

New York State Student COVID-19 Response Letter

June 15, 2020

We, the undersigned representatives, recognize the COVID-19 relief efforts undertaken by the State of New York thus far, while calling upon our Governor, Assembly, and Senate to support the needs of students.

As college campuses closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic across New York state, students lost more than access to libraries and lecture halls; they lost jobs, their ability to pay for [housing](#), and the resources to support their everyday lives. Income earned by students is [crucial](#): 43% of full-time students and 81% of part-time students reported being employed prior to the pandemic. Coronavirus layoffs are [disproportionately impacting](#) New York residents, with students losing the jobs they rely on to make ends meet.

Simultaneously, the New York State Division of the Budget has announced that the [initial budget control actions](#) outlined in the Fiscal Year 2021 Enacted State Budget Financial Plan will reduce state spending by \$10.1 billion. We recognize this dilemma, however, acknowledge an investment in students now will lead to [greater prosperity](#) for New York State in the future.

We strongly urge our representatives in Albany to consider:

1. **A Public Hearing on the Needs of Students:** New York students have been uniquely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. A virtual public hearing will enable collaboration between elected student representatives and government officials in Albany.
2. **A Rent Relief Fund For Students:** Given the enormous loss of income that has come as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is essential that New York students have access to a student specific rent relief fund to enable their future academic success.
3. **Emergency Support for eligible DACA student recipients:** While excluded from CARES Act funds under Title IV of the Higher Education Act, eligible students should be granted financial assistance by New York State through a subsidized loan program specifically developed to assist students that fall under the New York State DREAM Act.
4. **Continued Funding for TAP, EOP, and Excelsior Scholarships:** As students are further economically disadvantaged by the COVID-19 pandemic, New York State should match last year's higher education funding for TAP, EOP, and Excelsior scholarships.

Extending support to *all* students is a critical step in maintaining commitment to higher education and ensuring resilience as New York State and its economy reopens.

Sincerely,

Link to [sign on](#).

Joseph Anderson, President, Cornell Student Assembly

Austin Ostro, President, The State University of New York (SUNY) Student Assembly

Timothy Hunter, Chairperson, The City University of New York (CUNY) University Student Senate

Casey Smith, President, Tompkins Cortland Student Government

Justine Hastings, President, Syracuse Student Association

Justyna Gorka, President, University of Rochester Students' Association

Lawson Castaldo, President, Niagara University Student Government Association

Austin Ruffino, Senator, Ithaca College Student Governance Council

Rudaba Ahmed, President, Student Association at State University of New York at Plattsburgh

Tommy Keith, President, Hamilton College Student Assembly

Amarachi Iheanyichukwu, President, Colgate University Student Government Association

Michael Lilholt, Vice President of Student Services, St. John Fisher College Student Government Association

Patrick Kohn, President, St. John's University Student Government