

Dear Chancellor Matos Rodríguez,

We write as members of the newly formed CUNY Alliance to Defend Higher Education. We are a group of faculty governance leaders who have organized across the university in response to the attacks on higher education that we've witnessed over the last few months, and we wanted to reach out in anticipation of your testimony on July 9th to the House Education and the Workforce Committee. We are eager to meet with you to offer you our support and to share with you our perspectives on the value of higher education for all.

Like you, we have been alarmed by the federal government's assault on colleges and universities. The intensification of politically motivated cuts to federal funding, active suppression of dissent, and rejection of crucial mechanisms to diversify curricula and student bodies may be only the beginning of the challenges we will face.

We were heartened to see that you were one of the first signatories to the [AACU statement](#) calling for constructive engagement with the federal government, and that as Board Chair of [ACE](#) you filed an [amicus brief](#) in support of Harvard University's lawsuit challenging the Trump administration's efforts to reshape higher education for political ends. We trust that you will continue this advocacy in your appearance before the House committee.

As you know, faculty from across the country, and right here in New York State and New York City, have rallied to the idea of collective action to defend higher education. This action has been formulated by faculty governance organizations nationwide as Mutual Academic Defense Compacts (MADCs).

The principles of a MADC are that member organizations pool their legal, public relations, and other resources, and collectively respond to any political interference against their members. This movement began when the [Rutgers](#) University Senate passed a resolution calling for a MADC across the Big 10 schools. Similar resolutions were then passed by the [University of Massachusetts, Amherst](#), and this initiative spread across the [country](#). Closer to home, MADC resolutions were passed by the university faculty senates of the [State University of New York](#) and the [City University of New York](#), and virtually every college within [CUNY](#) has passed a MADC resolution calling on you as CUNY Chancellor to engage with the SUNY Chancellor for a New York State Mutual Academic Defense Compact. The CUNY Alliance to Defend Higher Education emerged from the CUNY MADC movement, and is committed to working with you to make a New York State-wide MADC a reality.

Given all of the above, we urge you to bring the following arguments to the hearing:

1. **CUNY -- and higher school education more broadly -- is a public good that is well worth the investment of public dollars.** As you know, our mission is to "provide a public first-rate education to all students, regardless of means or background." And we do. Our student population is ethnically and socioeconomically diverse, and many of our students are first-generation college students -- both testaments to our role in expanding the educated citizenry of

America.

2. **CUNY is an engine of social mobility.** This feature of our university has been well established by numerous college rankings as well as through surveys of students and alumni, all of which point to CUNY as a national leader in this area. We feel that this is a compelling result of the work we do, **especially as higher education is being denigrated again and again by the Trump administration.** We ask that you remind everyone of the crucial work CUNY does in empowering and promoting its diverse student body, and the larger value of higher education as a public good.
3. Equally vital to this mission is the **work of CUNY faculty**, whose research spans disciplines and directly addresses pressing social, economic, scientific, and cultural challenges. As teachers, scholars and researchers we not only **contribute to the advancement of knowledge** but also bring the **benefits of our research directly into the classroom** and into the communities we serve. Our work enriches the educational experience of our students, informs public policy, and strengthens New York's position as a global intellectual hub. **Supporting CUNY means supporting research that makes a difference.**
4. Additionally, even as you remind Congress of the crucial work CUNY does in empowering and promoting its diverse student body, and the larger value of higher education as a public good, **we hope you will challenge the weaponization of antisemitism allegations as another tactic in an ongoing right-wing strategy to delegitimize and undermine the democratic mission of higher education.** While we acknowledge instances of the rise in antisemitism at CUNY — as well as other forms of intolerance -- which you have sought to [address](#), we also believe that it should not be used as an excuse for shutting down discussion and debate. Like the city it educates, CUNY is a vibrant (even if at times raucous) place, and we are strong enough to **allow a diversity of opinions even as we guarantee a respectful learning environment for all.**

In short, we, the faculty of the City University of New York, stand in defense of the university as a public good, and hope you deliver this message.

Sincerely,

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