



A big vision for small business

July 15, 2009

The Honorable Charles Rangel
Chairman, Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rangel:

On behalf of the thousands of small business owners in the Main Street Alliance network, I want to extend our organization's sincere thanks to you and the leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives for introducing the "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009" (H.R. 3200). This historic legislation encompasses the principles and objectives of Main Street small business owners to achieve comprehensive reform of our nation's health care system, giving small employers real choices in affordable health coverage including the option of a competitive public health insurance plan. We are proud to give this legislative framework our strong support and pledge to work with you and your colleagues toward its adoption.

This legislation will help make America's small businesses more competitive by giving them greater control over one of the most costly and unpredictable aspects of doing business: the spiraling costs of providing quality health coverage. H.R. 3200 includes essential reforms that address the key priorities our small business owners hold: promoting transparency and giving small businesses simplified choices through a Health Insurance Exchange, increasing bargaining power and driving down costs through a strong public health insurance option that will keep private insurers honest, prohibiting pre-existing condition exclusions and ending discrimination against small groups based on health status, and making coverage more affordable through a system of shared commitment. These elements are essential to making health care work for Main Street. We are particularly pleased that the bill includes a strong public health insurance plan as one of the Exchange options; a strong public plan is essential to control costs, encourage innovation, and provide the competition to keep private insurers accountable.

The Main Street Alliance believes that health care reform must be a shared responsibility of all stakeholders – individuals, businesses, providers, insurers and the government. The Alliance is pleased to see that H.R. 3200 asks all parties to play a role in improving health care. As long as truly affordable coverage options are available, we support giving employers the choice of either offering coverage to employees or making a contribution toward the cost of that coverage. We appreciate the inclusion of tax credits to help smaller, low-wage businesses offset the expense of providing coverage, as well as subsidies to assist low-income employees and their families to afford their contribution.

We have a historic opportunity to confront the nation's health care crisis, and the "America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009" is an important step in seizing that opportunity. The Main Street Alliance extends its strong support for this legislation, and we look forward to working with you and other leaders in Congress and the Administration to see comprehensive health care reform enacted into law this year.

Sincerely,

Dave Mason
Legislative and Policy Director
The Main Street Alliance