

July 17, 2013

The Honorable Mark Begich
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Begich:

Thank you for your letter regarding implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and how the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) can help small employers navigate the law.

The SBA is committed to providing small businesses with all of the tools and resources they need to understand what the health care law means for them. We have taken a lead role in engagement with small businesses and small business stakeholders around the Affordable Care Act. To that end, we are working closely with our partners at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), and the U.S. Department of the Treasury/Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to ensure that business owners have the information they need to make informed decisions about their insurance coverage options and other provisions of the ACA.

The SBA has established a robust online presence at SBA.gov/healthcare. Our web page has been developed specifically for self-employed and small employer audiences, and it serves as a gateway connecting small businesses with resources from our Federal partners. SBA.gov is one of the top five most visited small business websites according to alexa.com, and as we've added content on the ACA we've seen our online traffic increase. Together with our Federal partners, we are continually updating and improving our health care content so businesses can quickly filter and find the information they need. SBA has also deployed a variety of other online resources, including social media, a bi-weekly health care blog, and a direct e-newsletter that reaches more than one million subscribers.

In addition to our web and online presence, SBA is committed to business outreach as an essential component of the education strategy. Since February 2013, SBA has trained over 2,200 of its field staff, network of business counselors (Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, and SCORE), and staff at other Federal agencies through a series of ACA webinar trainings, with the goal of providing key resources to small businesses in their communities.

SBA is also engaging in direct, in-person outreach with local chambers, community organizations, and Congressional staff members, often alongside our Federal partners. For example, SBA and HHS representatives are working together around the country to give presentations and briefings to small business owners, chambers of commerce, business groups, Congressional offices, and other relevant stakeholders who have a commitment to ensuring that employers have the information and tools they need to navigate the health care law. We are also coordinating with IRS to deliver similar presentations and briefings on topics like the small business health care tax credit and employer-shared responsibility. SBA will continue to work with our field staff to help stakeholder groups and Congressional offices that want to hold their own events on the ACA.

With respect to your specific requests, we agree that a comprehensive website for employers that provides critical information about how the ACA impacts businesses and their employees and families is essential. Business.USA.gov is leading the effort in providing comprehensive ACA information and easy to use tools for businesses. The site has recently been updated and includes customized ACA information for businesses of all sizes from any state. Furthermore, Business.USA.gov is coordinating across sites like SBA.gov/healthcare and Healthcare.gov to make sure the information is consistent and widely available. This is in keeping with our no wrong door approach, making sure that small businesses that visit these various websites do not fall through the cracks.

We also agree that technical support provided by a toll-free call center is critical for small employers. On June 24, 2013, HHS launched a toll-free call center on the Marketplaces. SBA has been working closely with HHS to help ensure that the call center representatives are knowledgeable on small business issues and available during business hours to answer small business questions and provide referrals for more in-depth inquiries.

We share your commitment to supporting employers in Alaska and throughout the country as they work to comply with the ACA. I appreciate your input and support as we continue to develop resources to ensure businesses of all sizes have the information they need to successfully implement the law and help give millions more Americans access to affordable health insurance coverage.

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Again, thank you for your letter, and I look forward to working with you as the Administration continues to implement the ACA. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any further thoughts or concerns.

With warmest regards,

Karen G. Mills