The City Takes a Hit in Mr. Cuomo's Budget

By THE EDITORIAL BOARD  JAN. 15, 2016

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But when people started examining the new $154 billion budget, it looked as if Mr. Cuomo was telling the mayor: New York has a surplus? I’ll take that, thanks.

Mr. de Blasio was diplomatic in his response. “Both the city and the state have a long-term interest in strengthening the financial status, and preserving the quality, of our public higher education and our Medicaid systems. We look forward to a coordinated effort.”

But the reaction from others was swift and blunt.

“For New York City, I think this is one of the worst budgets that it’s seen in a long time,” Maria Douli, a budget analyst at the nonpartisan Citizens Budget Commission, told Politico.

“It’s a lot of money, a lot of money,” said Carol Kellermann, the budget commission’s president.

The Daily News used its front page to wish Mr. de Blasio luck in the Powerball lottery. (He didn’t win, so that option is off the table.)

Mr. Cuomo says that the city shouldn’t be complaining, that the Medicaid and CUNY plans were part of an efficiency drive that in the end “won’t cost New York City a penny,” and that it’s not as if Mr. de Blasio is a total loser — with the budget anyway, given the state’s pledges on affordable housing and homelessness, on funding for universal prekindergarten, community schools and other things.

It will be up to Mr. de Blasio to defend the city’s interests, and for the city comptroller, Scott Stringer, whose office is doing its own analysis, to get to the bottom of the situation in the coming weeks of budget testimony in Albany. The Legislature will have its own say in the process. Maybe it really is a sincere effort to help CUNY and Medicaid, as Mr. de Blasio, perhaps wincing, says it is. But if the budget is as needlessly punishing as experts fear, Mr. Cuomo must not get away with it.
Cuomo wants to join the State University of NY and CUNY

By Aaron Short

Gov. Cuomo ultimately wants to take over of the City University of New York and merge it with the state's public university system, sources told The Post.

Cuomo officials are examining how the State University of New York can incorporate CUNY's four-year colleges and graduate schools, while slashing administrative costs at both institutions, the sources said.

"It's a precursor to a merger, but dismantling CUNY won't be easy," one political source said.

Despite these private ambitions, Cuomo steered clear of takeover talk in his annual state budget address Wednesday. Instead he called on the city to pay one-third of CUNY's budget, or $485 million, in proportion to the number of trustees Mayor de Blasio appoints to the CUNY board. The governor appoints two-thirds of the board.

Cuomo, facing harsh criticism from city leaders and educators, soon backpedaled and said he was just floating a blueprint for budget talks over the 278,000-student system. But his obsession with CUNY runs deep.

"He just has a thing about CUNY," said a high-ranking state government source. "This has to do with Andrew not controlling it. What he
doesn’t control he likes to destroy.*

Cuomo currently has little control over CUNY because the appointees to the board are largely leftovers from the Patink and Bloomberg administrations. SUNY’s board, conversely, is littered with Cuomo allies.

A political consultant said Cuomo is rankled that the state pays 46 percent of CUNY’s $3 billion budget yet “they treat him like s—.”

The CUNY faculty union endorsed Bill de Blasio in his mayoral primary but did not endorse Cuomo for governor.

His staff grumbles that four-year graduation rates are low while the state continues to fork over $36 million for its central administration.

Cuomo also fumed when CUNY’s board bestowed retiring chancellor Matthew Goldstein with a golden parachute in 2013 that included a $490,000 year-long sabbatical and $300,000 annually for five additional years, another source told The Post.

CUNY insists it has already trimmed administrative budgets by 6 percent.
Cuomo’s Ambitious Agenda Would Cost City More in CUNY, Medicaid Funds

By MARK TOOR | Posted: Friday, January 15, 2016 4:45 pm

Governor Cuomo gave to the city with one hand and took with the other in his State of the State message Jan. 13, pledging $20 billion to provide affordable housing and beds for the homeless while cutting the appropriation to the City University of New York by $485 million and telling the de Blasio administration to cover hundreds of millions more in increased Medicaid costs.

What’s Old is New Again

Following a year that saw the former leaders of both the State Senate and the State Assembly convicted of corruption, Mr. Cuomo unveiled a new ethics package—his fourth since taking office at the start of 2011. None of the ideas were new, and some, including public financing of campaigns, he had previously traded away to legislative leaders in budget negotiations.

