

Written Testimony

Dear Distinguished Committee Members,

It is my honor to again address you and thank you for your continued support of Temple University. Over the past 16 months, while serving as Temple's president, one thing has become very clear: Temple University is stronger because of all of you and the long-standing support of the Commonwealth.

For more than 60 years, Temple has been partnering with the Commonwealth, and it is evident that a stronger Pennsylvania and a stronger Temple go hand in hand. This partnership is one of the primary reasons that we can continue to fulfill our mission of providing an excellent education to talented students from all walks of life.

Last year, when I appeared before the committee, I had served as Temple's president for only a few short months. I was still very much on a listening tour as I spent time meeting with students, faculty and staff across Temple's 17 schools and colleges. I met with alumni across the country and neighbors from the North Philadelphia community. I met with many of you and your colleagues in the legislature.

In those early months, I was incredibly optimistic about Temple University and its path forward. Now, one year later, I am even more confident that Temple has the potential to set the standard as one of the most consequential urban research universities in the nation.

But we cannot accomplish this goal alone. It is going to take all of us, and that includes our dedicated elected representatives. I look forward to working with each of you in the months and years to come to help lift up both Temple and the entire Commonwealth.

Temple's value

Throughout my career, I have been inspired by the ability of higher education to positively impact the lives of students and our communities. I have led other institutions in the Commonwealth, including Franklin and Marshall College and Drexel University, but this has been the first time I have had the privilege of leading a public university.

While the mission of every institution of higher education is important, there is something unique about public, state-related institutions like Temple. We are proudly known as Philadelphia's Public Research University.

I have always said that I see Temple University and Temple Health as two of the most important anchor institutions in both the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and that has only been further affirmed during the past year. We recently commissioned an economic

impact study, and its findings illustrate just how important Temple is when it comes to the social and economic vibrancy of the City of Philadelphia, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and beyond.

Combined, Temple and Temple Health's impact on the state economy is more than \$11 billion as the institutions support nearly 52,000 jobs. In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania's largest city, Temple and Temple Health's impact is even more pronounced as the institutions generate almost \$7.7 billion in economic impact, sustaining 1 in every 15 jobs within the city. Nearly 48,000 jobs in total are supported across the greater Philadelphia region.

While Temple is a global institution, our heart is here in Pennsylvania, and we are committed to not just serving Philadelphia but the greater Commonwealth. An example of this is the recently announced [opening of a state-of-the-art dental clinic and education center in Tamaqua, Pennsylvania](#), located in Schuylkill County. This will be key in helping to improve access to high-quality dental care for adults living in rural environments and specifically Schuylkill, Carbon and Luzerne counties.

Our Lewis Katz School of Medicine and WellSpan Health have also [formalized an agreement that will establish a new regional campus](#) for Temple's medical school in York County. The agreement is a significant step in enhancing the pipeline of future WellSpan physicians across the health system and throughout central Pennsylvania communities, as this will be the first academic medical school to reside in York County.

Our impact in Pennsylvania can also be seen through our graduates as Temple's 370,000-plus alumni include more than 200,000 Keystone state residents, who earn an estimated \$2.5 billion due in part to their Temple education. Taking a closer look at the numbers, 53% of Temple graduates end up in Pennsylvania after receiving their degrees, which further illustrates how this institution helps power the Commonwealth.

It also provides evidence of how your support for Temple is a direct investment in Pennsylvania. Thanks to the state appropriation, the university is able to offer more than \$270 million in tuition support to Pennsylvania residents. As a result of your investment, Temple provides every undergraduate in-state resident with at least a \$15,000 annual discount on tuition.

This year, we are requesting a 16% increase to our appropriation, which would allow us to hold Pennsylvania resident tuition flat across all levels for the upcoming academic year.

Please know that we are also doing our part to help keep higher education affordable and accessible for Pennsylvania residents. We cut our budget by more than \$37 million for fiscal year 2026. And, since fiscal year 2021, Temple has reduced its budget by more than \$260 million.

While we have been making these reductions, we also have been increasing how we support our students in the form of financial aid. This year's budget includes \$184 million that will be directly distributed to undergraduate students in the form of financial aid. This represents a more than \$35 million increase from last year, and it is the most financial aid that we have ever distributed. It is a significant investment for the university, but we believe it is key for supporting our students.

