



the Downstate Update

DOWNSTATE CHAPTER NEWS

By Redetha Abrahams-Nichols

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BROOKLYN NEEDS DOWNSTATE

More than 300 UUP members, faith leaders and community activists and advocates for safe, affordable public hospital care rallied at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University March 24, with one message for lawmakers: Brooklyn needs Downstate.

That chant resonated over and over again during the rousing 90-minute rally, as Downstate supporters demanded that the state resume funding one of its most important public health care assets. The rally had an added sense of urgency, as it took place just eight days before the state budget is due.



Gov. Kathy Hochul's Executive Budget proposal did not include any operating support for any of the SUNY hospitals, but SUNY and a number of key lawmakers have joined UUP in pressing for operating funds for all three public hospitals, including Upstate Medical University Hospital in Syracuse, and Stony Brook University Hospital.

"We are committed together to deliver the message that Brooklyn needs Downstate," UUP President Fred Kowal said as he kicked off the rally. "We are here because we are summoned to bear witness to the lifesaving work of our

union siblings in three unions: CSEA, PEF and UUP ... so it's good that we are here in this hour to call out the leaders of our state that the sacred work that goes on in these walls must be honored not with words, but with deeds."



LIFESAVING CARE, WITHOUT STATE SUPPORT

For the last decade, New York's financial approach to Downstate's University Hospital has been at odds with the hospital's stellar reputation and the irreplaceable role it has held in one of the highest-need urban areas in the United States. At a time when the medical profession has acknowledged that patients respond better to doctors with whom they can relate, Downstate's medical school has trained more physicians of color than any other medical college in the state—and the Downstate University Hospital has been the clinical training ground for those doctors. At the height of the coronavirus pandemic, New York designated

Downstate University Hospital as a COVID-only hospital.

Yet it's been years since New York provided any operating funds to its three SUNY teaching hospitals, and the hospitals are the only state entities required to pay their own debt service. UUP has called for an immediate \$133 million operating aid infusion for SUNY Downstate.

PAST VICTORY INSPIRES CURRENT FUNDING PUSH

It's been a long struggle for Downstate. Ten years ago, the hospital faced a serious threat of privatization or outright closure. UUP leaders, including the late Rowena Blackman-Stroud—the longtime UUP Downstate Chapter president—pulled together a coalition of faith leaders, labor and community activists in a move largely credited with keeping the hospital and medical school open and public.

Kowal paid tribute to Blackman-Stroud, who died in December 2022, as he recalled that earlier effort.

“Her spirit is with us, and that’s going to inspire us to be successful once again,” Kowal told the crowd, which cheered at the mention of Blackman-Stroud’s name.

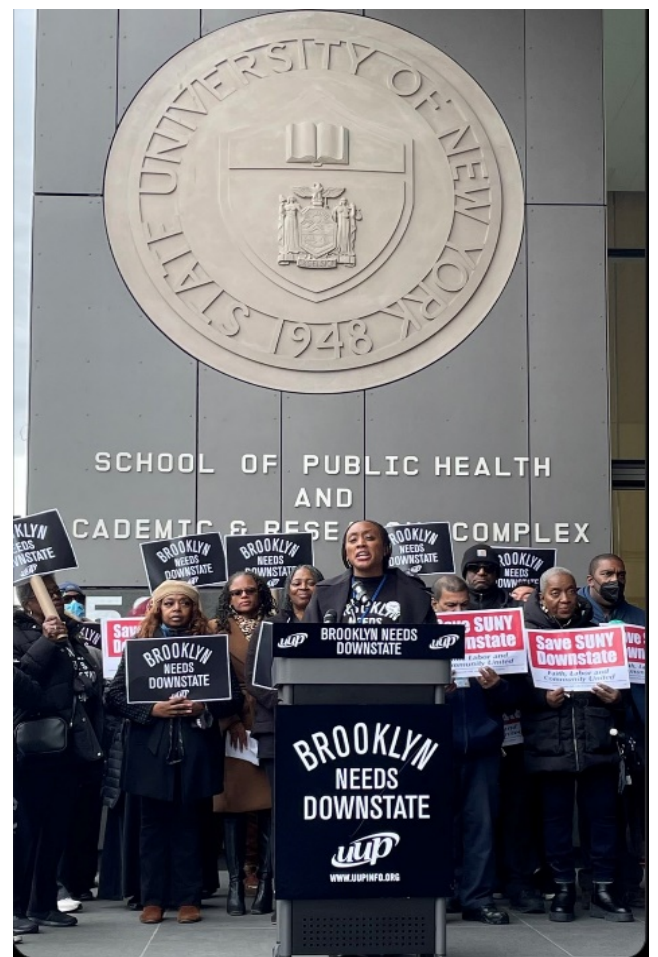
NATIONAL, STATEWIDE ADVOCATES BACK DOWNSTATE

More than a dozen speakers joined Kowal on the steps in front of the hospital’s entrance at 450 Clarkson Ave. Labor leaders included AFT President Randi Weingarten, New York AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento, NYSUT President Andy Pallotta and Redetha Abrahams-Nichols, the UUP Downstate Chapter president.



