



News from:
COMPTROLLER KEVIN LEMBO

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**COMPTROLLER LEMBO TESTIFIES IN FAVOR OF PUBLIC
OPTION DESIGN TO EXPAND AFFORDABLE QUALITY HEALTH
CARE AND STIMULATE ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Comptroller Kevin Lembo testified before the state legislature's Insurance and Human Services Committees today in support of a public option concept that would expand affordable and quality health care to private-sector workers, particularly those working at small businesses.

"Connecticut's economic future – and the good of its workforce – demands access to affordable quality health care, plain and simple," Lembo said. "Workers are rightfully looking for employers that offer quality health care, and we have an opportunity to help businesses do so affordably."

The state legislature's Insurance and Human Services Committees held an informational public hearing today on the merits of creating a public option for health insurance, with the goal of exploring solutions that solve two issues: providing as many Connecticut residents access to quality affordable health care as possible, while making it cheaper for employers and the state to provide access.

Lembo said that Connecticut small businesses employ over 700,000 people – almost half the state's workforce – and yet less than half of small businesses offer health insurance benefits to their employees, a 25-percent decline since 2010, according to the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB). Lembo said this is particularly of concern for Connecticut's economic future because the Employee Benefit Research Institute has found that 82 percent of employees say that health insurance is 'very' or 'extremely important' when choosing to stay with their current company versus searching for a new job.

"How can our state possibly achieve economic growth if its small employers struggle to provide quality affordable basic health care to employees?" Lembo said. "For the sake of economic

growth – and for the basic wellbeing of Connecticut residents – this must be a priority.”

As state comptroller, Lembo is administrator of the state health plan that provides coverage to nearly 200,000 state and municipal employees and retirees. Lembo testified in support of a concept of allowing small businesses to purchase health care coverage that is pooled with the state employee plan with the goal of lowering administrative costs for small businesses.

Under Lembo’s administration, the state health plan has benefited from below-average cost trends when compared to the broader commercial market. Deploying a state-administered public option, first to small employers, would allow the state to extend its purchasing power to help businesses and propel economic growth.

“It’s time to provide financial relief to Connecticut businesses and high-quality affordable health care to all working families,” Lembo said. “Expanding opportunities for the state’s workforce and businesses to access the best health care for the best price positions Connecticut as a destination for economic development and reinforces our state’s values. I have spent the better part of my life, as the state’s first Healthcare Advocate and decades before that, fighting for people who have been denied access to care. Connecticut wants more for its private employers and workers, and I stand ready to support those initiatives in any way possible.”

Lembo thanked and praised leadership of the Insurance and Human Services Committees – particularly state Sen. Matthew Lesser, Rep. Sean Scanlon, Rep. Catherine Abercrombie and Sen. Marilyn Moore – for hosting the public hearing and giving these concepts the consideration they deserve.

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