

Help New York's Small Businesses!

Preserve the Small Business Exemption in the Mental Health Mandate.

August 11, 2004

Hon. Joseph L. Bruno
Majority Leader
New York State Senate
Room 909, Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12247

Hon. Sheldon Silver
Speaker
New York State Assembly
Room 932, Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12248

Dear Senator Bruno and Speaker Silver:

Year after year, New York's small businesses identify the high cost of providing health coverage to workers as their No. 1 concern and the most significant obstacle to economic growth, competitiveness and job development. As it is, nearly half of New York's small businesses don't provide any coverage for their employees because coverage is too expensive.

With tight profit margins and an ever increasing cost of doing business in New York, small businesses are particularly vulnerable to the increased cost of health insurance. Another insurance mandate like mental health parity would increase premiums significantly for small businesses, placing them at an economic disadvantage and putting affordable coverage further out of reach.

That's why the Senate's decision to exempt small businesses with 50 employees or fewer from the mandate is a critical signal to this sector of the state's economy. New York's small businesses need this exemption to help them remain competitive and to maintain affordable health coverage. **We urge you to preserve the exemption for businesses with 50 or fewer employees.**

Although we are opposed to health insurance mandates because they drive up the cost of coverage, we recognize the importance of providing some basic mental health benefits. In fact, many employers already provide comprehensive mental health coverage to their workers. In a recent Harris poll, 73% of New Yorkers found that existing mental health benefits are adequate.

By passing the mandate with a small business exemption, you can send a signal – a signal that says you care about small businesses and their workers; that you care about the impact of rising health care costs on these businesses; and that you care about small businesses as employers and as a critical partner in New York's economic resurgence.

Keep the signal strong. Keep the small business exemption intact.

Sincerely,

Dan Walsh, The Business Council of New York State, Inc.
John Lincoln, New York Farm Bureau
James Ayotte, Northeastern Retail Lumber Association
Jim Batsford, Schoharie County Chamber of Commerce
Jim Calvin, New York Association of Convenience Stores
Nancy Conley, Orchard Park Chamber of Commerce
Dr. John D'Ambrosio, Orange County Chamber of Commerce
Alex DePersis, Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce
Frank Ferrando, Genesee County Chamber of Commerce
Gary Grote, Greater East Aurora Chamber of Commerce
William Guglielmo, Rome Area Chamber of Commerce
G. Wallace Hart, Fulton County Regional Chamber of
Commerce & Industry

Jennifer Hill, Greater Oswego Chamber of Commerce
Kevin Keely, Chemung County Chamber of Commerce
Nancy Ploeger, Manhattan Chamber of Commerce
Rob Robinson, The Otsego County Chamber
Jim Rogers, Food Industry Alliance of New York State
Al Samuels, Rockland Business Association
Jane Schramm, Guilderland Chamber of Commerce
Mary Beth Silano, Delaware County Chamber of Commerce
Charles Steiner, The Chamber of Schenectady County
Randy Wolken, Manufacturers Association of Central New York
Scott Wexler, Empire State Restaurant & Tavern Association