

New York State's Crisis – Affordable Health Care

The Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care

Press Release

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State Leaders Ask Pataki for Health Care Mandate Reform

ALBANY – A diverse group of New York's top business leaders have united to send Governor George Pataki a message: "New Yorkers desperately need health insurance mandate reform."

Nine coalition leaders representing a broad range of interests hand delivered a letter (attached) to the governor today, asking him to support health insurance mandate reform in his upcoming state-of-the-state address. Co-authors of the letter include the Business Council of New York State, the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the New York School Boards Association, New York State Farm Bureau, Health Insurance Association of America, the Printing and Imaging Association of New York State, Manufacturers Association of Central New York, New York Health Plan Association and the Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care.

In their letter, the leaders asked Governor Pataki to support a process that would allow lawmakers to determine the cost and medical effectiveness of proposed health insurance mandates prior to legislative action. Such a process already exists in more than 20 states. Until this is achieved, they requested that the governor support a moratorium on passage of any new health care mandates.

"Once in a while New York has a chance to do the smart thing and the right thing, at the same time," said Mark Alesse, state director of the National Federation of Independent Businesses. "This is one of those occasions. We can take the politics out of health policy and stop special interests from driving health insurance costs higher for

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small businesses by insisting on a simple cost/benefit analysis before any new coverage-mandates are imposed on insurance. This is the essence of good government, and small business owners think it should be done without delay.”

Health care is an issue that defies any single demographic, he explained. It is not limited to manufacturing, education, farming, or any one particular field of expertise. Seventy-five percent of the three million people uninsured in New York State are working individuals who cannot afford the luxury of such benefits.

While the leaders recognize that subsidized programs like Child Health Plus have allowed New York to stabilize the number of uninsured, more needs to be done to address the high cost of health care in New York.

“One problem continues to be state mandates that make it virtually impossible for people without insurance to afford coverage,” said Employer Alliance Chairman Scott Miller. “Governments pass the cost of mandates along to taxpayers and employers. Taxpayers cover these services for public employees and state health care programs like Medicaid. Larger companies that can self-insure their health insurance are exempt from state mandates, which means that the brunt of mandates fall predominately on those least able to afford the premium increases - small and medium-sized employers.”

Randy Wolken, president of the Manufacturers Association of Central New York, agreed. “New York needs a rational policy so lawmakers understand the long-term effect of the decisions they make before they are passed into law. By supporting this request, Governor Pataki would help alleviate an issue that is having a drastic impact on people across the state. Ultimately, the governor would perform a huge service to New Yorkers by decreasing the cost of health care.”

This coalition will continue to advocate for health insurance mandate reform throughout the 2003 legislative session.

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