



The Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care

PO Box 1412 • Albany, NY 12201-1412

[www.employeralliance.com](http://www.employeralliance.com)

## **Press Release**

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**For more information, contact:** Pamela Reese Finch

(518) 462-2296 / [Pamela@employeralliance.com](mailto:Pamela@employeralliance.com)

### **Single Payer “New York Health” is not the solution that small businesses need**

**Syracuse** – New York lawmakers should focus on solutions that help reduce costs, not restructure the health care system, as they look for ways to improve New York State’s health insurance system, Syracuse business owner Michael Wheeler told New York State lawmakers Thursday. Wheeler, who is treasurer of Har-Rob Fire Apparatus Service and Sales in East Syracuse, was among those who spoke in the first of a series of statewide public hearings to gather comment on the “New York Health” proposal to create state single payer health coverage.

. Wheeler spoke on behalf of The Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care, which is a grassroots coalition comprised of more than 3,000 sole proprietors and small business owners who believe that reducing health care cost is essential to ensure that everyone has access to basic, affordable health care. Even with federal reform, health care costs remain a significant concern for many of New York’s small businesses, he said

“The New York State Legislature should not be in the healthcare business,” Wheeler said. “History clearly shows us that when state government gets involved, costs go up. New York is NOT known for its business-friendly policies, so you can understand why the notion of lawmakers taking complete control of the health care system is a substantial concern to those of us in the business community.”

“Health care is not, and should not be, a one-size-fits-all solution,” Wheeler said. “We support the desire to ensure that everyone has access to basic, affordable health insurance coverage, but believe a better solution would be to take small steps to make it more affordable. We encourage lawmakers to pursue efforts to reign in utilization, rising hospital and drug costs. Simple price controls, as employed by other single payer systems, will have the undesired effect of virtually eliminating innovation and efficiency.”

*The Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care is a coalition of more than 3,000 employers and individuals from across New York, representing more than 150,000 working New Yorker committed to preserving quality affordable health care.*



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The Employer Alliance suggests the following steps that the legislature could take to reduce health care costs while maintaining the current delivery system:

**Medical Cost Transparency** - Research shows that in states where price data was made available ahead of time, the end result was reduced health care cost without any negative impact on patient care. New York must establish protocol requiring hospitals and health care providers to disclose the cost of their services up front.

**No more fees, taxes or assessments, especially those with no direct impact on health care** - The added costs that are placed on health insurance carriers result in increases to consumers. The New York State Health Care Reform Act specifically imposes numerous “surcharges” on health insurance including the Covered Lives Assessment and Patient Services Assessment. A fee by any other name still creates hardship for consumers.

**Finalize the Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission** - Established in 2007, the commission would review any proposed mandated health insurance benefits to provide an objective “cost-benefit analysis” before legislative action would be taken on specific proposals. Now that health insurance coverage is dictated by the basic benefits package, this commission is an even greater priority as any coverage changes could ultimately impact both consumers and taxpayers. Any decisions that are made related to health insurance coverage should be made based on fact, not conjecture. The Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission is a good first step in achieving this control.

**Personal responsibility** - Health insurance is the only type of insurance where typically the primary purchaser is not the primary user. While many advances have been made in this area, we must continue to help consumers understand that a healthier population will have lower overall health care costs. We must continue to empower people to make healthier choices in terms of diet, exercise and lifestyle that will result overall benefit to their well-being.

**Share savings dividends with employers** - Any universal health system in New York will include savings derived from Medicaid efficiencies including reduced charitable emergency room visits and overall quality improvements. These savings should be shared with employers to further support coverage in the private sector and should serve as a brake against increasing premiums.