

Testimony of Aaron Davitt
CUNY Graduate Center, Guttman Community College
Before the Board of Trustees at
Queens Public Hearing

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Hello, my name is Aaron Davitt and I am a third year doctoral student at CUNY Graduate Center. Previously I have been teaching for eight years, mainly as a high school science teacher. When I switched careers to become a doctoral student, I knew that I would be taking a pay cut from my high school position. To make ends meet, I started teaching at Guttman Community College as an adjunct lecturer. I enjoy teaching and I appreciate the experience. However, the adjunct pay rate is abysmal and it just plain sucks. It is difficult to be a quality teacher when the pay is so low. I have to take on extra adjunct positions in order to ends meet, taking away from my ability to effectively teacher. Being a veteran teacher does not make this any easier—there are no tricks or tips that I have learned over the years in order to make this low pay rate bearable.

Even though I would teach a three-hour class twice a week, many argue that I have the “time” to do other things or obtain other types of employment. Correction: the time off is spent grading, having office hours for students, and developing or adjusting lessons based on the class dynamics. To be a quality teacher takes time that this pay rate does not allow for. It causes unnecessary hardships and impacts not only myself, but my family, as they to rely on my

income, and the students in the class. Being overworked and stressed does not allow for effective teaching and learning.

I am here to testify that the pay rate needs to increase—and \$7,000 per course is a deal. Additionally, there need to be more safeguards for adjunct faculty. This semester clearly demonstrated how disposable I am to a school.

I was scheduled to teach another section of Biology this semester. However, less than a week before I was supposed to teach, I was informed that no student registered for my class and my section was for overflow for other sections. As a result, I was out of a job and could not apply for another position since Guttman follows a different academic calendar than other CUNY schools. Since I was given “adequate” time, I am not entitled to monetary compensation. What is funny, though, is it turns out that the Biology sections are being overfilled this semester and my section would have been needed.

The point is this: in addition to the pay rate increase to \$7,000 per course, there needs to be some form of compensation for adjuncts that have their sections cancelled less than a week before classes start. In fact, if it is less than three weeks, a scaled compensation needs to be given.

I do hope that we have your support in this matter. Everyone here has the ability to raise a group of people out of poverty and improve their standard of living. Furthermore, a teacher that is less

stressed about finances is able to dedicate more of their attention and time to teaching, improving the quality of education students receive, which also improves their chances for success.

Thank you for your time.