He also proposed billions of dollars of new spending on transportation, which he called the New York: Built to Lead program. The $100-billion plan includes a replacement for the aging and shabby LaGuardia Airport, a new Penn Station, an expansion of the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center and a freezing of tolls on the Thruway through 2020.

And he said he would increase funding for local schools by $2.1 billion to $25 billion, which he said was the highest such spending in the history of the state.

He did not make clear how he would fund these initiatives, although he said his $145-billion budget is “1.7 percent less than our 2-percent spending limit.” He has restricted budget increases to 2 percent a year since taking office.

‘No Idea How to Pay’
“He’s proposed $100 billion in new projects without any idea how he will pay for it,” said State Republican Chairman Edward F. Cox.

Mr. Cuomo said that although New York State’s economy still suffers from problems that affect the rest of the country, including a crumbling infrastructure and a slow economic recovery, “the state of the state, my friends, is strong, stronger than at any point in recent history.”

Mayor de Blasio, who has feuded with the Governor, sat up front as Mr. Cuomo described his homelessness program and thanked him for his “cooperation” on the issue. Mr. de Blasio has been taking it on the chin for weeks over the increasing visibility of the homeless in Manhattan; critics say it is symptomatic of a deterioration of quality of life in the city under his administration.

The number of homeless people in shelters reached 59,000 in December, a figure that has increased steadily since the Governor ended the payment of $35 million to the city to help cover rent subsidies for homeless people who found stable jobs and left the shelter system in 2011. The annual census of homeless people living on the street has ranged from 2,328 to 4,395 over the past 10 years; in January 2015 it was 3,182. This year’s census was scheduled for Jan. 25.

Mr. de Blasio has promised more attention to the problem, from quarterly population counts to additional police action to more social workers. He also pledged to build 200,000 units of affordable housing by 2025, with 40,000 having been provided in the past two years.

**Broadside at Mayor**

A spokeswoman for Mr. Cuomo said in November, “It’s clear that the Mayor can’t manage the homeless crisis.”

The Governor’s plan provides “a record $20 billion over the next five years” to build 100,000 affordable units, 6,000 beds with social services provided, 1,000 emergency-shelter beds, and other homeless services.

He recognized that many homeless adults avoid existing shelters because they are unsanitary and unsafe. He appointed State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli to audit shelters outside New York City and City Comptroller Scott Stringer to audit those in the city. That latter move may have been a swipe at Mr. de Blasio; Mr. Stringer is seen as a possible opponent when the Mayor runs for re-election in 2017.

Mr. de Blasio, after the speech, declined to criticize Mr. Cuomo. “I think it’s commendable that the state is making a serious commitment on supportive housing, and on affordable housing,” he said. He added that he was not bothered by Mr. Stringer’s role.

He declined to discuss the additional expenses for CUNY and Medicaid, saying he needed to study them, but the next day he was in full attack mode. “We will fight these cuts,” he said. “We will ask the assistance of both houses of the Legislature in fighting these cuts. They are unprecedented and
they are unfair to this city.”

Mr. Cuomo, speaking later that day on NY1, seemed conciliatory. “This is the beginning of the budget process, he said. “...This is really the beginning of the discussion. At the end of the day, what you’ll see is it won’t cost New York City a penny. We have to reduce the cost of the bureaucracy at CUNY. We have to reduce the cost of administration for Medicaid.”

**Major Medicaid Hit**

The additional Medicaid costs to the city could run $180 million this year and $300 million next year, the Daily News reported. The city is apparently not covered by Mr. Cuomo’s promise to take care of any increases in Medicaid costs for jurisdictions that keep property-tax increases under the state’s mandated 2-percent-a-year cap.

On CUNY, the state has provided virtually all the system’s funding since the city flirted with bankruptcy in the 1970s. However, Cuomo aides said that now that the city is financially sound, it should provide 30 percent of CUNY’s budget, equal to the number of seats it controls on the system’s board. They said the state would provide $240 million to any settlement of the long-stalled contract with CUNY’s employees.

On ethics, Mr. Cuomo offered a laundry list of proposals. The first involved restricting outside income for legislators, which is now unlimited. He did not mention the substantial salary increase from $79,500 a year that other proponents of the idea say would be required to transition the Legislature from part-time to full-time status.

