

**Testimony of
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Chairman Kline, Congressman Hanna and other members of the committee, and distinguished guests: Welcome to SUNYIT. Congressman Hanna, thank you for bringing the Chairman and this hearing to the Mohawk Valley and to our campus. And thank you for this opportunity to share with you some thoughts on higher education's role in job growth and economic development.

Like the nation, our region is at a crossroads. More so than many other parts of the country, this part of New York State is in transition, as our rich history gives way to a bright future. New York's economic stature has been an example for the nation and the world, but it is increasingly clear that we must maintain a shared commitment to ensure that this generation, and future generations of New Yorkers, continues to build success.

Education is key, from the K-12 foundation laid down by our school districts to higher education and beyond. Our community college partners, and SUNYIT, as a unique representative of the State University System, have and will continue to give students the preparation they need to launch successful 21st century careers. In a global economy, opportunities for success are abundant—and those who pursue life-long education and training will thrive.

Our role as a regional workforce development engine holds great promise, especially in light of our nanotechnology partnership with UAlbany's College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering, and the continuing development of the Marcy NanoCenter at SUNYIT. Thanks to

the support of our elected officials, SUNYIT is making significant investments in infrastructure and expanding its academic offerings—with new programs in engineering, computer security, biology, and human services—as we look to meet the needs of current and future students. With both broad preparation in the liberal arts and specific technical competencies, our students are well-prepared to succeed in an increasing array of careers.

At SUNYIT, we are committed to providing affordable, quality undergraduate and graduate education, and because of our unique history, we have always stressed the importance of applied learning and its connection to students' career success. Last week, we brought together dozens of potential employers with students preparing to graduate—our career services office and many of our faculty maintain connections with business and industry that help our graduates find jobs and launch successful careers. To ensure that what our students learn is relevant to workforce and industry needs, many of our academic programs regularly seek professional expertise through advisory boards to keep their curriculum relevant.

Throughout our history, many of our graduates have found employment and professional advancement in our region. But in other cases, graduates in certain programs moved elsewhere—and students who came to us from outside the Mohawk Valley also left the area after graduating. Through our nanotechnology partnership, SUNYIT will be a catalyst—contributing to a more robust regional economy with greater opportunities for all. This model has worked in Albany—and we know it will be successful here as well.

Affordable access to higher education is essential to workforce development and, ultimately, to America's international competitive advantage. And maintaining affordability is critical to our students. More than 80 percent of SUNYIT students depend on some form of financial aid, and the Federal role in keeping a college education affordable cannot be overstated.

We are seeing more and more students with significant financial need. Since the economic downturn, our financial aid counselors encounter students from families in which a parent has lost a job—sometimes both parents have been laid off. Two years ago, more than one-third of our undergraduate students received Pell Grants. Last year, that figure increased to almost 40 percent.

Clearly, our students' need for Pell and other forms of financial aid is increasing. Any reduction in Pell Grant awards would be a blow to lower and middle income families, and would certainly keep some from beginning or continuing their college education at SUNYIT. Thanks to the generosity of our alumni, we continue to build our endowment so that we can offer additional support to those students who need it—but because we are a relatively young institution, founded in 1966, we are in fact a public college of modest means. So our students have and will continue to rely heavily on Federal and state aid.

We are proud to be this region's public college—and public higher education is a critical component of workforce preparation, but colleges cannot do workforce development if people can't afford to go to college. I ask that you and your colleagues in Washington continue to support a strong Federal role in support for higher education. Thank you.