

Press Release
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care

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State Budget Establishes Mandate Review Commission

The 2007-08 state budget helps to ensure that millions of hard working New Yorkers have greater access to affordable health insurance by taking the final and complete steps needed to establish the Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission.

Today's budget gives New York State a new set of tools needed to establish the commission's \$300,000 in funding plus legislation to outline its establishment. The commission will provide lawmakers with critical, independent information they need to aid their decision-making process. Health insurance mandates are laws that expand basic health insurance policies by requiring carriers to include specific treatments or services. Historically close to 100 health insurance mandate proposals are introduced annually.

The Council for Affordable Health Insurance places New York in the top 10 of most heavily mandated states, with more than 40 different treatments or services that expand the scope of the basic health care policy. According to an actuarial study New York premium payers purchasing fully-insured policies pay 12.2% of their total premiums to cover the costs of mandates. A health insurance mandate review commission will help to ensure that any future legislation is fiscally responsible and medically sound.

"Today I am overjoyed. Albany has finally heard our call," said Jeff Leland, chair of the Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care. "Our members have always thought that the true cost and impact of all health insurance mandates should be known to lawmakers before their final decision and we are glad that state leaders have finally agreed."

"The Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission shows a serious commitment toward a transparent government," agreed Craig Lacy of Medina, owner of Medina Parts Co. "By giving Legislatures the tools they need to study the proposals, this commission ensures that New York's business community will only pay for treatments and services that make sound medical and fiscal sense. New York's business community welcomes this relief."

The Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care has been calling for creation of this type of commission since its inception in 1997. The group, which began with a handful of concerned business owners, is now the largest single-issue grassroots business coalition in New York State with more than 3,500 who oppose health insurance mandates and

believe that everyone should have access to basic, affordable health insurance.

Today's achievement is a credit to the thousands of Employer Alliance members who refused to let the issue fall by the wayside," said Pamela Finch, executive director of the Employer Alliance for Affordable Health Care. "They rallied for affordable health insurance and lawmakers have listened. Now, when New York's premium payers write that check, they will at least know there is a tool in place to ensure that precious health care dollars are being well spent."

A direct nexus exists between high premium and the number and cost of state health insurance mandates. In a single example, the Department of Insurance determined that New York's chiropractic mandate law (1998) accounted for as much as 2.6% of premiums and adds more than \$265 to the annual premium of every family policy.

"For millions of hard working New Yorkers, the Health Care Quality and Cost Containment Commission is an all-around win. Small business owners consistently cite the high cost of health insurance premiums as a primary concern," said Rob Robinson, president and CEO of the Otsego County Chamber. "This analysis offers the framework needed for a streamlined process and relief from skyrocketing insurance costs."