



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, INSURANCE, AND ENVIRONMENT
STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD
ON
HB15-1066: REPEAL HEALTH BENEFIT EXCHANGE
JANUARY 29, 2015
TIM GAUDETTE
COLORADO OUTREACH MANAGER
SMALL BUSINESS MAJORITY

Dear Chairwoman McCann and members of the Committee,

As a small business advocacy organization working to educate small business owners about the new health insurance marketplace, we are writing to urge you to vote against HB15-1066, "Repeal Health Benefit Exchange." As advocates for the small business community, we're working continuously to get entrepreneurs the information they need to best take advantage of the health law's small business provisions. Small businesses have been waiting for decades for something to help bring down their costs, and Connect for Health Colorado has the ability to help get them some relief.

This is why we strongly oppose HB15-1066. HB15-1066 will undo the progress Colorado has made to fit the unique needs of its small business owners and self-employed individuals through our state-based health insurance marketplace.

Small Business Majority's opinion polling found many small business owners are eager to take advantage of the new health insurance marketplaces. In fact, our polling shows that two-thirds of small business owners would use the marketplace or at least consider using it, compared to a mere eight percent who say they would not.

While improvements must be made to the enrollment process, Connect for Health Colorado has made great strides in ensuring access to quality affordable health care for Colorado small businesses, increasing transparency in the insurance market, and reducing the number of Coloradans without insurance. In fact, as of January 15th, more than 120,000 people used the marketplace to enroll in private coverage for 2015, and that number continues to climb. The number of Coloradans that have signed up during this open enrollment period has surpassed those that enrolled during the 2014 open enrollment period.

What's more, the small business health insurance marketplace, or SHOP, has a potentially large wave of growth coming next year with employers with 50 to 99 employees joining the market in 2016. These firms have a higher incidence of both employer and employee familiarity with health insurance and many already offer health insurance benefits to their employees. These will be firms that have more time and human resources to engage in SHOP, as opposed to businesses with less than 50 employees.

Additionally, we'll see more broker involvement as firms of this size are more likely to utilize the help of agents. These firms mean more to a broker's book of business and their incomes.

Despite any problems along the way, Colorado's new health insurance marketplace is still the most important component of the healthcare law for small businesses, and having reliable access to it online is imperative.

We want all small businesses to be able to enjoy affordable and comprehensive health insurance coverage, and Connect for Health Colorado can help the state's small businesses achieve that.

I hope you will strongly consider the importance of Connect for Health Colorado to our state's entrepreneurs as you consider this measure.

Sincerely,

Tim Gaudette, Colorado Outreach Manager
Small Business Majority