

**Testimony of William Friedheim, Retired
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 applaud Chancellor Matthew Goldstein's announcement at the 9/26/11 Board of Trustees meeting that the University will seek funding for adjunct health insurance in its upcoming State budget request. That's a crucial first step, but only the first of many steps before state- or city-funded healthcare becomes a reality. Together, with many others from the City University of New York (CUNY) community, I urge you to invest the political capital of the university to make fully funded adjunct healthcare not simply one of many budget items, but a priority.

We owe this to our adjuncts. A button worn proudly by hundreds of CUNY part and full-time faculty, staff, and students tells the story: "CUNY runs on adjunct labor." Today's university could not function without adjunct labor.

As a retiree who labored for 41 years at the University, I witnessed a disturbing transformation. When I began teaching in 1965, almost all courses were taught by full-time faculty and just a handful by adjuncts. Today, more than half of the courses are taught by contingent labor with little job security and minimal benefits.

Many adjuncts, significant numbers with PhDs, move from pillar to post, trying to scratch together a living in an academic job market where full-time tenure bearing lines are at a premium. Much of academic labor has become cheap labor, reflecting growing income inequality across the United States. What does this say about our profession; Our University? What message does it send to our students? How does it reflect on our society?

I am not here to ask you to remediate all of academia's problems. But, I join with others to make a plea for basic justice. State University of New York adjuncts have healthcare funded by the state. Half-time employees in other city agencies are on the NYC health plan. The core workers at our university deserve no less.

Do the right thing! Take every step necessary to turn the university's commitment announced on September 26th into publicly funded healthcare for our adjuncts.

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