

April 5, 2006

Dr. Richard Coopersmith
123 XXXXX Road
XXXtown, CT

Dear Dr. Coopersmith:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the need to address affordable health care for small businesses.

As you may know, on March 7, 2006, I joined with 20 of my Senate colleagues in introducing the Small Employers Health Benefits Program (SEHBP) legislation to give small businesses affordable choices among private health insurance plans and to expand health care coverage to their employees. This bill (S. 2382), which is sponsored by Senators Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), is being offered as an alternative proposal to the Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act (S. 1955), proposed by Senator Michael Enzi (R-WY), that is currently being considered by the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

The escalating cost of quality health care is an ongoing crisis that must be addressed. Currently, there are more than 350,000 men, women, and children in Connecticut among the uninsured. I cosponsored SEHBP because it is a necessary and affordable solution that will enable small businesses in Connecticut and throughout the nation to provide quality health care for their employees. Our plan will help these families sleep better at night and dream of a healthy future by making it easier for them to receive insurance through their employers.

Specifically, our proposal aims to address the barriers to small businesses with less than 100 employees in purchasing health insurance for their workers. SEHBP would allow small businesses across America to band together for lower health care prices by pooling their purchasing power and spreading their risk over a large number of participants.

Employers

would qualify for an annual tax credit to partially offset contributions on behalf of low-income employees.

SEHBP is modeled after the highly successful Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), which has offered more than eight million government employees and retirees, including Members of Congress and their staffs, a wide range of private health insurance choices for more than 40 years. SEHBP would give employees of small businesses access to a comparable range of private health plans.

SEHBP would authorize the Office of Personnel Management to administer the program and enter into risk-sharing contracts with insurance companies, as it does for federal employees, and offer tax subsidies as high as 25 percent of the cost of the premium to small businesses that participate in SEHBP.

Please be assured of my continued support for S. 2382 as it moves through the legislative process. To keep track of future actions on this legislation, you can go to the "Bill Tracking" service at <http://lieberman.senate.gov/issues/resources>.

My official Senate web site is designed to be an on-line office that provides access to constituent services, Connecticut-specific information, and an abundance of information about what I am working on in the Senate

on behalf of Connecticut and the nation. I am also pleased to let you know that I have launched an email news update service through my web site. You can sign up for that service by visiting <http://lieberman.senate.gov> and clicking on the "Subscribe Email News Updates" button at the bottom of the home page. I hope these are informative and useful.

Thank you again for letting me know your views and concerns. Please contact me if you have any additional questions or comments about our work in Congress.

Sincerely,

Joseph I. Lieberman
UNITED STATES SENATOR

JIL:vdh