



# NEWS RELEASE

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## ***SBA ADMINISTRATOR JOINS SENATE SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE CHAIRWOMAN SNOWE, TO BACK ASSOCIATION HEALTH PLANS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES***

**WASHINGTON** – Hector V. Barreto, Administrator of the U. S. Small Business Administration, today again voiced his support for the creation of health insurance pools for small businesses.

At a press conference in Washington, D.C. Barreto said: “Rising healthcare costs put an undue burden on many small business owners often times stifling growth and leaving workers uninsured. We must encourage entrepreneurship in America, and the creation of Association Health Plans (AHPs) will do that by generating essential cost savings and increased variety in plan choices for the self-employed and small firms. Most importantly, they would expand access to health insurance to millions of people.”

Secretary of Labor Elaine L. Chao also participated in today’s press conference in support of AHPs, along with U.S. Senators sponsoring AHP legislation and business leaders, including Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME, Chair of the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee), Sen. Jim Talent (R-MO), Harry Alford (U.S. Black Chamber of Commerce), Jack Faris (National Federation of Independent Businesses) and Bruce Josten (U.S. Chamber of Commerce).

While those opposed to AHPs have been vocal in criticizing the initiative, their argument has not silenced the calls for assistance coming from small business owners. They have argued that a practice of picking off and insuring healthy workers will leave more vulnerable workers without insurance.

Administrator Barreto said: “I have heard the argument against AHPs, and I respectfully disagree with their position. This Administration has made it clear that AHPs will have to comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), which would prevent such a practice from happening. I am confident that the Department of Labor would enforce such a policy just as effectively as they currently do for health insurance plans.”

Barreto added, “America’s entrepreneurs, workers and their families need affordable, attainable healthcare. They need AHPs to give participating small employers the same opportunities for providing affordable employee health coverage as larger employers, leaving fewer workers without insurance.”

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