

National Black Church Initiative

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For immediate release

PRESS RELEASE

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National Black Church Initiative Calls For All Businesses to Cover Their Full and Part Time Workers with Health Insurance

Wal-Mart Has Set an Excellent Example

Washington, DC, -- The National Black Church Initiative, a coalition of 34,000 African American churches, is calling upon all businesses in the United States to offer health insurance to their employees, whether or not they are full or part time. We believe that the President is right on this issue. Everyone, including small and large corporations, must be willing to offer health insurance to their employees. There have been numerous studies that point to this as a critical factor in improving America's competitiveness around the world. It makes common sense; a healthy employee is able to produce more goods and services.

The church, in its role as an important player in civil society, must advocate on behalf of all employees because we want to see strong families. Strong families promote strong communities, and strong communities promote a strong nation. Health-care should be a moral obligation for any free society and especially for a society that is based on capitalistic principles. It is our understanding that the National Retail Federation's (NRF) members are opposed to the idea of mandatory health-care for all businesses. The church has a moral obligation to protect the dignity of all workers and to promote the ethics of work. It cannot do this if the workers are without the basic necessities to ensure their dignity. Health-care is part of the dignity of the individual and it should be a right. There can be no such thing in a civil society as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness without having the basic necessities of food, shelter and health-care.

It was not so long ago that those of us in the Civil Rights community were asking Wal-Mart to step up to the table and cover all their workers with health insurance. Wal-Mart not only learned from that experience, but they have incorporated health-care so that today 94.5 percent of their workers – full and part time – are covered by either Wal-Mart or another health-care provider. This is why they have become the gold standard as well as a perfect example of how businesses can incorporate health coverage and create a business model that makes money. We applaud Wal-Mart for its leadership in this area and that is why the Black Church insists that every employer, big and small, should cover its employees. It is only right that businesses should follow the lead of Wal-Mart, but they also should demonstrate the leadership for our nation as our nation struggles to provide health-care for everyone.

Rev. Anthony Evans, President of NBCI, said, “The question is, has this been done before successfully. The answer is yes. Wal-Mart is setting the gold standard for this, and if Wal-Mart can do it then everyone else should be able to follow their example. The church has to be concerned about the dignity, welfare and health of its parishioners because we are the ones to motivate them to go into the workplace and do an excellent job to improve the profit margin of their company. We certainly can’t do this if they are continuously sick and can’t get aid.”

There are many that argue that this is not cost efficient. It is. According to “The Economic Impact of Health-care Reform on Small Business” by the Small Business Majority there is substantial evidence that providing health-care for employees does indeed help to cut costs and improve workers’ productivity. This report thus undermines the NRF’s claim that covering employees would be financially burdensome. There are three arguments that undermine this claim:

1. The tax relief alone that businesses can claim on their income statement will be substantial.
2. Because they are buying in bulk as a business they are able to control health-care costs.
3. Businesses will have a healthier workforce and can improve profitability.

“The Economic Impact of Health-care Reform on Small Business” shows that even with required health-care for all businesses reform would help businesses save and make money in the long run, especially small businesses who many detractors claim will suffer the most. The report states that:

The results are clear: Small business will be far better off under a thoughtfully reformed health-care system based on shared responsibility among individuals, business, government and the health-care industry – as long as such a system includes provisions that reflect the particular financial constraints faced by small business. Under the models considered, shared responsibility includes tax credits to enable small business owners to better offered coverage options (based on the size of the business), coupled with a payment, on a sliding scale, to be made by employers who don’t offer health insurance (also based on the size of the business).

The analysis demonstrates that the type of health-care reform that is emerging from today's debate will save small business hundreds of billions of dollars in costs, protect small business wages and jobs – and allow small business owners to continue to reinvest in and grow our economy.

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 16,000 African-American and Latino member churches works to eradicate racial disparities in health-care. In addition to our member churches, we have 18,000 sister churches. NBCI is a faith-based health organization dedicated to providing critical wellness information and preventive health screening to all of its members. The African-American community ranks first in eleven different health risk categories. NBCI's purpose is to partner with national health officials to provide health education, reduce racial health disparities, and increase access to quality health-care.