



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruth Hassell-Thompson

Senator Hassell-Thompson Calls for the Establishment of the New York Health Benefit Exchange

RUTH HASSELL-THOMPSON November 2, 2011

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By establishing the New York Health Benefit Exchange, the state will be in accordance with the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) and will be eligible to receive \$100 million dollars in federal funding

President Obama recently signed the Affordable Care Act into law. The new law requires each state to either establish a Health Benefit Exchange or participate in a regional exchange, through which individuals and small businesses will be able to purchase health insurance in the form of a qualified health benefit plan. If any state fails to comply with the law by January 1, 2014, its residents will be required to participate in a federal Health Benefit Exchange.

Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson (*Westchester/Bronx*) has called for prompt passage of Governor Cuomo's Program Bill #12 which would establish the "New York State Health Benefit Exchange". Actually a public benefit corporation, the proposed health exchange would serve as a marketplace for the purchase and sale of health insurance plans in the State of New York. The purpose of the legislation is to provide health insurance to uninsured persons and to improve access and affordability for those already in the individual and small group markets.

“There are over 2.5 million New Yorkers without health insurance and those numbers will increase whenever jobs are lost or health benefits reduced. We are working with Governor Cuomo to keep large and small employers in New York. For instance, companies like IBM, Samsung and Intel recently met with the Governor and agreed to expand their businesses all across New York State. We also have changed the law to give small businesses a real chance to win a lucrative state contract. The best way to expand health insurance is to preserve and create jobs,” stated Senator Hassell-Thompson.

In September 2011, Governor Cuomo and former President Bill Clinton convened an economic summit in Albany where the democratic leaders rolled out the **New York State: Open for Business** campaign. At the Governor's behest Senator Hassell-Thompson served as an expert panelist on helping woman and minority businesses obtain state contracts. “The health insurance legislation is tailored to respond to the needs of small business and individuals. The two issues are indelibly connected,” said Hassell-Thompson.

The Democratic controlled Assembly passed the health exchange bill this Summer, but the GOP-led Senate has refused to take it up. Federal Law requires that each state have a fully functioning health insurance exchange by January 1, 2014. The Affordable Care Act envisions that states will develop and run their own exchanges. If New York does not implement its own exchange, or it becomes apparent by January 2013 that the state will not be ready to operate an exchange by 2014, the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services will set one up for the residents of New York.

“There are several major problems with that scenario. First the state will lose out on substantial funding from the federal government. Secondly, the federal government does not know the intricacies of New York State's diverse population and regional and economic layout. It is advantageous for New Yorkers to control the design. Thirdly, and most importantly, the longer the state waits to enact this portion of the ACA, millions of New

Yorkers will continue to go through life without basic health coverage,” stated Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson. Senator Hassell-Thompson continued, “I urge my colleagues in the Senate to please come together and pass this critical piece of legislation so that New York can move forward with this plan. The Assembly passed this bill on June 23, 2011 and now the Senate must move this legislation.”