

# 2024 New York City Policy Agenda

YOUNG  INVINCIBLES

## Overview

As we continue recovering from the global pandemic and exacerbation of long-standing and severe systemic barriers, the challenges young adults face have risen exponentially. Millions of New Yorkers face a [housing crisis](#) with [limited tenant protections](#), [skyrocketing rents](#), and the [highest cost of living in the world](#). We also face the student debt crisis (with U.S. student borrowers owing over [\\$1.7 Trillion](#)), severe defunding of our public colleges and universities, widespread [food insecurity](#), lack of access to affordable health care and mental health services, limited accessible workforce development opportunities, and more. The cost of living in New York, in New York City especially, isn't just record-breaking—it's hostile to our economic security. Underlying all these issues is a long trend of powerful private interests and marginalizing and/or tokenizing young adults in the political process. Surely, the city with the highest proportion of billionaires and millionaires in the world can do better when it comes to investing in the well-being and security of our young people and our economy. We must act now to help protect and support current and future New Yorkers with more inclusive, equitable, and effective policies.

The following recommendations are aimed at expanding the overall economic security and wellness of young adults by improving the affordability and accessibility of higher education and health care, expanding workforce development pipelines, and strengthening civic engagement. Our policy priorities for 2023 are a multi-pronged approach to promote solutions that increase the long-term health, financial stability, and opportunity for all young New Yorkers. This requires reimagining higher education using the [community schools model](#). These priorities were chosen by centering young adult input from our New York Young Advocates Program, Youth Advisory Board, alumni, coalitions, partners, and with [Young Invincible's mission and values](#) in mind.



**Key:** \* = No related legislation proposed yet. \*\* = Forthcoming legislation in the pipeline (as of 03/15/22)

**Pass The People’s Budget** - provide #CareNotCuts for students, student parents, adult literacy programs, life-saving social services, reestablishing normal library hours, and more.

**Equitably Expand Work-Based Learning Opportunities for All**  
**Increase Funding, Seats, and Partnerships for State and City Internships\***

While helpful, a college degree does not guarantee future employment. Thus, when polled, our college students indicate that their first-ranked and most common concern, by far, is wanting more internship and work-based learning opportunities. These jobs are crucial for low-income students who cannot afford to work unpaid internships. City and state work-based learning programs like the NYC Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) are key to developing valuable professional experience and career prospects for budding young professionals and tradespeople. Yet, such programs are still very limited in budget, scope, accessibility, and targeted outreach/enrollment, especially among marginalized students.

**Increase Access to Campus Mental Health Supports - Invest in**  
**Campus Mental Health Counseling (per A04142) and the free Healthy**  
**Minds Checklist**

In recent years, nearly half of CUNY students reported a need for mental health services, yet the ratio of mental health counselors to students is still terribly insufficient, with around 1 counselor to every 2,500 students, on average. As a result, students often wait weeks to months for help. To improve student success, wellness, and to save lives, we must increase investment in mental health counseling at all public colleges and guarantee at least one counselor for every 1,000 students, with a priority for hiring counselors that reflect our student demographics. Institutions can also greatly enhance their mental health approach with the free Healthy Minds Checklist, which has already been implemented in Colorado.



