degrees on time.

As students, we should not have to choose between our education and our ability to afford the transportation needed to access it. I strongly encourage the Legislature to invest in equitable transit solutions that support student success.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



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