

**Testimony of Michael Batson, Adjunct Lecturer
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

I have never been completely comfortable with the designation of Adjunct: it implies that one is nonessential, one who is ancillary, and auxiliary. I believe that too many too often operate under the false premise that adjuncts are not essential to this university; not central to its mission; not a significant part of its structure.

Such thinking makes it easier to make another false assumption: that the pay and benefits that adjuncts receive is not a vital part of our income. Like the women entering the workforce in the nineteenth century who were paid less than their male counterparts under the assumption that their income was supplemental to the male breadwinner, or that their wages was merely pin money, we adjuncts have to constantly remind people that we work here out of necessity, and that the pay we receive puts food on the table and shoes on our kids. It may not be our only income, but it is certainly an important part of it. No matter how much we would like it to be otherwise, many, many adjuncts are carving out a living here. Scores of adjuncts have been here for ten or more years, teaching two to three classes every semester.

And now we have a new threat to our well-being: the possible loss of our health care. The most basic of needs, our health, is at risk. The ability to go to the doctor when we are not feeling well and possibly preventing the development of a serious illness is jeopardized. The fear of facing some serious illness without the means to treat it is almost upon us. The reality that we may be teaching our students while sick because we can't afford the medicine to make us better may come to fruition.

I am fortunate in that to the best of my knowledge I am in good health. But I know that that could change at any moment. Without coverage, even a moderate health issue requiring an operation or a hospital stay could cause me extreme financial hardship. If it's serious, I could lose everything. I have spoken to colleagues who are currently dealing with health issues, and they don't know what they will do without coverage. A very good friend of mine who was diagnosed with breast cancer last year said that the threat of losing her health care feels like a death sentence. That is not hyperbole, but rather reflects the serious and dire reality of this issue.

I commend the City University of New York (CUNY) on its quick response to this issue. Actions speak loudly, and CUNY's budget request shows its desire and willingness to do the right thing. I would ask that in the budget negotiations with the state, you keep this issue a priority so that those who need it can continue to have adequate health coverage.

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