

I'm here today to share my story and I thank you for the opportunity to be listened to.

My name is Charlotte Adamis. I am a school library teacher here in Kingston at the J. Watson Bailey Middle School, and I am a wife and the mother of two grown men.

I'm also a proud member of the Kingston Teacher's Federation. The members and the leadership of my union worked really hard to negotiate the terms of our excellent health insurance. And I am incredibly grateful for my great, good fortune. But, in the same breath, I must assert that I believe, in my heart of hearts, as must you—all of you, Democrats and Republicans, union members and non-union members--that health care should not have to be negotiated. It should not be for some and not for others. We are not talking about taking care of our houses, our cars. We are talking about taking care of human lives at the most basic of levels. People without good health care get sick. They suffer. They sometimes even die.

We are not formulas to be figured out.

We are not widgets to be profited from.

That the history of health insurance is so deeply enmeshed with the making of profit is, of course, at the heart of this debate and we must be daring and brave enough to begin the work of disentangling health care from profits. It will not be pretty or smooth and it will not be perfect—but we must hold onto the vision that we are working towards the betterment of all humans and not just for the privileged few.

As one of the privileged, I know that it is my responsibility to speak up and speak out for those who are not. Members of this committee, you are among the privileged too, and so it is also your responsibility

to speak up and speak out for all.

It is also your responsibility to truly listen to your constituents – and not just to hear them through your party-affiliated filters, or through the lens of your own pocket book – or the whispering in your ear from those who stand to profit. Because if you truly listen – you will hear the real stories of health care disaster. Hundreds of them. Thousands of them. You will also hear fear and confusion. If you frame the question as: This is what you will lose...people will grab for the life preserver, taking whatever measly plan they have. Even though their life preserver, their inadequate health insurance plan, will keep them afloat for only so long. The idea that something is always better than nothing has great power of persuasion. Give people misinformation, and you will cloud their judgment.

Those who stand to gain financially do a very good job of sewing those dark seeds. Some politicians and too many corporate interests benefit from fear and confusion—they benefit even from a certain kind of anger, the kind of anger that grows out of fear and confusion and misinformation. When people are angry, fearful and confused, and misinformed, they can so easily overlook the simple truth.

And the simple truth is that people without good health care get sick.

They suffer.

They sometimes even die.

I am ~~am~~ hopeful that our elected officials in Albany will be the kind of daring and courageous leaders that we so desperately need at this critical juncture. Our state can be the first. We can lead the way.

And we should be willing to take the risks associated with big and bold change. Each and every one of

our EOCs must get behind the New York Health Act. This bill must pass, and then serious work must be done to flesh it out so that it can serve as a model health care plan for the entire nation.

Thank you.