Among the state lawmakers who have been advocates for public higher education and public health care were Sen. Zellnor Myrie and Assemblymembers Latrice Walker and Monique Chandler-Waterman. And Bishop Orlando Findlayter of Brooklyn’s New Hope Christian Fellowship reiterated his support for Downstate as he invoked memories of the fight a decade ago to keep the hospital open and public—a fight in which he played a key role as a faith leader who knows the value of Downstate to the people it serves.

Go to UUP’s website at UUPinfo.org for more information and coverage of the event and watch the website for updates as lawmakers and the governor continue working toward a final enacted state budget.





GET INVOLVED! TELL YOUR LEGISLATORS TO FUND SUNY DOWNSTATE! SEND AN E-LETTER URGING THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY TO

Click [Fully fund SUNY's campuses and public teaching hospitals! - Action Network](#) to send the letter. You can also find a link to the letter on the UUP website, at <https://uupinfo.org/>.

Send a strong message to Governor Hochul. FUND SUNY!!!



Chantel D. Fuller, Grievance Chair,
Jacqueline Bourgeois, Chapter Assistant
and Redetha Abrahams-Nichols, Chapter
President-Downstate

SIGN UP FOR LOAN FORGIVENESS CLINICS

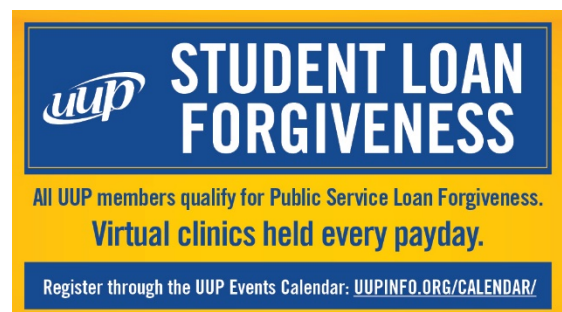
UUP regularly offers virtual student debt clinics to help members navigate the federal public service forgiveness

program and learn more about income-driven repayment plans.

The next clinics are set for:

- Wednesday, April 12, 2023 – 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm
- Wednesday, April 26, 2023 – 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm
- Wednesday, May 10, 2023 – 11:30 am to 1:00 pm
- Wednesday, May 24, 2023 – 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm

* Register [Here](#)



REGISTER FOR UUP'S PRE-RETIREMENT WORKSHOPS

UUP is holding its next virtual pre-retirement workshops April and May 2023.

The two-part webinars will cover health care and Medicare, followed by union benefits, such as dental and vision coverage.

The schedule for the workshops is:

- Monday, April 10, 2023 - 12:00 Noon to 1:00 pm . Part One
- Wednesday, April 12, 2023 – 12:00 Noon to 1:00 pm Part Two

* Register [Here](#) for the April webinars

- Monday, May 8, 2023 – 8:00 pm to 8:00 pm – Part One
- Wednesday, May 10, 2023 – 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm – Part Two

* Register [Here](#) for the May webinars

PARKING NYS-RIDE COMMUNTER PROGRAM

I am pleased to announce that the current NYS-Ride pre-tax program has been expanded to cover qualified monthly expenses for commute-related “non-employer provided” parking. As

many of you are aware, the existing NYS-Ride commuter program currently provides interested employees with the ability to pay for commute-related mass-transit expenses with pre-tax dollars. The expanded program will now also allow employees to pay for commute-related parking expenses for non-employer provided parking on a pre-tax basis. This includes payments to third-party parking vendors for commute-related parking at:

- Parking meters
- Park and ride locations
- Visitor or guest lots
- Municipal or private lots

Unfortunately, the NYS-Ride program cannot be used for parking that is “employer-provided.” Employer-provided parking includes parking in downtown Albany provided through the NYS Office of General Services, parking fees paid through payroll deduction, or parking fees paid through other direct payment to the employer. However, know that the issue of pre-tax treatment for “employer provided” parking (primarily paid through payroll deduction) is still a topic of on-going discussion between UUP and the State.