Moving 'Forward with Purpose'

In late January, we [introduced Forward with Purpose: Temple University's Strategic Plan](#), which has been designed to serve as the university's compass through Temple's 150th anniversary in 2034. It provides us with a blueprint for how we can accomplish our goals, and it is one of the many reasons why I remain so optimistic about this university and its path forward.

The plan has been organized around three priorities: Student Success, Research in Action and Place-based Impact. Additionally, a set of three foundational principles—Innovation for Excellence, Partnerships, and Operational and Financial Strength—will span the university's work across the priorities and form the foundation needed to achieve our objectives. Together, these six elements form a shared framework for the university's future.

The process of developing this plan was no small undertaking. Over the past year, the Strategic Plan Steering Committee, Executive Committee and more than 2,000 members of the Temple community—faculty, students, staff, alumni and community partners—contributed their ideas to the plan.

We now begin the implementation process in earnest, but work around these priorities is already underway. This plan provides us with an opportunity to be thoughtful when it comes to accountability and measuring progress. It will allow us to ensure that Temple remains on the path to becoming one of the most consequential urban research universities in the nation. Accomplishing this goal will also bring greater attention to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the important role it plays in driving innovation and powering our nation's workforce.

There is still much work to do, but here is a snapshot of some of our early progress on these priorities.

Student Success

Before we can help our students succeed, we must first support them and empower them to pursue higher education in the first place. It is no secret that Temple, like so many other institutions of higher education in the northeast, has dealt with enrollment challenges in recent years.

Building back enrollment was one of my early goals, and while we still have work to do, we have made significant progress. This fall's [entering Class of 2029 is 5,379 students](#), which represents a 9.2% increase in first-year enrollment over last year. In addition to new first-year students, we also welcomed 924 new transfer students as well as 2,237 new graduate and professional students.

Overall, first-year enrollment from the Commonwealth is up 20.8% with 3,369 students (63% in total) who are Pennsylvania residents, which is another proud point of distinction for our institution.

However, more new students means we must increase our focus on student success, which is why it has been identified as one of the key priorities in the strategic plan. Specifically, we are working to improve the infrastructure that ensures students stay on a path to graduation.

We are strengthening coordination across academic affairs, student affairs and enrollment management, both centrally and within our many schools and colleges. Students are going to have clearer, easier access to academic support, advising, financial guidance, career counseling and other essential resources.

We are also doing all we can to further build out the pipeline to make a Temple education accessible for all qualified prospective students. I know you are familiar with [Temple Promise, our innovative, last-dollar financial aid program](#) that launched in 2024 and helps keep a Temple education affordable for Philadelphia students who might not otherwise have the opportunity. Last year, we also launched [Temple Future Scholars](#), a scaled college pipeline program that supports middle school students in Philadelphia.

In March 2025, Temple [became the 18th member of the University Innovation Alliance \(UIA\)](#)—a national coalition of public research universities committed to increasing student success, reducing equity gaps in higher education and ultimately increasing the number of college graduates in the United States. We are the only Pennsylvania institution represented within the UIA. In addition, [we were one of only 21 colleges and universities nationwide](#) to receive a top designation in the categories of research and student success in the latest release of the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education.

Beyond this, there are a handful of initiatives and programs in various stages of development, about which I hope to share more information in the very near future. While the strategic plan has been built around three priorities, it is not hyperbole to say that this priority rises above the others. At Temple, we want to be known as an institution where student success is at the center of all we do.

Research in Action

One of the other key priorities of our strategic plan is research in action. As one of the most important institutions in both Philadelphia and the Commonwealth, we must do our part to confront society's most urgent challenges through research and creative activity. By doing so, we believe we can improve public life across Philadelphia, the Commonwealth, our nation and the world.

This work is already underway. While Temple's home is in Philadelphia, its impact is global, and our research output helps illustrate that. As an R1 institution, our annual research expenditures are approximately \$315 million, and an estimated 67% of that funding originates outside Pennsylvania. In other words, Temple brings in more than \$200 million in research funding to the region.

What makes me most proud of our research, however, is how it makes a difference. Consider the work being done by Assistant Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering Gangadhar Andaluri and PhD student Md Saiful Islam as an example.

