

Maine Survey: Small Businesses Need Healthcare Reform

The high cost of health insurance is a financial burden for small businesses.

Small businesses in Maine support healthcare reform and they want it to address skyrocketing costs, according to results of a telephone survey conducted in May 2009 and sponsored by Small Business Majority. The survey found:

- 42% of Maine small business owners polled reported that they pay for health insurance for their employees. Of those, 81% say they are really struggling to do so.
- Of the 58% of small employers that do not provide insurance, 88% say they can't afford it.
- 75% say healthcare reform is important for getting the economy back on track.
- The number one concern for Maine small businesses in healthcare reform is controlling costs, followed by providing coverage for everybody and an assurance of high-quality, standard minimum benefits.

Employers accept responsibility to help provide employee health coverage.

- 65% say it is important for individuals, employers, insurers, the government and healthcare providers to share the responsibility for making healthcare more affordable.
- 59% believe that their company has a responsibility to provide health insurance for its employees.
- 55% agree that employers should pay some percentage of their payroll toward their employees' insurance if they don't offer a plan themselves.

Small businesses want reform in many parts of the system.

- A large majority of respondents (82%) agree that people should be able to buy health insurance without regard to any past health problems, and 78% see these preexisting condition rules as barriers to starting a business.
- Maine small business owners appreciate choice—67% prefer the option of a public or private health plan, while just 19% are interested only in a private plan, and 10% prefer only a public option.

Respondents are politically varied.

- 32% of respondents identified themselves as Republican, 27% as Democrat and 32% as independent.

About this research: This is a telephone poll of 200 randomly selected small business owners in Maine conducted by the national public opinion firm Lake Research in May 2009. The survey included owners of companies with fewer than 100 employees as well as sole proprietors. It has a margin of error of 6.9%.