

For Immediate Release:
January 26, 2017

For More Information:
Cynthia McCafferty,
Cynthia@hawthornestrategy.com
Office: 312.970.0251
Mobile: 314.322.8647

Small Businesses Need Seat at the Table during Healthcare Policy Discussions

Survey Shows that Access to Affordable, Quality Health Care Is Crucial to Small Business Success

Chicago, Ill. – The Women’s Business Development Center (WBDC), in partnership with Health & Disability Advocates (HDA), released today a survey shedding light on key issues facing small business employers in the changing healthcare landscape.

The survey, *Employer Attitudes on the ACA*, was conducted by HDA, leveraging the WBDC’s network of small businesses across the Midwest, including Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota, to gauge employers’ perspectives on offering health insurance, wellness initiatives and the impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

“Looking at the research, it’s apparent that small businesses have a desire to offer health insurance – it’s just a matter of affordability, quality and accessibility,” said Emilia DiMenco, President and Chief Executive Officer at the WBDC. “By taking into consideration the needs of small businesses during healthcare discussions, Congress has the opportunity to spur an economic boost to this sector and keep workforces happy and healthy.”

Beyond the health benefits of insurance, the survey also offers a glimpse into the way small businesses leverage employee healthcare to keep their businesses competitive for top talent.

Key findings from the survey include:

- Small businesses are struggling to find affordable healthcare options; the data is clear that 2016 benchmarks show that the smallest employers (between 3 to 49 workers) offer health insurance at a much lower rate (53%) than larger organizations (50 to 99 workers – 89%, 100+ workers 96%).
- More than half (53%) of survey respondents cite costs specifically as the key barrier to offering coverage. Many respondents knew little about the opportunity to purchase

coverage for their employees under the ACA, citing the need for better communication about the ACA.

- Requiring health insurance companies to accept everyone no matter their health status is one of the most popular provisions of the Affordable Care Act.
- Efforts to improve upon the Affordable Care Act should ensure that there are no barriers to health coverage for the 52 million Americans with pre-existing conditions.
 - By eliminating these barriers, it expands the talent pool for small businesses offering health coverage as a benefit to their employees.
- New policy provisions should include increasing the number of FTE's eligible up to 50; eliminating the current tax credit requirement that limits the employer contribution to the average premium for the state; and finally, streamlining the process of applying for the credit – making it less cumbersome for employers and tax preparers.

“Small businesses are the nation’s economic engine, and have earned a seat at the table to talk about what’s working with the ACA and what needs to work better, said Barbara Otto, Chief Executive Officer at HDA. “They have a lot to say – and a lot to lose – in this debate. Let’s hope our leaders in Washington, D.C. take the time to listen this time around.”

###

About the Survey

Anticipating changes to the health insurance landscape in 2017, the survey was fielded in the Fall of 2016 after the election. The key constructs of interest then attempt to gauge the employers’ perspectives on offering health insurance, wellness initiatives and the impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The survey received 147 unique responses, in 5 mid-western states (Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota), mainly concentrated in the urban centers of Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee and Minneapolis-St. Paul. There was a large range of employers, with the majority falling under 50 total full time equivalent employees. The mean number of employees is 25.5. Finally, respondents were asked to share their suggestions for improving the small employer health insurance market.

About the WBDC

Celebrating its 30th Anniversary in 2017, the Women’s Business Development Center’s mission is to support and accelerate business development and growth, targeting women and servicing other underserved communities and veterans in order to strengthen their participation in and impact on the economy.

About HDA

For 25 years, HDA has been breaking down economic, social and structural barriers to health and well-being. HDA advances develops, interprets, and advocates for public policies that improve health status, and policy solutions that lead to better health and economic outcomes.