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Small businesses to lawmakers: Bring back the mandate review commission!

ALBANY – Small business leaders are asking elected officials to re-instate New York’s Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission prior to the end of session, an entity defunded by Governor Andrew Cuomo earlier this year. Senator Patrick Gallivan and Assemblyman Peter Lawrence have introduced S.1668/A.5281 – legislation to re-establish the commission, including a strict timeframe for legislative appointments.

Ten years ago, through a collaborative statewide effort, New York’s small business community successfully secured funding and legislation to create the Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission. The mandate review commission, as it’s more commonly called, would provide lawmakers with a cost and efficacy analysis prior to vote, relieving small businesses from the burden of unnecessary mandates. Unfortunately, commission appointments were not completed, the commission never met. This resulted in the Governor’s recent veto action. The legislation sponsored by Senator Gallivan and Assemblyman Lawrence would rectify this situation.

Signing a letter to New York State lawmakers were: The Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care, Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. - Empire State Chamber, Capital Region Chamber, Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce, Herkimer County Chamber of Commerce, North Country Chamber, National Federation of Independent Business, New York Farm Bureau, Greater Oneida Chamber of Commerce, The Chamber of Southern Saratoga County and Unshackle Upstate. The organizations collectively represent more than 90 percent of New York’s small business community.

According to The Empire Center’s public policy blog, “The Torch,” New York consumers face the highest premiums in the lower 48 states. Health insurance mandates – bills that require insurance carriers to provide specific types of medical care, further exacerbate the problem. Twenty-six other states successfully utilize a commission to study impact of mandates prior to passage.

(more)

A 2003 Actuary Study commissioned by The Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care determined that 12.2 percent of premiums paid by each individual went straight to paying for New York's health insurance mandates. The cost is much higher today, and yet the Legislature continues to introduce close to 100 health insurance mandate proposals every session.

"Very few times does life offer a second chance to get it right.... Here is one chance," said Pamela Reese Finch, executive director of The Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care. "Collectively mandates are expensive. Lawmakers owe it to their constituents to study these mandate proposals before they are passed to determine if it's something that will benefit all premium payers, not burden a few."

The Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care is the largest, single-issue grassroots coalition in the state, with more than 3,100 small business owners and sole proprietors representing more than 150,000 individuals who believe that everyone should have access to basic, affordable health insurance.

"With among the nation's leading health care costs, it is imperative that the Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission is reinstated and fully operational," said Mike Durant, Director of NFIB New York. "Health care costs remain a top concern for New York's small businesses and the onslaught of health insurance mandates proposed each year in Albany need to be thoroughly examined before facing an up or down vote by the legislature."

NFIB is New York's leading small business advocacy organization, working to protect business owners rights to own, operate and grow their small business.

"Year after year, one of the top concerns for employers across the state is the ability to provide afford health insurance options to their employees," said Greg Biryła, executive director of Unshackle Upstate. "Re-establishing the Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission represents an opportunity to provide meaningful mandate relief and reduce the cost of health insurance. Considering the current focus on health care issues, our leaders in Albany should advance this proposal before the end of this year's session."

Unshackle Upstate is a non-partisan, pro-taxpayer, pro-economic growth, education and advocacy coalition made up of chambers of commerce, business and trade organizations from all parts of Upstate New York.

"The Capital Region Chamber has been a strong advocate for affordable and comprehensive access to health insurance and a robust healthcare system without imposing new and costly mandates" stated Mark Eagan, Chief Executive Office of the Capital Region Chamber. "By finally appointing members to this review commission, the state can provide much needed relief to our business owners and taxpayers".

The Capital Region Chamber represents 2,500 businesses and organizations from throughout the Capital Region – Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer and Saratoga Counties and beyond – that employ more than 150,000 area residents.

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