



June 13, 2006

Hon. Joseph Bruno
New York State Senate
Room 909 – Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12247

Senator Bruno:

On behalf of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, representing 2,500 employers in the Buffalo Niagara region, I am writing because we understand that the so-called "Walmart Bill" may be moving forward in the New York State Senate. Thus, I need to express strongly that our members feel that passage of this legislation is poor judgment which will severely harm the Buffalo Niagara business community.

While the bill's supporters have cleverly dubbed it the "Walmart Bill," S.7090 will hurt many Buffalo Niagara companies who employ as few as 100 people – a far cry from Walmart's 10,000 employees (and multi-billion dollar earnings). Yet, supporters still claim its purpose is to stop the practice of "big-box" retailers turning their employees onto the state's health plan rather than providing health insurance themselves.

The mandate of a charge of \$3 per employee per hour - even if businesses already provide health insurance – is burdensome and illogical. By forcing smaller employers to pay this extra cost - on top of a laundry list of business regulations and fees including workers' comp and the highest taxes in the nation – you will be only encouraging them to close shop and move to more business-friendly states. And the thousands of people who had jobs with health insurance will join the unemployment ranks as a direct result.

The proposal to charge businesses already providing health insurance this ridiculous fee is yet another clear demonstration of the battle that organizations such as the Partnership face in trying to build a competitive business environment. There are several versions of this health care legislation that exist, but somehow this version with its very adverse impact on small businesses is the one that's been pushed to the forefront. If the intent is to stop unethical practices by "big-box" retailers, then the legislation should be kept at that. The collateral damage caused by this law will be irreparable.

The New York State Senate, under your leadership, traditionally has been a friend to the business community. We ask for your continued support in helping to build a more business-friendly environment in Buffalo Niagara and across the state. There is no room in a business-friendly environment for onerous legislation such as this.

Thank you for your support, and we look forward to the defeat of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "AR", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Andrew J. Rudnick
President & CEO