



July 9, 2019

Memorandum of Support

A.5250 (Barrett)/ S.1889 (Skoufis)

The Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU) supports A.5250/ S.1889, a bill which raises the outdated income threshold for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and increases the minimum award. CICU represents more than 100 private, not-for-profit colleges and universities in New York State which educate almost 500,000 students annually, including nearly 300,000 New Yorkers.

TAP, New York's signature financial aid program, is structured to progressively serve New York's lowest income families. Since its inception more than 50 years ago, TAP has enabled more than five million New Yorkers to realize their college dreams. TAP is designed to let students go to any accredited New York college or university, private or public, that best meets their needs. One of the most important aspects of TAP is that it treats New York college students the same, regardless of where they enroll. More than 336,000 students receive TAP, and 72,000 of them (21 percent) attend private, not-for-profit colleges. Those 72,000 Independent Sector students represent 43 percent of the New York State resident undergraduates enrolled in private, not-for-profit schools in the state.

Despite the success of the program, awards and income eligibility have failed to keep pace with inflation, preventing worthy students and families from accessing this important aid program. Because TAP awards and income standards do not undergo periodic adjustment, fewer students can benefit from it than in previous years. For example, the inflation adjusted median family income in New York State increased by 7 percent between 2005 and 2017, however the TAP upper income limit of \$80,000 has remained stagnant since 2000. This legislation will help bring TAP's income levels more in line with inflationary adjustments to family income. Raising the minimum award to \$750 will also benefit students across New York and help to keep the award relevant to the middle-class families who receive it.

This legislation is an important first step towards keeping TAP financially relevant to all students and families. In addition to raising the income limits to \$95,000, CICU is calling for the maximum award to be raised to \$6,000 and the minimum award to \$1,000. The increase in the maximum award to \$6,000 dollars would allow TAP to keep up with inflation since 2008.

TAP is successful as part of a student's entire financial aid picture, and it needs to be adjusted to remain relevant as incomes grow. Private, not-for-profit colleges and universities statewide gave \$5.7 billion in financial aid from their own funds to students in 2017. Progressive solutions to increase TAP awards and eligibility, like this legislation, will help augment institutional aid, and make college a reality for more students.

For these reasons the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities supports this legislation and urges its enactment.