**Would End LLC Loophole**

Other proposals included closing the LLC loophole that allows unlimited amounts of campaign contributions given by limited-liability corporations, public financing of election campaigns, a revocation of pensions for lawmakers convicted of corruption, a widening of the definition of lobbyists and allowing people to register to vote when they get a driver’s license.

“These ethics reforms are important,” he said. “Especially considering the context of the past year.” That’s as close as he got to mentioning former Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and former Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos, both convicted of corruption in Federal Court.

Mr. Cuomo was heckled at the beginning of the speech by fiery Assemblyman Charles Barron of Brooklyn, who said he was offended by a lengthy video purporting to describe how wonderful life in New York State had become since the Governor took office.

Mr. Barron’s criticisms were barely audible, but Mr. Cuomo’s voice rose almost to a shout as he talked over the lawmaker. “Just because you yell doesn’t mean you’re right,” the Governor said.

**Barron: Too Rosy a Picture**
“What’s happening in there is not really the state of the state,” Mr. Barron said after leaving the room. He said Mr. Cuomo was ignoring minorities and the poor in places like his East New York district.

The Governor ended with some personal reflections. He recalled the death of his father, former Gov. Mario Cuomo, a year ago and how the press of business kept the two of them from spending more time together at the end. The experience, he said, led him to propose family leave of up to 12 weeks for workers in the state. Mr. de Blasio late last year granted a parental leave of that length to nonunionized workers, although with givebacks attached to offset the cost that some have protested.

Mr. Cuomo also described his girlfriend, celebrity chef Sandra Lee, and her battle with cancer that resulted in a double mastectomy last spring. In homage to her, he said, he had budgeted $90 million for “the most aggressive, best breast-cancer screening in this country.”

**CSEA: Don’t Buy the Hype**

Danny Donohue, president of the Civil Service Employees Association, criticized Mr. Cuomo’s agenda. “Billions are proposed to move our state forward, but too many New Yorkers are being left behind,” he said in a statement. “Flawed plans and inadequate funding for state mental-health and developmental-disabilities services are just two examples of how state agencies have been undermined, leaving tens of thousands of New Yorkers without the care they need. The daily reality in these agencies doesn’t match the Governor’s lofty rhetoric.

“The budget also shortchanges localities, increases public-employee-retiree health-care costs, and continues wasteful corporate-welfare and economic-development schemes that fail to produce the jobs they promise. The list could go on. It’s time to get real.”
Cuomo Steals De Blasio's Lunch Money Yet Again

by Miranda Katz in News on Jan 15, 2016 3:25 pm

Governor Cuomo's vision for New York City in 2016 includes a $20 billion housing plan and glitzy, glass-bound, multi-billion dollar infrastructure projects. It also might end up costing the city $1.4 billion.

Since the governor laid out his agenda during Wednesday's State of the State address, he's dismissed concerns about costs to the city, arguing that the focus should really be on the money he's pouring into projects such as the Penn Station overhaul and subway renovations that will shut down 30 stations for up to a year.

Speaking on the Brian Lehrer show Thursday morning, he scoffed at the press's response to the budget announcement, saying that he's offering the best news for the city in decades. "If you want to be fair or objective, the headline should be: Unprecedented Joint Effort Between The State And The City On Major Priorities," Cuomo said.

Yet there are serious reasons why no journalists have taken the governor's suggestion: Cuomo's plan would saddle NYC with $485 million in CUNY costs by 2017 and as much as $1 billion in Medicaid spending by 2020, according to Mayor de Blasio's estimate.

Cuomo, who barely consulted de Blasio on his budgetary plans, is forcing the city to undertake large costs that have long been covered by the state, seemingly in the service of his endless dick-measuring contest with the mayor. In the meantime he's throwing money at projects like the Javits Center renovation, which has already been called a waste of taxpayer dollars.

The governor's budget also included $20 billion over five years for affordable housing, supportive housing, and shelter beds, which could help alleviate the homelessness crisis that is most concentrated in the city. But Cuomo put Comptroller Scott Stringer, who has been vocal in his criticism of de Blasio's
handling of homelessness, in charge of reviewing the city's Department of Homeless Services, in yet another politicized jab at de Blasio's approach to the issue.

