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Testimony before New York State Joint Senate and Assembly

Standing Committees on Higher Education

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I'm Anne Kress, President of Monroe Community College (MCC), and I'm honored to come before you today as the representative of SUNY's 30 community colleges. Together, we thank you for your past – and continued - support.

Historically, your investment in our colleges has provided an essential and welcomed door of access to opportunity for our State's residents seeking higher education. Today, we account for 52% of overall enrollment at the SUNY System.

Our students come to us with diverse goals: some arrive seeking an affordable, high-quality path to transfer to one of New York's outstanding universities.

And, an increasing number of our students come to pursue career pathways. These students are often nontraditional: as dislocated workers, they are looking for new careers; as returning veterans, they deserve a chance for opportunity at home; as residents of challenged neighborhoods, they want to build brighter futures.

In these programs, SUNY's community colleges link what students learn to what they can earn post graduation. As an example, MCC returns over \$8 for each \$1 of student tuition, and 8% on each tax dollar. The credits earned at MCC add over \$600M annually to our region. SUNY's community colleges work for state and our students.

I know the faces and stories of the students we serve: Adrian who went from Rochester city schools to the Marines to MCC to Yale; Teresa who came to MCC to become a nurse and has inspire real change in her Rochester neighborhood; Tim who went from MCC to Cornell to lead a Fortune 20 company. Any of my 29 colleagues could share similar stories.

But, today, we are increasingly challenged as we seek to fulfill our missions and serve these students and our communities.

As our enrollments settle back to pre-recession levels, the economic hardships facing our students and our counties do not seem to have subsided. And community colleges are feeling this hardship, too.

Therefore, I join the Chancellor today in advocating for the Legislature to provide a long-term and rational funding plan for the community colleges, one provides our students with the access to high-quality, affordable higher education and career pathways that they deserve and that our State needs. This rational funding plan would support continued improvement at the Community Colleges, fulfilling the promise we hold out for all of New York. Your investment would help us

- o Guarantee that qualified students can "finish in two"
- o Support underprepared students with accelerated success-based programs like quantway/statway and competency-based education
- o Expand innovative and cutting edge programs linked to industry and business workforce needs
- o Assure that under-represented and low-income students receive the additional supports they need to succeed

Finally, I thank the Governor for the inclusion of the community college capital projects in his Executive Budget and ask that these projects be included in the Enacted Budget for 2015/16. I also add my voice to

the call for New York to find an avenue to provide funding for facilities at those colleges whose sponsors are unable to provide a local match for these capital projects.

Thank you so much for this opportunity to speak on behalf of my colleagues, our colleges, and our students.