

**Testimony of Mark Lamoureux, 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

My name is Mark Lamoureux. I have worked as an adjunct at the City University of New York (CUNY) since the spring semester of 2006. I have worked at Kingsborough Community College (KCC), Queensborough Community College (QCC), Medgar Evers College (MEC), and New York City College of Technology (NYCT). I am presently teaching six credits at QCC and three credits at NYCT. I have been on the adjunct health insurance plan since the fall of 2007, after I completed my MFA at the New School and was no longer eligible for graduate student health insurance. Since I am a practicing poet, CUNY is my only permanent source of income and health insurance. In my field, I have published two full-length books of poems, with two more on the way in 2012 and 2013; I have published extensively in peer-reviewed print journals and online. Since my MFA, once a terminal degree in my field does not qualify me for a tenure-track position at CUNY and makes a full-time non-tenure track position extremely unlikely, I am dependent upon the adjunct health insurance plan for my healthcare. As an active member of the arts community in New York City, I can vouch for the fact that there are many adjuncts in this field in the same position as I am. For arts practitioners, teaching is not usually a supplementary career, but the most consistent source of income and benefits.

Since adolescence, I have suffered from Major Depression. Properly treated through a program of medication and supporting psychotherapy, I have learned to live with my illness and prosper. Without this medication and attendant care, I would be placed in a position where I am potentially at risk due to the effects of Major Depression. Additionally, I have congenitally high cholesterol and take statin drugs to maintain my cardiovascular health. Without these medications, I would run the risk of heart-related problems in the not-so-distant future.

Without health insurance, the SSRI medication I take for Major Depression would cost \$157 per month. The attendant therapy would cost \$50 a week, or \$200 a month. The cholesterol medication would cost \$155. My rent is \$870 and my student loan payments are \$369 per month. I have employment-related expenses of \$104 in the form of a monthly unlimited subway pass (I take two trains and a bus to get to QCC and a train to get to City Tech) and also about \$199 per semester (\$66 per month) for a case of printer paper and laser printer ink, since these supplies are so scarce at CUNY that instructors are encouraged to make copies for coursework on their own. I make \$2,310 a month between my three classes, after taxes, which, once these expenses are deducted, leaves \$493 per month for food and related expenses such as the electric bill, the

internet and any other medical or dental bills that arise. These figures are only for the months in which I get paid, and not the months during break, in which I am not. During those months the cost of the medication would remain the same with no income at all.

It should be obvious that such a situation would be untenable, so I would then have to seriously consider whether or not to continue in my career as an adjunct professor since my medical expenses would total nearly one-quarter of my income during those months during which I am paid, and be prohibitively expensive during those months in which I am not. Cutting adjunct health insurance is, in effect, a de-facto layoff for instructors such as me. Please do the right thing and continue to fund adjunct health insurance.