

NEW JERSEY STATE AFL-CIO

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June 30, 2006

Dear Members of the State Assembly:

Re: SUPPORT S-539 (Buono/Coniglio)

Directs Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services to Prepare Annual Access to Employer-Based Health Insurance for NJ FamilyCare Enrollees Report

The New Jersey State AFL-CIO respectfully urges Senate members to support S-539 which is scheduled to come before you for a vote today. This legislation will require the New Jersey Department of Human Services to prepare an annual report which will include information regarding New Jersey employers with more than 50 workers enrolled in the New Jersey FamilyCare program. Additionally, as amended last week by the Assembly, these reporting requirements will be extended to include those who receive State-funded care including Medicaid and hospital based charity care.

There is no doubt that the information revealed in this report will illustrate the fact that profitable companies are increasing profits at the expense of New Jersey's taxpayers and continue to fail to pay their fair share for their employee's health care. With the expanded reporting requirements, we will get an even better picture of just how extensive this problem is.

It is clear that the lack of affordable and accessible health care for workers across this country has reached a crisis point. While more than one million New Jersey residents are uninsured, it is estimated that more than one third of Americans between the ages of 19 and 64 lack the means necessary to receive affordable health care. These statistics beg the question 'who pays for the health care of those that lack coverage?'

The disturbing reality is that when profitable companies refuse to offer their workers affordable health insurance we all pay the price. Taxpayers, other workers and other businesses are forced to pick up a \$113 billion tab for those companies that refuse to act responsibly. As long as bad corporate citizens are allowed to pass this burden onto the rest of us unchecked, those employers that choose to do the right thing and provide for the health of their workers will be forced to compete on an unlevel playing field.

A disturbing lack of action in Washington makes it clear that the current Administration has no intention of remedying this problem at the federal level. This Legislature has gone to great lengths to reform the health care system at the State level and we once again respectfully urge your support in this matter.

Charles Wowkanech
President

Sincerely,

Laurel Brennan
Secretary/Treasurer

CW:LB:jmn
OPEIU:153

"The Voice for Working Families in New Jersey"