

My name is James N. Perlstein. I am a retired professor of history at CUNY and a member of the Professional Staff Congress, American Federation of Teachers Local 2334.

I call on the City Council to reject this and any other effort to amend Administrative Code 12-126.

I'm 87 years old and for 43 of those years, from my mid-twenties to my late sixties, I worked full time for the City, committed to providing educational opportunity to working class New Yorkers. I earned a living, raised a family and, although I saw my income slide over the years from near the top of my profession to near the bottom, I took some comfort in the City's promise to cover my health care costs into retirement.

This proposed code amendment is a blatant attempt, unworkable and unnecessary, to constrain escalating health care costs at the expense of the most vulnerable and least powerful segment of the public sector, municipal retirees like myself. Still worse, the amendment, as written, exposes in-service employees to similar victimization down the road.

It does nothing to restructure the inadequate, unsustainable, jerry-built system that passes for NYC health care. But there is an alternative. And the City Council is positioned to explore and advocate for it.

(a) Redirect funds the City holds in reserve to bridge the Municipal Labor Committee Stabilization Fund for three years, (b) Create a stakeholders commission charged with finding a path to control health care spending, with hospital pricing as a priority, and (c) Develop a sustainable mechanism for funding City health insurance.

These proposals, put forward in greater detail by my union, PSC/CUNY, are preferable to the surrender of earned rights for an unreliable, discriminatory fix.

And, oh yes: I'm old, I'm tired. But I'm not dead yet. And I vote.

Thank you.