The money for CUNY and Medicaid as laid out in the governor's plan would have to be diverted from other areas of the city's budget, which the mayor is set to present on January 21st, and he's made his problems with the proposition clear — both to the governor and in an unrelated press conference yesterday.

"We're adding 2,000 more cops," de Blasio said Thursday. "We wouldn't be able to do that in the future if we lost $1 billion from our budget."

De Blasio also rebuffed the governor's suggestion that the city could easily cover these proposed costs with its budget surplus. The mayor said that money cannot come out of city's $6 billion reserves, as that cash will go quickly if and when another economic downturn hits the city.

"When times get tough and the economy goes bad and revenues start plummeting, when I turn around and say to Washington and Albany we're in trouble, the cavalry is just not coming, so we have to protect ourselves," de Blasio said.

On Thursday night, after a day of backlash, Cuomo told NY1 that actually, his budget "won't cost the city a penny" — if it can make CUNY "more efficient from a bureaucratic point of view."

It's hard to see where the city might free up any money from CUNY, given that the university was facing a $51 million budget shortfall as of December. On top of that, the governor did not address whether the city's still expected to foot the bill for Medicaid increases, which is likely to be the heftier sum.

But de Blasio, for now, seems resigned. On Friday, he told reporters that he's taking the governor "at his word."

Contact the author of this article or email tips@gothamist.com with further questions, comments or tips.
CUNY is vital to our long-term economic security

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The City University of New York is in dire straits, due to political rivalries and a lack of will to fund these institutions at levels consistent with the 21st century. Notably, aside from chronic facility underfunding, many staff members have gone without raises since 2010, at a time when the cost of living has increased dramatically across the city.

Countless artists, scientists and civic leaders emerged from City, Lehman, Brooklyn and Queens Colleges— institutions that would later form the backbone of the CUNY system. City College in particular served as a haven for Jewish-American intellectuals in an era of institutional anti-Semitism in higher education. The civil rights movement flourished on CUNY campuses and forced the system to take steps toward racial integration. At its inception, CUNY promoted open enrollment for all New Yorkers and began remedial education efforts for incoming freshmen.

Today, the system is among the most diverse in the country, providing the children of immigrants and native New Yorkers alike the opportunity for a quality and affordable education. Indeed, my first experiences on a college campus were through summer programs offered for local high school students at Baruch and Queens Colleges.

Albany took control of CUNY’s senior colleges during the financial crisis of 1976 and instated tuition consistent with SUNY schools. Budgetary concerns and uncertainty on the state level have shrunk CUNY enrollment, forcing the system to backtrack from the “open enrollment” policies instituted in 1970.

In reaction to soaring staff turnover rates and student protests, the budgetary crisis became a political football between City Hall and Albany, with both sides disagreeing on how to close CUNY’s reported $51 billion budget gap. About 45 percent of CUNY’s budget comes directly from Albany.

While a solution has not been forthcoming, the mayor and the governor have traded recriminations, each placing the responsibility on the other to provide additional funding. Last month, citing his opposition to adding $600 million to the state budget outside of a phased plan, Governor Andrew Cuomo proposed a $1 billion inflationary increase to pay, utilities and healthcare costs at CUNY.
Notably, Governor Cuomo’s recent announcement to instate the $15 minimum wage requirement across the SUNY system as part of the Mario Cuomo Campaign for Economic Justice, made no mention of CUNY schools, despite its announcement at a rally in Manhattan. The only schools within New York City subject to the increase would be Maritime College and Downstate Medical Center, both SUNY schools. Barbara Bowen, president of the Professional Staff Congress, which represents 25,000 CUNY faculty and staff, criticized the exclusion of CUNY workers from the announcement.

New York’s economic might and greatest asset is its workforce. Investing in higher education is an economic necessity that drives competitive wages. The postwar economic expansion was the largest in American history and coincided strongly with the establishment of public education institutions and efforts by the government, such as the G.I. Bill, to promote a skilled and educated workforce. Higher wage earners also are good news for Albany’s budget, as the lifetime tax contributions provided far outweigh a modest investment in education.

Studies by organizations such as the Economic Policy Institute have found a strong tie between educational attainment and high wages in states, with the only notable outliers being Alaska and Wyoming, whose economies hinge on resource extraction.