Together, they are [researching how to sustainably remove PFAS chemicals and microplastics](#) from drinking water, and they are making tremendous progress. They have found a way to use air bubbles to create foam that captures contaminants, allowing them to be easily filtered from water. The best part about this research is that it does not require the use of toxic chemicals.

Another wonderful example of our research impact can be seen through the work of Gabriella Maria McLoughlin, an assistant professor in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences in the Barnett College of Public Health. Gabriella and a multidisciplinary team of Temple faculty and graduate and undergraduate students [are working in partnership with the School District of Philadelphia](#) to examine why participation in free school meals has declined, and they are working to identify solutions.

Specifically, the findings of their research have led to the launch of a pilot program in four area schools, where tailored strategies are now being tested to address barriers to participation in the free lunch program. The partnership with the School District in this effort illustrates how our research can help support both our neighbors and stakeholders across the Commonwealth.

We will continue to work diligently to increase our research impact in the years to come.

Place-based Impact

The final priority of our strategic plan is place-based impact.

Included within our recently-launched strategic plan is [a campus development plan known as Building Connections](#), which helps envision the physical environment that will support 'Forward with Purpose.'

Designed to be implemented over the next 20 years, the scope of the plan encompasses Main Campus, the Health Sciences Center and Center City. The plan will support the creation of a multidimensional innovation corridor along Broad Street, extending from Temple's Health Sciences Center in the north, to Main Campus, then south to Terra Hall at Broad and Walnut streets on the Avenue of the Arts.

This is all part of our broader strategy to create a sense of place, and some efforts from Building Connections are already taking shape. Your support was critical in helping [the Caroline Kimmel Pavilion for the Arts and Communication come to fruition](#), and construction is underway. When it opens in the fall 2027, it will create a dynamic community hub for activity, education and entertainment on Main Campus.

Your support was also the primary reason that we were able to secure a new home for our Center City Campus in Terra Hall, the former main academic building for the University of the Arts. Work is proceeding to envision the next iteration of Terra Hall, which will serve as an intellectual hub and a catalyst of innovation and creativity on the Avenue of the Arts.

This placed-based strategy will be aimed at helping spur economic growth along the North Broad corridor. It is imperative that we create an environment conducive to investment, and that is why our Department of Public Safety must be resourced for success. This past December, [we shared the results of an independent staffing study](#) that was conducted for the department. We intend to use it as a guide to ensure that the Department of Public Safety is staffed optimally both now and moving forward, so that it can continue to capably serve students, faculty, staff and neighbors alike.

At the recommendation of the independent study, the university plans to pursue a phased, multiyear staffing plan aimed at increasing the number of sworn officers while also enhancing training, operations and alternative response capabilities.

The immediate focus will be to add 29 patrol officers, one detective, six sergeants and one lieutenant within the next five years. This will allow the department to support more comprehensive public safety services. Once that milestone is reached, we will conduct a thorough reevaluation of its capacity and needs and will develop a path forward.

In the meantime, the Philadelphia Police Department has graciously stepped in to assist us. Philadelphia Police Commissioner Kevin Bethel has provided six bike patrol officers and a sergeant, who have been fully embedded within Temple's ranks since January. It is the latest demonstration of the strong partnership between Temple and the City of Philadelphia.

Closing

Once more, I would like to thank you for your continued support of both Temple University and all of the state-related institutions across the Commonwealth. Over this past year, it has been a pleasure working with so many of you, and I look forward to collaborating even more in the years to come.

Temple is an institution that is rooted here in Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. We are a driver of upward mobility, and an institution that has the ability to change lives.

Temple, including Temple Health is the fourth largest employer in Philadelphia, with more than 20,000 persons contributing to our impact across the region and the Commonwealth, and as I shared at the beginning of this letter, our impact across the region and the Commonwealth is great.

We will be a vital, trusted partner in our city and throughout the Commonwealth, and that is why communications like this one are so important. I assure you that as we implement 'Forward with Purpose,' you will be hearing from me frequently, as I provide updates on our progress.

We are only able to create such an impact because of your support. Thank you for your unwavering leadership and continued confidence in Temple University and our mission. It makes all the difference.

Sincerely,

John Fry
President
Temple University