

**Testimony of Lynda Caspe, Adjunct Associate Professor
Before the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York**

**Concerning Funding for Adjunct Health Insurance
In the CUNY Budget Request (Calendar Item 3.A.)**

21 November, 2011

My name is Lynda Caspe. I am an Adjunct Associate Professor at BMCC. I have been teaching at BMCC since 1978 and at CUNY since 1974. I want to thank you for including adjunct health insurance in the CUNY budget request for next year. I urge you to ensure that those funds you include cover the cost of the transfer of all eligible adjuncts to the City Health Plan. The City Health Plan will not only cover the health needs of teaching adjuncts but it will follow those adjuncts into retirement. I don't think that any of the SUNY plans do that.

Although adjuncts teach the majority of the classes at the City University they are paid a third of what full time professors get. In the 1980's, when CUNY first started giving adjuncts health insurance, it was like getting a pay raise and, in part, made up for the low adjunct wages and the poor working conditions.

If CUNY allowed adjunct health insurance to end, it would be like getting a pay cut, which in some cases would equal fifty percent of the adjuncts' wages. Lack of health insurance would be a financial blow to all adjuncts including myself, even though I am eligible for Medicare. Medicare isn't free. There is a monthly fee, and since I have always earned less than \$24,000 a year, this fee would equal almost all of my social security. In my old age, unable to work, I would have to depend totally on my pension, which would be approximately half of what I am now earning.

I have been teaching at CUNY for 37 years. I always thought I would become a full-time professor, but shortly after I was hired in 1974, New York City went into a financial downturn. Not only was the City University not opening up full-time lines, but in order to save money many colleges took their last hired full timers and turned them into adjuncts. Then slowly over the next 30 years full-time lines opened and when they did, they were filled by the former full timers who had been made adjuncts. It wasn't until 2003, that there was a full-time line in my department that was to be filled by an adjunct who had never held a full-time position. By that time, I was close to being a senior citizen and the department seemed more interested in hiring younger workers. I continued applying for full-time lines every time they came up. I applied four times. But I also continued getting older. So the possibility of being hired on a full time basis became more and more remote.

I am primarily a professional artist, but I enjoy teaching and helping students develop their talents. Teaching and creating art is a good fit for me. I have students who keep in touch with me years after they have taken my courses. They come to my exhibits and e-mail me their achievements. I value those relationships.

Although I have achieved a certain amount of success as an artist, although I have sold my art and gotten grants for my artistic work, the money mainly went into producing my artwork, and so I am basically living on the money I earn at CUNY.

I would like to feel that after 37 years of teaching thousands of students for the City University I would not be discarded when I can no longer teach and left to fend for myself. I would like to feel that the Board of Trustees would recognize my service and the service of others in the same position and support us with decent salaries and retirement pay including health benefits.