

# **Mayor Vetoes Bill to Provide Health Care for Working New Yorkers and Their Families**

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## **Mayor Vetoes Bill to Provide Health Care for Working New Yorkers and Their Families**

*Bill Would Benefit 27,000 Working New Yorkers, Ease Taxpayer Burden*

**New York, NY** — Health care advocates expressed disappointment in Mayor Bloomberg's veto of the Health Care Security Act last Friday, a bill recently passed by the City Council that would expand and protect health care coverage for 27,000 workers in the grocery industry. The legislation, sponsored by Health Committee Chair Christine C. Quinn and 43 Council colleagues, would protect responsible employers in the grocery industry who provide health care by requiring all grocers to contribute a minimum amount for health care for their workers. It has drawn broad support from a coalition of business leaders, labor unions, health policy advocates, religious leaders, and community groups organized by New York Jobs with Justice.

Backed by over 100 New York City businesses, including Gristedes, D'Agostinos, Key Food, Pathmark, and Stop & Shop, the bill would end a dangerous race to the bottom created when companies drop health care to cut costs, forcing competitors to do the same. The bill would apply to "big box" stores, such as Wal-Mart, that many argue are spurring this trend.

"We are disappointed with the veto because Mayor Bloomberg has been a health care advocate in the past," said Adrienne Shropshire, Executive Director of Jobs with Justice, a coalition of over 75 labor and community organizations. "This is innovative legislation that expands health coverage for thousands of New Yorkers and protects responsible businesses and taxpayers. These seem like principles that the administration would support."

Although over 70 percent of employers in the grocery industry already help pay for health care for their workers, this number is likely to drop unless a level playing field is created.

Passage of the bill would ease the burden on taxpayers who pick up the tab when businesses that do not provide health care force their workers into publicly funded assistance programs. A Columbia University study estimates that NYC taxpayers spend roughly \$612 million per year covering these costs.

The New York City Council voted overwhelmingly in support of the legislation, passing it by a bi-partisan 46-1 vote in August. City Council Speaker Gifford Miller has pledged to override the veto in the upcoming month. Thirty four votes are needed to override a mayoral veto.

"The Health Care Security Act marks one of the first times that the business community has come together to set some basic standards

around employer contributions for health care,” said Paul Sonn, Deputy Director of the Poverty Program at the Brennan Center for Justice, which designed the legislation. “As Washington fails to respond to the worsening health care crisis worsens, I think we’ll see more cities and states exploring new approaches like this.”