

Testimony before the Joint Legislative Hearing on Higher Education
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On behalf of the State University of New York at Binghamton (Binghamton University) I would like to thank the Legislature for holding these important public hearings. I especially want to thank Chair Assemblymember Deborah Glick and Chair Senator Ken LaValle for their commitment to strengthening public higher education in New York state. I also want to thank Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, our representative and alumnus, for her continued support for Binghamton University.

I am pleased to be here with Chancellor Zimpher to give my support for the Chancellor's budget request for SUNY. As president of one of the four research universities in the SUNY system, I appreciate this opportunity to share with you how important strong funding is to the University and to the entire Southern Tier.

In December, I discussed with the Assembly Higher Education Committee the impact that predictable tuition has had on our campus and community. In the two years that the plan has been in effect, Binghamton University has received approximately \$22.75 million in incremental tuition revenue. These funds have enabled us to hire 72 new faculty and nearly 100 support staff, while increasing enrollment by approximately 1,300 additional students.

These funds have been crucial to our efforts to fulfill our central mission, providing educational opportunities and support for residents across New York state. At the same time, we estimate that the economic impact of these additional students, faculty, and staff resulting from predictable tuition have added more than \$30 million to the Southern Tier's economy over the past two years.

This support is fostering new research and scholarship on our campus, in all areas of scholarship and creative activities, and especially in areas that may result in new industries developing in the Southern Tier. We are grateful for the support we receive from the Legislature--it

is really making a difference in the lives of students and the people of our region and state.

However, I am concerned that Binghamton's impact and trajectory of growth may be adversely affected if elements of the Chancellor's budget request are not implemented.

It is especially important that the state assume support for already negotiated salary increases. Binghamton has absorbed \$3.3 million in one-time costs this year and will face an additional \$7 million in recurring costs over the life of the current contracts. This has slowed our ability to hire new faculty, reducing both the quality of education we can provide and our output of research and scholarship. Equally important, this loss in support will significantly decrease our impact in a region that is in significant need of economic growth.

Similarly, we are concerned about the long-term effects of underfunding the University's critical maintenance. This presents a number of challenges, as the higher education environment has changed radically over the last several years, particularly with regard to the need for facilities equipped with the newest technologies. Binghamton received no critical maintenance funding last year. Fortunately, we have been able to successfully renovate a number of buildings over the past year, using funds appropriated in previous years, but I am concerned that if critical maintenance remains underfunded, we will be forced to postpone or cancel a number of already-planned projects. This would be a grave disservice to both our current and future students and would put us at a long-term competitive disadvantage with regard to our educational peers. I strongly urge the legislature to consider Chancellor Zimpher's request for additional finding for SUNY's critical maintenance so that we can continue to provide our students the modern, high-tech learning environment they require.

I strongly support Chancellor Zimpher's proposal to continue state support for the SUNY-affiliated hospitals. These hospitals provide critical services for all of New York's residents, yet the burden of resolving their challenges seems to fall solely on the campuses of the SUNY system. I strongly urge you to find a way to provide a state-supported resolution to the situation.

I want to thank the Joint Committee for hearing my testimony. I recognize that the state faces its own fiscal challenges, but I urge you to consider the positive impact that your support for SUNY has across the state. The Senate and Assembly have always been strong partners. Binghamton University values this partnership and we appreciate everything you do for SUNY and Binghamton University.