I will not prescribe the appropriate balance of funding between New York City and Albany, as the layperson cannot begin to comprehend the complexities of that relationship. Rather, I would urge New Yorkers to lean on their legislators, as well as the offices of the mayor and governor, to begin the conversation about stabilizing the CUNY system, as well as create a plan to ensure its long-term sustainability.

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Cuomo’s fast train to endless New York debt

By Nicole Gelin

The state-run MTA may close the L train for a year, or more, for Superstorm Sandy repairs.

The chaos this closure will cause for hundreds of thousands of young workers is a reminder of how much the city depends on subways. Yet in last week’s budget speech, Gov. Andrew Cuomo offered no real way to fix our broken transit system — because what’s really broken is how we pay for transit.

We can barely fit new people on the subways, as the L train crowds from Brooklyn are proving. We built “luxury” apartments instead of building better trains, subjecting people to a miserable quality of life. Last week, Sen. Chuck Schumer called for the feds to pay for new electricity sources so that the MTA can handle 2,200 more passengers on the line every hour (presumably after Sandy repairs are done).

But even if the feds pony up — hey, our next president may be from New York, and sympathetic to supporting “luxury” real estate — they won’t pay the whole thing.

Plus, the rest of the subways, commuter rails, buses, bridges and tunnels need $29 billion every five years in repairs and upgrades to barely
keep up with a growing city. The fares you pay don’t cover this cost—they don’t even cover paying the people who run the trains to come to work.

So where to get the money?

Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio said late last year that, don’t worry, they’d find it. To fill the gap left over after the MTA borrows money and Washington sends us their share, the state would put in $8.3 billion over five years, and the city would put in $2.5 billion.

People wondered last year where Cuomo and de Blasio would get this money, and were told to wait till next year.

Well, it’s next year—and the governor’s new budget makes the answer clear.

The grandchildren of the L-train hipsters will pay. Instead of putting in $8.3 billion, Cuomo has reserved only $1.4 billion over five years—a little less than $300 million a year.

Worse: To pay for this, he’s slashing the state’s funding of the City University of New York—by about $500 million a year.

You don’t have to be a genius to see that $300 million a year is less than $500 million a year. So really, the city is getting nothing—or nearly $200 million a year less than nothing—in return for Gothamites’ high tax payments to the state.

How do you make this work?

Simple: You push the costs to the future.

The state—whether through the MTA or some other fancy way—will have to do more borrowing than it planned.

That would be lovely if the future didn’t have its own need for money. But inconveniently, in another five years, the MTA is going to need another $29 billion, because of intense wear and tear on the subway system.

It doesn’t help that Cuomo keeps adding new things for the MTA to do. Earlier this month, he said that he’d build a third track along the Long Island Rail Road. A worthy idea. But that means another billion—at least—in MTA spending.

And remember, Cuomo can only come up with this $1.4 billion because New York City’s economy has done so well since he’s been governor—meaning unexpected budget surpluses from city taxpayers paying their state taxes.

In 2010, when Cuomo won office, the state collected $34.5 billion in personal income taxes. Last year, it took in $45.4 billion. And three years from now, the state expects to haul in $54.9 billion.

But what if it doesn’t? Well Street, and the global economy, may be crashing right now. But if not now, they will eventually.

That means deficits—and "emergency" tax hikes and spending cuts, just like what happened with the MTA back in 2009, when then-Gov. David Paterson had to enact a new $2 billion-a-year tax package just to keep the buses running.

Despite all of Cuomo’s grand promises, then, there’s no plan—except to wait for a crisis, when we’ll need a plan in a hurry.

Nicole Gellinas is a contributing editor to the Manhattan Institute’s City Journal.
Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams yesterday advocated a three-pronged attack that would lead to reinstating free tuition for two-year community colleges in the City University of New York (CUNY) system.

Adams plan comes after examining the Independent Budget Office of New York City (IBO) cost analysis report that he requested following President Barack Obama’s call during last year’s State of the Union address.
“The IBO's analysis reinforces my belief that tuition-free community college is the future for New York City, and it is time to take steps toward achieving it,” said Adams. “Our community colleges offer students an opportunity to develop their skills and to prepare for success in their careers.”

