Testimony of
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New York State Senate Standing Committee on Higher Education Hearing on
H1N1 Preparation
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Senator Stavisky and members of the Senate Standing Committee on Higher Education: Thank you for inviting Queens College of The City University of New York to testify before you today. My name is Katharine Cobb and I am the Vice President for Finance and Administration at Queens College. I am pleased to represent the College at this hearing and provide you information on our campus’s planning and preparation for the H1N1 pan epidemic.

Queens College, located in Flushing, NY, is one of the senior colleges in CUNY. We are proud of our alumni including Paul Simon, Jerry Seinfeld, and the distinguished chair of this committee, Senator Toby Stavisky. We have about 20,000 students on campus. This August 2009, we opened our first student residence, home to almost 500 students.
The Queens College Emergency Planning Committee has been responsible for implementing our H1N1 plan. We have coordinated our efforts with the CUNY Office of Environmental, Health, Safety and Risk Management.

During last spring’s H1N1 outbreak, Queens College had frequent contact with CUNY’s Office of Environmental, Health, Safety and Risk Management so we could obtain the most up-to-date data on the spread of the disease and discuss infection-control protocol and procedures. We have continued to work closely with that office as part of our effort to maintain the highest level of preparation.

We understand that our best defense against an outbreak is for all members of our college community to take simple preventive measures, like covering a cough, washing hands, and staying away from others when sick. To get that message out, we have conducted an aggressive communication campaign. We have sent out emails announcements on the topic, posted this flyer on preventative measures in all bathrooms and have a dedicated web page accessible from our College home page, with detailed instructions on prevention and treatment. The web page has links to CUNY and NYC H1N1 web pages where one can go to find locations to obtain the flu vaccine. We designed a logo for our campaign with the message “QC fights H1N1”; it is the “hot button” to our H1N1 webpage.
This logo, attached to my testimony, was embossed on a sticker and that sticker has been placed on all the soap dispensers in the bathrooms and all of the hand sanitizers on campus. Our logo is designed to reinforce our message of prevention and to communicate the College’s commitment to a healthy campus.

We want to make sure our students, faculty, and staff will find it easy to take our recommendations on how to prevent the spread of the disease and what to do if you are infected. To that end, we monitor our bathrooms to make sure no one will find an empty soap or paper towel dispenser. We have distributed hand sanitizers in all of our thirty-seven buildings in highly visible, convenient locations. We have asked our custodial staff to pay particular attention to surfaces that are touched frequently. Finally, the Provost has notified faculty of procedures to be followed for students in case of absences for flu-related illnesses so no student will feel compelled to attend class if they are ill.

Recognizing our new student residence brings an increased vulnerability to an outbreak of H1N1, we have taken extra measures for this population. Student residents were sent instructions on flu prevention and treatment before they moved in. Shortly after they arrived, staff placed those same instructions in each student’s
mailbox in addition to distributing this informational poster throughout the building. We trained resident advisors on the subject; they then held meetings with residents to disseminate information on H1N1.

Health Services has prepared "care bags" for students who are self-isolating. The "care bags" contain light food (bouillon, applesauce, soup, cereal, ginger ale, granola bars, and tea), disposable thermometers, salt for gargling, cough drops, and hand sanitizers. Our students are housed in apartment style accommodations with bathroom and kitchen, but we provide them with two masks in the "care bag" in case they need to leave their room.

Health Services is available to advise and assist students during the day. We provide an after hours nurse triage telephone service for students if they are not feeling well when Health Services is closed. The phone number for the service is posted on each floor.

We take our responsibility to provide a healthy campus environment seriously. We are confident that we have taken the steps necessary to reduce the possibility of an outbreak of H1N1 virus at the College and to minimize the impact if it should occur. Thank you for allowing me to share our plan with you.
QC Fights H1N1 Flu