## More funding for CUNY students' success and basic needs

- **General Funding** - To address crumbling infrastructure/capital improvements, more full-time faculty and less adjunctification of CUNY faculty, improving faculty and administrator pay, and more academic advisors and counselors to address the massive shortages of both
- **Community Colleges** - To fully fund staffed comprehensive basic needs centers, like Medgar Evers' Transition Academy, in place of the terminated Single Stop Centers
- **Funding to Expand the [CUNY CARES Program](#)** to non-Bronx Community Colleges
- **Provide Guaranteed Annual Funding for the [NCS Scholars Program](#)** (Which is \$20,000 cheaper per year per student housed in NCS rather than the shelter system, and includes comprehensive wrap-around services, academic enrichment, and social/emotional support)
- **General funding and funding for more targeted outreach/advertising campaigns for...**
  1. **[Healthy CUNY](#)** - to support food security (SNAP enrollment, food pantries), research, student Advocates and Navigators, and healthy food options across all 25 schools
  2. **CUNY basic needs service full-time staff**, resembling [Medgar Evers College's Transition Academy](#)<sup>1</sup>
  3. **The Office of Disability Services** - To ensure students with a disability are supported inclusively, equitably, and sufficiently per legally mandated compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disability Act.<sup>2</sup> Disability services should go beyond the minimum legally required standard and be comprehensive enough to ensure high-quality support both inside and outside of the classroom (including transportation to and between classes), as evidenced by regular surveys of student satisfaction and feedback.
- **Career services and on-campus/virtual/nearby jobs and paid internships** - The number one highest ranked and most common concern we hear from students is wanting more opportunities for paid internships and work-based learning opportunities, especially those that also grant academic credit for high school and college (such as [dual-enrollment internships](#)).
- **Streamlined SNAP nudges and auto-enrollment, like SUNY**, and<sup>3</sup>
- **\$2 million to fully stock and staff Campus Food Pantries at all 25 schools**<sup>4</sup>



1 <https://www.mec.cuny.edu/student-success/transition-academy/>

2 <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/faq/disability.html>

3 <https://www.suny.edu/suny-news/press-releases/2-21/2-3-21/sfa-snap.html>

4 <https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/cunyverse/2023/04/10/cuny-has-20-on-campus-food-pantries-heres-how-students-can-take-advantage-of-them/>

## Pass the Fairness in Apartment Rental Expenses (FARE) Act ([Int 1105-2023](#))

Rent and housing fees are by far the greatest drain on young adults' finances and economic opportunity in NYC. What's more, our city is one of the most cost-prohibitive and economically discriminatory places to live because the majority of apartments for rent here require a broker fee to be paid. This fee must be paid upfront by the new tenant, not by the landlords who hired the brokers for their buildings. Broker fees here are often 8- 15 percent of the annual rent (almost 2 times the monthly rent). Combined with the security deposit and first month's rent, this means that renters often need to pay 4 times the monthly rent upfront to rent an apartment. Given that the average rental price here for the cheapest option, a studio apartment, is [currently](#) \$3,300/month, that means an average renter would need to have and pay \$13,200 upfront to move to a studio apartment. For a one-bedroom, on average, one would need to have and pay nearly \$16,000. For a 2-bedroom, on average, over \$20,000.

These amounts seem ludicrous because they are, but also because as much as half of those amounts are from the broker fees that landlords push onto any new tenant. Under this paradigm, the tenant often does not hire/choose the broker and often receives virtually no services from them besides seeing the unit the tenant inquired about and submitting their rental application to the landlord. This bill would justly shift the law so that landlords are required to pay their own brokers this fee. This does not, however, impede prospective renters from hiring and paying for their broker to research and/or show them rental units, if they wish to seek out those services.

## Make MetroCards Free for CUNY students ([per NYC Res 0099-2018](#))

New York City's public high school students receive free MetroCards to get to school, but when they graduate and go to college at CUNY schools the cards are no longer provided. Despite still often being full-time students, they must now shoulder the financial burden of transportation to and from classes throughout the day themselves, in addition to tuition and many other non-tuition fees. This especially impacts thousands of low-income and first-generation students at CUNY. It's also unusual that CUNY doesn't offer free transportation, as many SUNY schools and smaller private colleges and universities have free shuttle services and/or local bus fares.

Making MetroCards free for CUNY students is an easy way to make public higher education more affordable and accessible. Some have also made the case that at least those at the CUNY Community Colleges should receive free Metrocards.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> THE CITY SHOULD PROVIDE FREE METROCARDS TO CUNY STUDENTS <https://nycfuture.org/research/the-city-should-provide-free-metrocards-to-cuny-students>