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Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council needs quick action from lawmakers

Pittsburgh Business Times

Pennsylvania state legislators find themselves at a crossroads, and the life of the [Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council](#) hangs in the balance.

PHC4, an independent state agency formed in 1986, has been, since its inception, the leading innovator for public reporting on not only the cost, but equally important, the quality and value of health care.

By the very nature of the health care provider-insurer relationship in the United States, collecting data, measuring quality and shining light on the health care system is not an easy task. As employers continue their movement to consumerism and transparency in the cost and quality in health care, the importance of PHC4 to provide credible and rigorous information becomes even more critical.

Unfortunately, this support to employers will die if the [Pennsylvania General Assembly](#) does not vote to reauthorize PHC4 before the end of the fall legislative session, which concludes next week. It is time for our lawmakers and the governor to set aside political differences and, in this instance, focus exclusively on reauthorizing PHC4.

By producing benchmark reports on the cost and outcomes for a range of procedures and conditions, including cardiac surgery, diabetes and hospital-acquired infections, PHC4 identifies efficient and effective health care providers, including hospital and outpatient facilities, so that employers and individual consumers can be equipped to make informed decisions about where to buy quality health care at an affordable cost.

It is critical that employers, and the individual consumer, continue to have credible information available to them, especially considering that continually rising health care costs are making businesses in Pennsylvania uncompetitive.

In fact, health insurance expenses are the fastest growing cost component for employers. According to the [National Coalition on Health Care](#), unless something changes dramatically, health insurance costs will overtake profits this year. In many cases, these costs are being shifted to employees, who today pay \$1,400 more in premiums annually for family coverage than they did in 2000.

By reauthorizing PHC4, the Pennsylvania General Assembly can send a message that the Keystone State is serious about providing its citizens with the information they need to make decisions on the health care they are seeking and needing and creating a business climate in which employers aren't held captive by an ineffective health care system

Everyone — from employers, to employees, to providers, to insurers — has a stake in PHC4's survival.

It is critical that lawmakers stand up and reauthorize it.

Chris Whipple / executive director, Pittsburgh Business Group on Health

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