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Wednesday, November 26, 2008

Rebuttal

Lawmakers didn't rush Blue Cross reforms

I take issue with the Oct. 29 editorial regarding Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan ("Don't rewrite Blue Cross law in lame duck session"). This piece of legislation was passed by both of the chambers of the state Legislature. More than a year-and-a-half of diligence has been done on this issue, the longest we have seen in many years. This piece of legislation has not been rushed through, as The News claims. It has been slow as molasses.

What The News failed to acknowledge is Blue Cross Blue Shield projects that it will lose \$260 million in the individual market. The Blues have lost \$800 million in reserves, are carrying the float on General Motors claims during its cash crisis and cover 84 percent of the unhealthy Michigan individual market. The Blues are not crying wolf; this matter is critical and serious.

Also, Blue Cross Blue Shield is the fourth largest company in Michigan, employing more than 9,000 employees. The weak Michigan economy, rising health care costs, staggering business tax increases and increased energy costs are all converging to create a perfect storm for Michigan's small business community. And a critical lifeline -- affordable health care coverage through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan -- is in danger of being lost.

We receive numerous phone calls a week from our members considering cancellation of their group health insurance because they can no longer afford it, and this year has been the worst.

When employees who have lost coverage go to the market, the younger and healthier individuals often are offered lower-priced coverage from private insurance companies, leaving the older, less healthy and at-risk population covered by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan as the state's insurer of last resort.

We feel strongly our economy will suffer if these bills do not pass before year-end.

This proposed legislation provides individuals and their family several options with fair pricing as well as a guarantee of obtaining coverage, shields consumers from rate hikes and ensures a safety net in the market to minimize the uninsured.

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