



Open Letter to New York City College and University Presidents

April 24, 2025

We write this letter as the New York City Council Progressive Caucus representing over 3 million people, many of whom are students, faculty and staff at your institutions. As federal authorities carry out an extreme MAGA agenda that [threatens](#) to [re-segregate](#) and defund our institutions and [disappears countless students](#), we call upon you to step up and defend our constituents.

We were heartened to see many of you sign [Tuesday's statement](#) pushing back against the Trump administration's authoritarian actions, and we know the difficult position you are under with federal funding and your principles on the line. It is not always easy to say and do the right thing, but we need you to stand with your students and faculty. We call on you to commit to the following principles:

- 1. Defend academic freedom and student expression.** Protect the right of all students, faculty, and staff—regardless of political viewpoint or national origin—to engage in peaceful protest, organize, and express dissent without fear of reprisal or surveillance. Reject efforts to dismantle cultural studies curriculums.
- 2. Refuse collaboration with immigration enforcement on campuses.** Do not voluntarily comply with ICE or other federal immigration authorities seeking access to campus or student records unless legally compelled by judicial warrant.
- 3. Support immigrant and international students.** Expand legal and financial resources for undocumented and international students who may face retaliation, visa threats, or loss of housing or employment due to federal policy shifts.
- 4. Uphold labor rights on campus.** Engage in good faith bargaining with unionized student and faculty and staff workers, who often bear the brunt of instability in higher education and are essential to university functioning.
- 5. Advocate for federal research and education funding.** Use your platform to push back against attempts to defund the NIH, NSF, and other critical agencies, which disproportionately harm public institutions and the communities they serve.

We recognize the critical role you play in our city and will fight alongside you against federal overreach and cuts in this critical moment. We have your backs and will work to identify funding at the city and state level to fill any gaps created by the Trump White House.

As administrators who are tasked with educating the next generation of our country's leaders, we urge you to stand with immigrant students, to stand with student workers, to stand with the democratic principles upon which many of your institutions were founded. We cannot allow this President and his extreme agenda to divide and conquer, starting with the most vulnerable of our communities.

As members of the New York City Council, we stand ready to help protect academic freedom and freedom of speech. Failure to protect student speech may violate Article 1, Section 8 of the New York State Constitution. New Yorkers need you to not remain idle. An injury to one is an injury to all.

Sincerely,



Progressive Caucus Co-Chair Sandy Nurse



Progressive Caucus Co-Chair Shahana Hanif
Brooklyn College alumna



Progressive Caucus Vice Co-Chair Carmen De La Rosa
Fordham University alumna



Council Member Jennifer Gutiérrez
SUNY Albany alumna



Council Member Alexa Avilés
Columbia University alumna



Council Member Tiffany Cabán, J.D.
New York Law School alumna



Majority Leader Amanda Farias
St. John's University alumna



Council Member Crystal Hudson



Council Member Rita Joseph



Council Member Shekar Krishnan
Cooper Union alumnus



Council Member Chris Marte
Long Island University-Brooklyn alumnus



Council Member Chi Ossé



Council Member Lincoln Restler



Council Member Pierina Ana Sanchez



Council Member Althea Stevens
Long Island University-Brooklyn, Hunter College alumna



Council Member Carlina Rivera
Marist College alumna



Council Member Nantasha Williams, Ph.D.
CUNY Graduate Center alumna



Council Member Julie Won
Syracuse University alumna