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July 23, 2008

The Honorable Nydia Velazquez
Chairwoman, House Committee on Small Business
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Velazquez:

The National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA) commends you for introducing the Small Business Cooperative for Healthcare Options to Improve Coverage for Employees (CHOICE) Act of 2008. NRCA strongly supports this legislation designed to provide small businesses with access to affordable health insurance.

The enactment of legislation to address the severe lack of access to affordable health insurance coverage for our nation's small businesses is urgently needed. Since 2001, premiums for family health coverage have increased on average by 78 percent, according to a recent report by the Kaiser Family Foundation, forcing many small businesses to reduce benefits or drop coverage altogether. The trend of sky-rocketing health insurance premiums for small businesses adds to the number of uninsured Americans and also makes it difficult for our nation's entrepreneurs to expand their businesses and create new jobs. Enacting legislation to address this serious problem has long been one of NRCA's top legislative priorities.

As you know, the Small Business Health Care CHOICE Act provides for the establishment of private, voluntary purchasing cooperatives designed to enable small businesses to stabilize health insurance costs by pooling risks and increasing their economies of scale. The proposal also provides a refundable tax credit to small employers who purchase health insurance for their employees through a cooperative, a promising idea that will further promote the expansion of coverage to small businesses. Finally, the bill provides a meaningful role for bona fide trade and professional associations in the development of purchasing cooperatives.

NRCA is pleased that this market-oriented legislation recognizes the need to expand pooling options for small businesses in order to stabilize health insurance premiums and expand access to coverage for working families. NRCA commends you for your strong leadership on this critical issue, and we look forward to working with you and other members of Congress to advance this proposal through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Duane L. Musser", written in a cursive style.

Duane L. Musser
Senior Director of Federal Affairs