

**Testimony of Carolyn Steinhoff, Adjunct 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 Carolyn Steinhoff. I teach as an adjunct 9 hours a week in CUNY colleges, work 10 hours tutoring as Learning Skills Specialist at CUNY, and also teach two classes at Adelphi University on Long Island. I spend about 20 hours a week beyond my time in the classroom or the tutoring center, preparing and responding to students' work. I research about how we learn, how our brains work, and I develop my own materials and approaches. I ask students to write about their "burning questions," which I helped them develop from their personal experience.

I purchase my own materials for students to use, such as high-quality art markers and plenty of other things. I love CUNY because students are so diverse. I learn so much from them. Their perspectives let me understand the world more than I ever could otherwise. CUNY is providing opportunities for so many people who wouldn't otherwise have education; CUNY is enriching the quality of our society.

But if I add up the hours I spend working for CUNY, I end up getting paid minimum wage or less. And yet now, CUNY wants to repay me by cutting my health care. The campaign to keep this from happening asked us adjuncts to tell our stories about what this would mean to us. We shouldn't even have to tell our stories. Who isn't aware what it means not to have health care? I won't be able to go to the doctor when I'm sick. I'll be at higher risk for every illness, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes because I won't be able to keep track of my health. I won't be able to get mammograms or pap smears so I'll be at higher risk for death if I get cancer. I'll have to go to the emergency room in the few public hospitals left for things like urinary tract infections, which could be treated by a doctor that I won't have. Without CUNY health insurance, if I got insurance at Adelphi, I would have to pay 100% of the premium, or I would have to purchase a private plan. I have two young adult daughters who're just starting out and if I have to buy my own insurance, I'll no longer be in a position to ever help them.

This would have been a travesty. We are already exploited labor, treated in degrading ways because our good work doesn't count. We barely earn enough to live on, and our work doesn't earn us respect or job security. This would have been one more violation of our basic human and worker rights, an indication that we are seen as just filling a need they have to have teachers in front of students. So we are grateful for your recognition of our value to CUNY that you have shown by, including benefit funding in your budget request. We thank you for finally recognizing the need for fully funded health insurance for adjuncts. Now we ask you to follow through, and put your political muscle behind making the funding a reality.