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Missouri Small Business Owners Eager for Health Care Reform *Research Shows Small Business Owners Willing to Be Part of Solution That Makes High-Quality Health Care Available to All*

(ST. LOUIS) - Recent research shows the majority of Missouri small business owners believe health care reform is necessary, and they are willing to be part of a solution that controls costs and guarantees coverage for everyone.

A statewide survey of 200 small business owners conducted by Small Business Majority, a leading national small business advocacy organization focused on health care reform, found that affordability is the primary obstacle for small business owners in obtaining health insurance.

- 89 percent of Missouri small businesses not offering health insurance say it is due to cost.
- 72 percent of small businesses that do offer health insurance are struggling to provide it.

Small business owners also see the cost of health insurance as a significant barrier to entrepreneurship and say reform is important in helping the economy recover.

Missouri was one of 14 states examined in the survey. Four other Midwestern states were included as well – Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota and part of Wisconsin.

“Small business owners aren’t shirking their responsibility where health care is concerned,” said John Arensmeyer, founder and chief executive of Small Business Majority. “They feel a responsibility to provide health care for their employees and are willing to do their part in fixing our broken system.”

“It’s important to keep ourselves informed so we can help shape discussions on health care change,” said Dr. James R. Kimmey, president and chief executive officer of the Missouri Foundation for Health (MFH), which funded Small Business Majority’s study in Missouri. “Business owners in our state need to talk to their legislators about the importance of guaranteed affordable choice in health insurance. They must tell lawmakers about the problems they have faced obtaining coverage and care, and let them know where improvement is needed.”

The report found that 69 percent of Missouri small business people support having the option of a private or public health insurance plan as part of health care reform. They also believe

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individuals, employers, insurers, the government and health care providers should share the responsibility for making coverage more affordable.

In addition, most Missouri small business owners believe the federal government should have a role in achieving reform. Fifty-nine percent say employers, individuals and the government should share responsibility in making health care more affordable. Nineteen percent want to replace the current system with government-provided health care.

Additional findings in the Missouri report include:

- 65 percent say health care reform is important to getting the economy back on track.
- 58 percent believe their company has a responsibility to provide health coverage for its employees.
- 76 percent of small businesses support establishing a health insurance pool to create a marketplace where small businesses and individuals choose their coverage.
- 82 percent of small businesses want to eliminate preexisting condition rules.
- 55 percent believe that businesses that don't offer health insurance should be required to pay something to cover their employees.

Cover Missouri is an MFH project to provide quality, affordable health coverage for every Missourian. Learn more about Cover Missouri at www.covermissouri.org. The Missouri Foundation for Health (www.mffh.org) is the largest nongovernmental funder of health activities in the state.

Small Business Majority conducts extensive scientific polling and research to determine small business owners' perspectives on health care reform, and brings a nonpartisan voice to policy discussions nationwide. Based in Sausalito, Calif., with offices in Washington, D.C., and New York City, the organization works with small business owners, health care policy experts and elected officials nationwide.

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