



# NEWS RELEASE

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## NYPIRG'S INITIAL REACTIONS TO GOVERNOR'S HIGHER EDUCATION BUDGET PROPOSALS

NYPIRG currently reviewing the budget bill language that goes with the governor's higher education proposals, but here are our initial comments; apparently:

- The governor proposes mandatory campus food pantries at all SUNY and CUNY schools to address rising food insecurity. We agree, no student should have to choose between paying for textbooks and buying a meal.
- The governor's plan expands the Excelsior Scholarship as scheduled. The plan increases the income threshold for middle income students to qualify for free tuition at SUNY and CUNY to \$110,000 this year.
- The governor calls for students who are undocumented immigrants to qualify for state financial aid programs.
- The governor puts forth protections for student loan borrowers.

But there are questions too:

- While there are modest funding increases for SUNY and CUNY, they don't seem to keep up with rising costs. Stagnating base aid funding paired with rising costs has meant that SUNY and CUNY cannot provide additional class offerings, adequate advisement services, and other resources which contribute to student success and graduation.
- Will this year's final budget continue to box part-time students, undocumented students, graduate students, and incarcerated students out of TAP and the Excelsior Scholarship?
- For students who do not qualify for financial aid, such as the above and others, the governor's budget keeps in place "predictable tuition plan" – which has increased tuition by over 35% since 2011.
- The governor's plan cuts state support for the Bundy Aid program, which helps independent colleges meet the financial aid for students (among other items). It is not clear if the Higher Education Capital Matching Grants program will meet those needs.

Of course, the governor can answer these questions, or fix shortfalls, over the next 30 days. If that fails to happen, the Senate and Assembly must act to make sure that higher education is affordable and accessible to all New Yorkers.

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