



News from:
COMPTROLLER KEVIN LEMBO

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**COMPTROLLER LEMBO PRAISES LABOR COMMITTEE FOR
BIPARTISAN VOTE TO ADVANCE A PUBLIC OPTION TO EXPAND
QUALITY HEALTH CARE AND FUEL ECONOMIC GROWTH**

Comptroller Kevin Lembo commended the legislature's Labor and Public Employees Committee for its bipartisan support to advance legislation this week that would expand affordable and quality health care to private-sector workers, particularly those working at small businesses.

The bill was passed nearly unanimously with broad and bipartisan support. Lembo praised the committee leadership, particularly the co-chairs, Sen. Julie Kushner and Rep. Robyn Porter, as well as committee vice chairs, Sen. Catherine Osten and Rep. Joshua Malik Hall. Lembo also praised Rep. David Rutigliano and Rep. Richard Smith for their support and recognition of the pressures facing Connecticut's small businesses.

Senate Bill 1004, An Act Concerning Public Insurance Options for Small Business Employees will allow Lembo, as administrator of the state health plan, to extend the quality and affordable benefits of the state plan to 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.

"I am so grateful for the leadership of the Labor Committee, and all of its members who recognized – across party lines – that our small businesses need relief and our workforce needs access to quality and affordable care."

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 Employee Benefit Research Institute (EBRI). Lembo said this is particularly of concern for Connecticut's economic future because the EBRI 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.”

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.

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