



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

Senators Akshar, Serino and O'Mara Host Hearing on MWBE Program That Helps Small Businesses Land State Contracts

FRED AKSHAR August 13, 2018

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(VESTAL, NY) On Monday, State Senators Fred Akshar, Sue Serino and Tom O'Mara heard feedback from stakeholders—including business owners, industry leaders and union representatives—on ways to improve New York State's Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise program (MWBE).

Monday's hearing follows similar hearings this year held in Albany and Watertown, where

dozens of businesses and organizations provided testimony on their experiences with the MWBE certification program, including their concerns over what they described as a lengthy certification process, participation thresholds, project delays and more. At previous hearings, testimony cited that the program's current implementation has driven up project costs, caused project delays, and in some cases forced businesses to hire contractors from outside the area.

While all who testified shared a broad base of support of the program's intent, witnesses expressed frustration with participation thresholds, the certification process, and the lack of a uniform waiver process. Witnesses were also hopeful changes could be made to reflect geographical differences, improve the certification process and protect the interests of taxpayers.

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Senator Fred Akshar, Co-chair of the New York State Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise program (MWBE) Working Group, said, "The best way for us to improve this program is by listening to stakeholders dealing with it everyday at the ground level. MWBE is a well-intentioned, but flawed program, and unfortunately, we're learning that meeting the MWBE program requirements can be a huge challenge for companies in Upstate New York. I am hopeful that we can take the feedback provided today and improve on the program to help even more entrepreneurs expand their businesses, create jobs and be part of the revitalization of New York's economy."

Senator Patty Ritchie, who serves as a co-chair of the Senate's MWBE Working Group, said, "With every hearing that is held, we are learning more about how this program presents unique challenges in different regions. I look forward to taking the feedback provided today and joining my colleagues to discuss and implement ways to improve this program to benefit

everyone, businesses, employees and the taxpayers of New York State.”

Senator Tom O'Mara said, "We need to take every step and cover every base in our ongoing work to establish a more business friendly climate across the Southern Tier and throughout New York State. These actions must address relief from high taxes, unfunded mandates and overregulation, as well as initiatives we're focusing on in this hearing to create a more efficient and effective MWBE program for job creators."

Senator Sue Serino said, "The MWBE program began as a way to empower and incentivize diversity in entrepreneurship and business. However, since taking office I have heard from countless business owners in my district who have come up against some extraordinary obstacles when trying to navigate this program, so much so that many are simply choosing not to participate. We're here today to figure out how we can effectively improve the program to ensure that it's actually helping the people it's intended to instead of acting as yet another road block to launching a successful business in New York."

This was the third of a series of hearings on the MWBE program, with four more hearings scheduled to take place across New York State later this summer and fall.

Senator Akshar, his fellow co-chair Senator Ritchie and their colleagues will review the testimony offered Monday and consider potential legislative solutions to create a more effective and efficient program to enhance New York's business climate.

Video of Monday's hearing can be found by clicking [here](#).