The first prong of Adams plan is to expand the Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), which offers free tuition with support services such as tutoring, career services, and assistance with transportation and the cost of textbooks. According to the IBO findings the ASAP program nearly doubled graduation rates in a three-year period, he noted.

The second and third prong has to do with modest increased funding from both the city and state, after the report found an apparent imbalance in CUNY funding support from City and State sources, leading to a heavy reliance upon tuition to support CUNY’s operating budget. According to the report, the annual budget of CUNY community colleges in Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) totaled $973 million, with 27 percent of this funding coming from the State, 31.5 percent from the City, and 36 percent from students’ pockets.

Thus, while applauding the State’s reported efforts to work with the White House on tuition-free community college, he called on this year’s budget to provide short-term assistance, increasing its contribution to the CUNY community college operating budget to equal one-third of total funding — with the other thirds coming from the City and student tuitions — which he estimated would reduce overall student burden by over $10 million.

Overall, the cost analysis found that an estimated annual expenditure between $138 million to $232 million would provide for free tuition for every CUNY community college student, both full time and part time, for as many years as are required to graduate.

In addition to asking CUNY’s Board of Trustees to consider the benefits of free tuition for community college students, Adams encouraged elected officials to work with each other in support of CUNY students by enacting the New York State Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which would provide financial aid from the state for students who are undocumented immigrants, as well as reaching a fair conclusion to contract negotiations with CUNY faculty and staff members.

“For many students, the cost of tuition prevents them from completing an associate’s degree or substantially delays their completion. As a result, thousands of people each year are denied the benefits of graduation, which would allow them to achieve the American Dream and robustly contribute to our economy,” said Adams.

“By reducing the tuition burden for city residents who attend our community colleges and providing the critical services that support our students, we will start to build success upon success, expanding opportunity for graduating classes of today and tomorrow. One year ago, President Obama challenged states and cities to work with the federal government to offer free tuition for community college. New York City now has the ability to become a leader in higher education by accepting that mission,” he added.
Cuomo v. CUNY

Cuomo vs. CUNY

Posted by: Erik Cuenio  in Education, Local, News, Politics/Government  January 13, 2016  0 Comments

With Governor Andrew Cuomo slated to release his latest Executive Budget on January 13, community organizations, clergy and union members assembled on Mon., Jan. 11, urging Cuomo to increase funding for the City University of New York (CUNY).

The group on Monday rallied outside the governor’s Midtown office, calling on Cuomo to restore funding for CUNY’s four-year colleges that was lost since the 2008 recession.

“We’re all here because CUNY funding is a justice issue for the whole city,” said Barbara Bowen, President of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), the union of CUNY faculty and staff members.

CUNY is the nation’s largest urban public university.

In September 2015, its student enrollment was posted at record levels with approximately 278,000 degree credit students and 218,083 adult, continuing and professional education students – the highest in CUNY’s history.

But with the state facing a $1 billion budget surplus, the groups who serve a large portion of the
city's students, parents and workers have taken issue with the current state of CUNY funding.

Bouwen said that PSC members have worked five years without a raise, and that CUNY has been forced to cut courses to save money, as well as hike tuition.

"People have had better lives because they were able to attend CUNY," said Bouwen. "It's a path to education, and a road out of poverty. That opportunity is being cut off now, because the governor has not restored funding."

"CUNY is the best vehicle working families in our city have to achieve social mobility," said Hispanic Federation President José Calderin. "To ensure that CUNY remains a beacon of hope and opportunity to working New Yorkers, the state's promise and investment in CUNY must be invigorated."

Among the voices joining with PSC was Bill Lipton, State Director of the New York Working Families Party; members of 32BJ; Henry Garrido, Executive Director of DC 37; Vincente Álvarez, President of the New York City Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO; Zakiya Ansari, Advocacy Director of the Alliance for Quality Education; and Rabbi Michael Feinberg, Executive Director of the Greater New York Labor-Religion Coalition.

"PSC's fight is our fight," said Karen Magee, President of the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), which represents 600,000 active and retired workers within the state's schools, colleges, and healthcare facilities. "It's a fight for fairness that resonates with every single NYSUT member who has gone one day without a new contract or feels disrespected by an employer. NYSUT's officers and every one of its members stand in solidarity with the PSC in its fight to end six years of hardship with a contract that recognizes the exceptional work they do on behalf of CUNY students."

