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### **NYPIRG STATEMENT ON HIGHER EDUCATION BUDGET**

(Albany, N.Y.) Early Saturday morning, the Senate and Assembly approved a state budget. In many ways, the higher education portion of the agreement is the best in modern memory, in other ways a lost opportunity. The budget invests in the State University and City University of NY \$500 million in additional support of the systems' operations. It includes \$150 million to expand the state's largest college students' financial assistance, the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP), to currently-ineligible part-time students who are enrolled in six or more credits at a SUNY, CUNY or not-for-profit independent college. The budget also includes \$5 million to restore TAP eligibility for incarcerated New Yorkers. \$59.6 million to CUNY and \$48.8 million to SUNY to fully reimburse each system to eliminate the TAP Gap. An additional \$53 million each to SUNY and CUNY to hire additional full time faculty at four year colleges or community colleges. \$15.6 million in start up funds to expand childcare to all CUNY and SUNY campuses. \$2 million for SUNY and CUNY mental health programs. The budget included a 13 percent increase in opportunity programs.

There was no agreement to increase the maximum TAP award or to raise TAP eligibility. There was no agreement on rolling back tuition costs. There was no increase in Bundy Aid (which helps independent colleges). Those were serious failures.

#### **The following statement is attributable to Megan Ahearn, Program Director for NYPIRG:**

“Students have been sounding the alarm on higher education funding shortfalls for years – the state's 2023 adopted budget begins to answer the call. There is no doubt that this higher education budget is the most positive in a generation, taking steps to support education equity and quality. Yet, it falls short of the financial needs of students and of higher education institutions. SUNY and CUNY community colleges, as well as the small four-year SUNY and private colleges, are all facing serious financial shortfalls that correspond with plummeting enrollments. Not only do those shortfalls harm the institutions, they undermine the state's economic development. Colleges and universities are hands down the best investment the state can make in its future.

The journey toward an affordable, quality, equitable college education is incomplete. More needs to be done.

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