

**Testimony of Renee Mizrahi, 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 Renee Mizrahi, and I've been an adjunct lecturer in the Department of English, at Kingsborough Community College for the past nine years. My greatest passions are to teach English, and to help my remediation students successfully overcome their literacy challenges so that they can continue their education.

On February 8, 2008 I was given the gift of life by my sister Susan. I received the miracle of a kidney transplant because I was fortunate enough to have adjunct medical coverage. The surgery went well and I'm now fine, but in order to stay alive I must continue to take immunosuppressant medication for the rest of my life. The cost of my medication is \$1167.84 per month and health insurance is my only lifeline to it.

Working as an adjunct at CUNY is a labor of love. We do not receive high salaries, and we are paid for far less hours than we actually work. When I began teaching at Kingsborough my goal of becoming a lecturer was realistic, but now many full-time positions have recently been eliminated making the chance of promotion to a full-time position, where health care is provided even through retirement almost non-existent.

Before my transplant surgery, my hospital social worker's words were "never go without medical insurance." After working with a health care advocate, who was referred to me by the Deputy Mayor's office, I learned that if adjunct health insurance was discontinued or greatly reduced, I and many other adjuncts would be forced into an unfair and life-threatening position. The current health care system does not cover an adult with a pre-existing condition, making it a financial hardship to purchase an individual policy. Most working people, as a last resort have the right to continue their current policy through COBRA, but I also learned that COBRA would be eliminated as well. This would force myself and other adjuncts into the open market to replace our current policies immediately at a high rate. Because of the disproportionately high cost, many would go without it.

Reducing or eliminating health insurance for adjuncts can result in inaccessibility to proper medical care, and life-saving medication for 1,800 hardworking and dedicated people that make up a very important sector of the CUNY workforce. Continuing to fund this life-saving necessity is the only civilized and ethical choice. I urge you to communicate to the state that it is essential that adjunct health care funds be part of the final budget. As you make the case in Albany, please consider the people like myself who have given their professional lives to CUNY because we believe in what CUNY stands for, people whose lives are now literally on the line.

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