

Resolution in Support of Level-Funding for Public Higher Education

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth is confronted with some of the most difficult challenges it has faced in our lifetimes and the continuing public health crisis and its economic fallout affects every corner of our state and most deeply impacts those who were already struggling;

WHEREAS, in past recessions, public higher education has received cuts in state aid, even as it has served as a refuge for people of all ages, a tool for economic growth, and an invaluable opportunity for the residents of the Commonwealth;

WHEREAS, the ability of colleges to raise tuition and fees to compensate for lack of state funding has led to crushing and unsustainable student debt and is, particularly during a pandemic, an unfair and inappropriate avenue to offset reductions in state aid;

WHEREAS, public higher education is indispensable to the economic vitality of our Commonwealth and to the tens of thousands of students, especially low-income students, and students of color, who rely on an affordable and high-quality public higher education system;

WHEREAS, the long-term health of our economy and our students' futures are at risk if we allow our public institutions of higher education to suffer irreparable damage during what we all hope and expect to be a relatively short-term crisis;

WHEREAS, any potential funding cuts are hitting a system of public higher education that prior to COVID-19 was already confronting a decades-long history of being chronically under-resourced which has made the financial consequences of COVID-19 particularly devastating for our students and campuses;

WHEREAS, the state has already provided limited immediate relief to our colleges and universities by level funding state services, including public education, through October 2020 which has aided in their re-opening and helped to prevent some of the worst potential cuts to student services, programs, staff, and faculty employment;

WHEREAS, maintaining level funding for the remainder of the fiscal year will strengthen the ability of those colleges and universities to weather the COVID-19 crisis and reemerge as a crucial and strong contributor to our recovery;

WHEREAS the stability of our local economies and our economic recovery post-COVID-19 depends heavily on the ability to maintain strong employment now and to ensure the economic benefits the public higher education system engenders, including the tax revenue, that a healthy economy produces;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Board of Trustees at _____ State University urges the Legislature to provide, at a minimum, level-funding for the FY21 to each of the Commonwealth's public colleges and universities.