We have confirmed that employees at Downstate who pay for parking through the Faculty Student Association will be able to enroll in NYS-Ride to pay for qualified expenses on a pre-tax basis. Discussions are ongoing regarding pre-tax treatment for monthly parking expenses for “employer-provided” at other campuses that charge for parking (e.g., Upstate and Stony Brook).

Enrollment will begin immediately utilizing the same enrollment system as already exists for the NYS-Ride mass-transit benefit. Employees will need to enroll by April 1 to begin participating for the June benefit month. Payroll deductions will occur late April and early May and the benefit will first be available for use in June.

Finally, information, both about the new pre-tax commuter parking program and about the existing mass transit program can be found at: [NYS-Ride | Office of Employee Relations](#).

Please be reminded that members who may not have monthly fees for commute-related parking, but who are using mass-

transit to commute to work, that they also can enroll in NYS Ride to pay for those mass transit expense on a pre-tax basis.



DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVE'S VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We invite all UUP members to get involved with their union. Here is how you can help.

If your department does not have a UUP Department Representative, please volunteer to serve in that role. Department Reps get up-to-date information on workplace issues. If your department has multiple shifts, each shift should have a Department Rep.

If you have not done so, please send your personal email to Brooklyn@uupmail.org so we can keep you up-to-date on what is happening.



March 30, 2023 - Redetha Abrahams-Nichols, President UUP Downstate Chapter rallied on Capitol Hill along with Randi Weingarten, President AFT and advocates to fight for legislation for safe nurse staffing in hospitals.

INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD PROGRAM

Funding for the Individual Development Award Program ("IDA") is provided under the 2016-2022 Agreement between UUP and the State of New York. Pursuant to the 2016-2022 Agreement, funding had been extended for a nine-month period July 2, 2022, ending March 31, 2023.

Congratulations to this round of recipients!!!

Redetha Abrahams-Nichols
Michele Adams
Grace Akpan
Nasser Ali
Juliet A Arthur (Green)
Rasheed Best
Adam Burgman
Sydney Butts
Veneta Callpani
Rebecca Chen
Punet Dhaliwhal
Jessica Dowling
Antoni D'Souza
Mohammad Faysel
Nabil A. Gergis
Emad Ghaly
Nicole Golbari
Rachel Shireen Golpanian
Rhea Graham
Farhad Haeri
Rivka Hellman
Anthony Ho
Johnson Ho
Alisen Huang
Stacy Hyman
Thulasiram Janardhanan
Adiebonye Jumbo
Aboud Kaliounji
Chella Kamarajan
Hagar Kandal
Michael Karp
Emily Kurlansik
Steven R Levine
Tian Li
Justin Marson
Jogy Mathew
Diana Moller
Julie Nguyen
Efekona Nuwere
Vikram Pagpatan
Nikolaos Papmitsakis
Joy Pessin
Karly Ann Raber
Michael Reinhardt
Simone Reynolds
Herman Sanford
Herman Sanford
Soaa Shalabi
Vikki Small
Temitope Soyemi

Dara Stephenson
Melinda Suarez
Pierre-Carolle Tchouapi
Jasmin Thomas
Emily Tongdee
Kristi Tran
Daurn Tribble
Alex Turcios
Ogie Umasabor-Bubu
Sarah Williams
Kino Williams
Nyousha Yousefi
Alireza Zandifar

CHAPTER ELECTIONS

The ballots for the 2023-2025 Chapter Elections have been mailed. If any member has not received a ballot should call 203-403-8401 – press 3 anytime and relay the following information:

- Chapter name
- Member's Name
- Mailing address
- Phone Number
- If it is for Chapter elections or Retired Member Governing Board elections

Please note that Chapter Elections Ballots are due on April 21 and are scheduled to be counted April 24 through April 28, 2023.

UUP Downstate Chapter

President: Redetha Abrahams-Nichols

VP for Academics: Samuel Marquez

VP for Professionals: Hazel Williams

Secretary: Ellen McTigue

Treasurer: Fred Houston

Grievance Chair: Chantel D. Fuller

Officer for Contingents:

Laura Martello-Rooney

Membership Development Officer:

Khadijah Sikriti

Retirees Officer: Shirley Patterson

UUP/NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist

Lisa Mouscardy Willis

Chapter Assistant

Jacqueline L. Bourgeois

Chapter information

Chapter office: Room BSB 2-71P, Box 96

Phone: 18-270-1519

Fax: 718-774-0800

Email: brooklyn@uupmail.org

UUP website: www.uupinfo.org