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CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS JOIN PSC BUDGET EFFORT AT CUNY WEEK EVENTS

More than a dozen New York City Council Members gathered today at the annual CUNY Day legislative breakfast sponsored by the Professional Staff Congress (PSC). The event, the centerpiece of a weeklong series of activities across CUNY campuses focused on securing funding for the University in the City budget, honored Council Finance Committee Chair David Weprin for his leadership in fighting for CUNY's needs. The breakfast and all of the CUNY Week events are part of the union's ongoing effort to advocate for much-needed increased aid from New York City.

"CUNY has always been a bridge to success for many New Yorkers. By providing quality education at an affordable price, CUNY has opened up the doors of opportunity to many who would have never had that chance. More than ever, we need to offer our full financial support for the CUNY system in order to help them continue their long tradition of helping New Yorkers meet their educational needs," said Weprin, the Democratic Council Member from District 23 in Queens since 2002. The PSC chose to honor Weprin because of his work in the City Council on behalf of CUNY, and specifically because of his leadership in helping restore funding in the City budget for the University.

"CUNY is also one of the city's best-kept economic development secrets," added PSC President Dr. Barbara Bowen. "It provides the skills, education and ideas that build the economic and cultural life of the future. Yet City funding for CUNY is 17% lower in real dollars than it was in 1990 and we have 5,000 fewer full-time faculty than we did in 1975, despite record enrollment. The time is now to invest in CUNY."

Mayor Bloomberg's preliminary operating budget falls \$59 million short of CUNY's budget request, including cuts in financial aid, and his preliminary capital budget falls short by \$39 million. The PSC is urging the City Council to restore these funds and to fund a Scholars and Diversity program to provide the resources for 200 additional faculty and professional staff for the community colleges with an emphasis on diversity in hiring, mentoring students and hiring faculty counselors.

Weprin was joined at the breakfast by many City Council colleagues, including Rosie Mendez, Daniel Garodnick, Gale Brewer, Robert Jackson, Miguel Martinez, James Vacca, Helen Foster, Maria del Carmen Arroyo, John Liu, Leroy Comrie, David Yassky, Letitia James and Michael McMahon. The event also honored Prof. David Lavin, author of several books about CUNY's open admissions policy, and the World Trade Center Community Labor Coalition, which has led the fight for safe demolition and replacement of CUNY's downtown building, Fiterman Hall.

All week, City Council Members and their staffs are touring campuses and meeting with students, faculty, staff and college administrators to hear and see first-hand the need for increased aid from New York City. On Tuesday, David Yassky visited the New York City College of Technology while Hiram Monserrate and Tony Avella met with members of the Queensborough Community College community. Aides to Robert Jackson, Alan Gerson and Kendall Stewart were at City College, Borough of Manhattan Community College and Brooklyn College, respectively. Educational events highlighting the importance of the budget were also held at an additional half-dozen campuses.

The PSC, which represents 20,000 faculty and professional staff at CUNY, has been the leading voice for public investment in CUNY by both New York City and New York State.