The union has worked without a contract since 2010, and while Chancellor James Milliken, who joined CUNY in June 2014, has said the funding of a new contract is his highest priority, he has also argued that not enough funding was provided by the state.

Bouwen noted that since 2008, the state's CUNY funding has decreased 44 percent.

"The governor says that funding has gone up, but if you look carefully at those numbers, you'll find they're not inflation-adjusted," Bouwen explained.

"And it's not per-student funding and CUNY has had a huge enrollment burst, so we really need to look at how much funding there is per student. That has remained flat."

Moreover, CUNY reports that more than 80% of 2015's full-time freshmen undergraduates are receiving some financial aid to help them defray college costs.

On December 11, Cuomo vetoed a bill that would have provided funding to all of the colleges that make up CUNY.

Known as the "maintenance of effort" (MOE) bill, the legislation would have ensured that tuition hikes went to improve CUNY and the State University of New York, rather than to offset underfunding by the state.

"The governor is calling for a 'progressive New York' — CUNY is essential to any vision of a progressive New York," remarked Bouwen.

"CUNY is 74 percent people of color, it's a mixture of different ages and communities, and it represents the chance for many New Yorkers to move out of poverty," she said. "So any progressive vision has to include decent funding for CUNY."

In a November 2015 statement regarding PSC's claims that the Governor had failed to adequately fund the institution, Cuomo spokesperson Dani Lever responded, "It is inarguable that
the state, under Governor Cuomo's leadership, makes significant investments in CUNY—providing roughly $1.7 billion annually in aid. CUNY is responsible for negotiating its own contract with its faculty and the state will have the opportunity to approve it to form once it's presented."

For more information, please visit www.psc-cuny.org.
Bill de Blasio sees ‘positive’ signs in Cuomo’s speech

January 13, 2016 By Emily Ngo and David M. Schwartz  emily.ngo@newsday.com, david.schwartz@newsday.com

Mayor Bill de Blasio, center, at the Capitol in Albany on Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2016. (Credit: AP / Mike Groll)

Mayor Bill de Blasio expressed conditional acceptance Wednesday of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's plan for state funding — and stepped-up oversight — to confront the homelessness crisis, but signaled potential resistance to shifting more Medicaid and CUNY costs to the city.

"It's a very positive sign, obviously, to see these resources put on the table for New York City," de Blasio told reporters in Albany after Cuomo's State of the State speech. "It's the kind of thing I look forward to working with the governor on."

De Blasio's cautiously worded approval marked a muting, at least for the day, of the long-running feud between the two Democrats. Before the speech, Cuomo and de Blasio met for what the mayor called a "productive" 30-minute talk on policy.

The mayor added caveats with his compliments.

On the governor's $20 billion, five-year housing plan, de Blasio said, "I want to see all the details, and I want to understand the timelines and how it's all going to play out." He added, "It certainly appears on first blush that there are some new additional resources for the day-to-day work we do to help the homeless."

The governor in his speech, which the mayor viewed from the third row, offered a brief hat tip to de Blasio for his "cooperation" in addressing shelter conditions — a shift in tone. Cuomo had repeatedly blasted shelters as "disgusting" and dangerous, and his spokeswoman in November said de Blasio "can't manage" the city's homeless problem.
But Cuomo also announced that he was assigning City Comptroller Scott Stringer — a potential 2017 challenger to de Blasio and a frequent critic — to review city shelters, and said the state was ready to provide "additional personnel" for the task.

Stringer in a statement indicated he would be carrying on with work already being performed to "audit and investigate" shelters. De Blasio said his Department of Investigation was already on the case, and "if the audit is complimentary to that effort, that's perfectly acceptable."

De Blasio appeared worried that the governor's budget proposal seemed to shift a greater burden to the city for funding Medicaid and the City University of New York, but he withheld outright criticism as "premature."

"If something actually is going to undercut our ability to provide health care to our people or to support our students, I'm not only to speak up, but work hard to address it," the mayor said.

The mayor voiced tempered gratitude for Cuomo's endorsement of three-year extension of mayoral control of schools, though he wants more. "I appreciate that the governor put forward a specific number," the mayor said.

The governor also backed three years at the start of the last legislative session, but de Blasio ended up with only one year. Cuomo said then that de Blasio could come back to request more "if he does a good job."