



July 29, 2009

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News Release

MAINE SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS EAGER FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM

New Study Shows Small Business Owners Willing to Be Part of Solution to Make Quality, Affordable Health Care Available to All

(Augusta, ME /Saulisito, CA)– New research shows the majority of Maine small business owners believe health care reform is necessary, and they are willing to be part of a solution that controls costs and guarantees health coverage for everyone. Consumers for Affordable Health Care (CAHC) is joining Small Business Majority (SBM) in releasing this new multi-state study showing how Maine’s small businesses feel about health care reform overall. **The report is attached and is embargoed until July 29th 2009 at noon.** SBM is a leading national small business advocacy organization focused on healthcare reform.

The statewide survey of small business owners conducted by Small Business Majority, found that affordability is the primary obstacle for small business owners in obtaining health insurance. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of small businesses in Maine not offering health insurance say they can’t afford to, while 81 percent (81%) of those who do say they are struggling to provide it. Most of Maine’s 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.

“Small business owners aren’t shirking their responsibility where health care is concerned,” says John Arensmeyer, founder and chief executive officer 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.”

The report found sixty-seven percent (67%) of small business people support having the option of a private or public health insurance plan as part of health care reform. They also believe individuals, employers, insurers, the government and health care providers should share the responsibility for making coverage more affordable.

“These findings are right in line with what we see at Consumers for Affordable Health Care. On our health care HelpLine we frequently get calls from business owners in our community or we meet them one-on-one and discuss their health coverage options. Often there just aren’t any quality, affordable health care options for these hardworking businesses that are trying to do right by their employees. If people are working hard, paying their taxes and trying to take care of their families they should be able to have access to quality, affordable health care that is there when they need it,” says Cherilee Budrick, Consumers for Affordable Health Care Communications Coordinator.

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The study also shows sixty-seven percent (67%) of small business owners believe the federal government should have a role in achieving reform. In contrast, only nineteen percent (19%) want to leave things as they are with no government involvement.

"Our employees are like family to us, so obviously we want to provide them with the best health insurance we can afford," says Dr. Steven Brier, owner of Little Dolphin School in Westbrook and Scarborough, Maine. "But with costs rising like they are, if the system isn't reformed soon not only will we be unable to offer them coverage, we won't be able to cover our own families, either."

Additional findings in the report include:

- 75% say health care reform is important to getting the economy back on track.
- 58% believe their company has a responsibility to provide health coverage for its employees.
- 82% of small businesses want to eliminate preexisting condition rules, and 78% see these rules as a barrier to starting a business.
- 55% believe that businesses that don't offer health insurance should be required to pay something to cover their employees.

Consumers for Affordable Health Care is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that has been helping Maine people get quality, affordable health care for more than 20 years. If you have any public or private insurance questions please call our toll free HelpLine at 1-800-965-7476.

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, CA with offices in Washington, DC and New York City, the organization works with small business owners, health care policy experts and elected officials nationwide.

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