

Good evening madam President, Mr. Olivo, board members, and administrative staff. My name is John Collins and I'm a resident of Monroe. I would like to address the board tonight about health care costs.

After filing a FOIL request to look at employee contracts I found that possibly one contract is currently expired and up to four will be expiring the end of June. Contrary to Mr. Olivo's statement at the September meeting that "the vast number of the District's employees pay into their premiums." I found that only two employee groups pay. The administrators pay up to 10% of the premium and the CSEA employees, our lowest paid employees, pay up to 25% but are capped at \$500 per year which is probably about 5% of the total premium.

So I don't understand the math of vast number when the administrators probably make up the smallest employee group and the remaining groups constitute the largest number of employees. Could you provide us with the actual figures of how many employees are in the district? How many participate in our insurance plan? How many pay into the plan? When you show us the numbers to support your statement we will feel much better.

Last week I read an article on Education Week's web site titled "Health Costs Strain School Budgets" about a survey conducted by the Association of School Business Officials International. More than 650 school districts responded to the survey. Surprisingly New York districts comprised the majority of any one state that responded. Also surprisingly they found that less than 7% of districts pay full health insurance premiums for their employees.

The survey also stated that districts gave up lots of things to pay for these costs. Since our district pays full insurance on whatever number of employees your going to tell us don't you think it's time that employees start paying into their insurance plans more in line with the rest of your industry as well as where most of us work?

I support the existing cap on our lowest paid employees. I also support that our highest paid employees should pay 25% of their health care premiums with no cap. And I think that the groups of employees now not paying a red cent start paying into their plans at whatever rate you can successfully negotiate. Maybe on a sliding scale, say the lowest third pay 10%, the next third pay 15% and the highest paid third in each category pay 20%.

I spent 23 years in our US Army. I paid no health care premiums for me or my family. I was promised free health care for life. Today I pay for the care that was once free. When I was in the army I made much less than 2/3 of your employees do. I had young soldiers on food stamps but their health care was free. Think about it.

Thank you.