

**Testimony of David Palazzo, Adjunct Assistant Professor**

**Hunter College**

**Before the Board of Trustees at**

**Queens Public Hearing**

**April 19, 2017**

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees:

I want to address three things: my personal background, the material reality of being employed as an adjunct, and the qualitative nature of teaching in a multi-tiered labor regime.

My name is David Palazzo, a first generation college graduate and the only member of my extended family to have earned a doctorate. My PhD is in the field of Political Science, in the subfield of Political Theory. For approximately the past 13 years I have taught as an adjunct within CUNY. For the past three years I have worked at both Hunter College and York College. My formal title is Adjunct Assistant Professor.

The material reality of being an adjunct is one of institutionally enforced penury. The following contribute to this state of affairs: low rate of pay per course; limitations on course load that routinely forces me to not take job opportunities; lack of any remuneration for courses that fail to reach a certain number of enrollments. The most I have earned in one year at the top rate of an adjunct is from teaching 10 courses that totaled an annual income of roughly \$35,000 before tax. New York City Department of Housing and Urban Development puts median rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the metro area at \$1,638 per month.

Connected to the material reality is the actual job. Adjuncts are not part of the department in any meaningful manner. Yet, I routinely shape the future of students' learning, engage them in how to navigate their studies, provide opportunities for advancement and achievement. But how effective can I really be if I have one foot in the department and one foot in another department? I operate on the assumption that the best education is one where there is a plethora of student-teacher interaction. This requires the latter actually has a presence on campus. Adjuncts do not have that presence. The perpetuation of reliance on adjunct-majority teaching is greatly detrimental to the learning environment of higher education.

I will finish with a brief comment of hierarchy in the workplace. Adjuncts are the majority of teachers within CUNY. Yet, our voice is not heard as if we are the majority. In fact, the lack of voice by adjuncts within their respective departments is conducive to a diminished professional environment, and, at worse, an abusive workplace.

Alas, thank you for allowing me to exercise voice in briefly addressing some observations and concerns derived from my experience as an adjunct within CUNY.

Sincerely,

David P. Palazzo, PhD