



September 7, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY), we wish to thank you for your unwavering support for the 894,000 students in the state of New York who are enrolled at one of our 89 collective institutions of public higher education. Our students have endured extraordinary challenges throughout the COVID-19 global pandemic, and because of your extraordinary leadership, have had the ability and opportunity to safely continue their education and help our state rebuild and grow.

As the House and Senate negotiate an infrastructure and budget reconciliation plan, we are greatly encouraged to see higher education and research and development provisions in the Senate's resolution. As deliberations continue, we respectfully urge that the higher education components of President Biden's American Jobs and American Families Plans be in the final legislation. These proposals recognize and reaffirm the essential contributions of public colleges and universities in creating a strong economy and empowering the upward social mobility and opportunity for which SUNY and CUNY are renowned. We know how committed you are to providing Americans affordable access to high-quality postsecondary education of all types—the president's proposals would help to achieve that goal. In particular:

- 1. Doubling Pell Grants.** In the aftermath of the pandemic, Pell grants are even more crucial to the over six million students nationwide who benefit from them. However, the value of Pell has declined drastically, from covering over 75 percent of college costs in 1980, to only 30 percent today. While the president proposes an increase to Pell, we strongly support an investment to double Pell grants now to provide a truly transformative opportunity to help students, especially those impacted by the pandemic. To further benefit students, we encourage that you expand short-term Pell to industry-aligned micro-credential programs offered at not-for-profit colleges and universities, increase Federal Work Study (FWS) authorization levels for institutions who serve the most students receiving Pell, and include off-campus cooperative education experiences in the definition of FWS.

- 2. Investing in Public Higher Education Infrastructure.** The increasing sophistication of technical education, which has a growing virtual component, requires continuous, large-scale capital investments. Academic facilities across the public higher education sector need at least \$76 billion in modernization. We support the president's proposed \$12.4 billion allocation for community college infrastructure and urge that additional investment include public four-year institutions, as both SUNY and CUNY have significant deferred maintenance needs on all of their campuses. Additionally, we strongly support new broadband investments totaling \$65 billion which are included in the bipartisan infrastructure agreement. Higher education institutions would be eligible for broadband grant funding and these grants would ensure all students have the tools necessary for a variety of learning modalities including remote learning.
- 3. College completion grants.** Providing students with the academic, counseling, financial management, and other tools that they need to succeed is costly, and many institutions lack the necessary resources. President Biden's \$62 billion proposed college completion grants will help more students cross the finish line. These expenditures are a complement to the federal investment in student aid.
- 4. Investment in Community Colleges.** We are heartened by President Biden's strong support of free community college. We support the federal government's sustained, additional investments with Maintenance of Effort in community colleges because of their transformational work. Community colleges can also be especially helpful in a post-pandemic world. There will need to be major economic adjustments and there will be an ongoing skills gap. Community Colleges can provide high-quality, employer-oriented training. President Biden proposed \$9 billion over 10 years to fund a similar program to help community colleges equip the nation's workforce with the ever-growing skills demands of the modern economy.
- 5. National Science Foundation research and technology directorate & research investment in climate and clean energy.** SUNY and CUNY have a history of generating some of the world's most transformative inventions, and the proposed technology directorate and increasing research funding will provide our faculty and students the opportunity to continue the quest to improve the world through research and innovation.

Thanks to you, SUNY and CUNY are well positioned to ensure that all students achieve their educational goals and can attain a family-sustaining income. Enhancing federal financial aid, improving educational facilities, and supporting data-driven completion strategies and job training programs will be essential to the resurgence of our economy.

Sincerely,



Jim Malatras, Ph.D.
Chancellor, SUNY



Felix V. Matos Rodriguez, Ph.D.
Chancellor, CUNY