



6582

City of New Haven  
John DeStefano, Jr.  
Mayor

**Testimony of John DeStefano, Jr.  
Mayor, City of New Haven  
March 3, 2009**

**Public Health, Insurance and Real Estate and Human Services Committees  
Connecticut General Assembly**

Honorable Committee Members, thank you for allowing me to address you. I am here today to testify in support of HB 6582, An Act Establishing The Connecticut Healthcare Partnership. Majority Leader Donovan has been a champion of affordable health care coverage and I commend his commitment to continuing to advocate for greater access to healthcare for the citizens of our state. HB 6582 would open the State employee pool and allow municipalities, small businesses and nonprofit organizations the option of joining the state pool.

Although this option would not benefit large municipalities such as New Haven who already have a large pool of insured, the option of joining the state pool would be a significant tool for smaller municipalities, small businesses and nonprofit organizations who are struggling to provide healthcare to their employees. As we have seen across the nation, healthcare costs continue to rise at an alarming rate, forcing employers to make untenable choices.

Over the past 10 years, 96 percent of new job growth in Connecticut has been created by businesses of 50 or fewer employees. These small businesses are increasingly struggling to afford to provide health insurance coverage to their employees. As health care costs rise, employers often drop coverage for employees or shift costs to workers through higher health care contributions, higher deductibles and cutbacks on raises and new hires. Increasing health care costs have also forced many small business employers to eliminate coverage all together or simply go out of business.

According to a 2007 study by the Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut, 78% of businesses in our state that did not offer employee health insurance cited unaffordability as the reason, yet, 80% of those businesses wanted to be able to provide affordable health insurance to their employees.

Since we all share the mutual goal of helping small businesses grow their business and create more jobs for Connecticut, this comprehensive and thoughtful approach to making health insurance more affordable would drastically reduce the number of uninsured residents in the State of Connecticut while supporting economic growth.

I therefore urge your support of HB 6582.