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**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD BEFORE THE GEORGIA SENATE REGULATED  
INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE ON HB 1339: HEALTH; CERTIFICATE OF NEED;  
REVISE**

March 19, 2024  
Rachel Shanklin, Georgia Director  
Small Business Majority

Dear Members of the Georgia Senate Regulated Industries Committee:

My name is Rachel Shanklin and I'm the Georgia Director for Small Business Majority, a small business organization with a mission to empower America's diverse entrepreneurs to build a thriving and equitable economy. I'm pleased to share comments on HB 1339, legislation that would establish a Comprehensive Health Coverage Commission to study the critical issue of closing the Medicaid coverage gap in Georgia.

Access to affordable healthcare is a top priority for Georgia's entrepreneurs, especially since it's their highest business expense outside of payroll. For new businesses or solo entrepreneurs, the cost of healthcare can prevent them from becoming an employer firm, thus creating major barriers to business expansion.

Similarly, the cost of healthcare can impede small employers from attracting and retaining top talent. Small employers want to offer essential benefits like healthcare, but often struggle to do so independently. This puts them at a disadvantage when competing with larger, well-established businesses for top talent.

This is why it's imperative for lawmakers to assess the crucial impacts of closing the Medicaid coverage gap in our state. Closing Georgia's coverage gap would enable [400,000 hardworking Georgians](#) to enroll in health insurance and gain access to affordable, quality healthcare. The low-income workers and small business owners in the coverage gap currently cannot access healthcare when they get sick or need to fill a prescription to stay healthy. They regularly face difficult choices between paying for stable housing, healthy food, and accessing the medical care they need.

While we are encouraged by HB 1339's proposal to establish a commission to study closing the Medicaid coverage gap, lawmakers have the opportunity to resolve this issue in the remaining weeks of this legislative session. A [decade's worth of data](#) shows that Georgia would financially benefit by closing the Medicaid gap, that Georgia workers and families would be healthier, and rural and safety net hospitals would be stronger. Delaying access to coverage for another year is costly for Georgia families, harmful to the state's small businesses, and strains rural hospitals even further than they already are.

What's more, Georgia small business owners have been calling for affordable health coverage for years. In fact, a [Small Business Majority survey](#) found that 59% of Georgia entrepreneurs support expanding Medicaid eligibility, ensuring that people who make 138% of the federal poverty level can receive healthcare benefits through this essential program.

Rather than agreeing to study the issue, I urge you to act and close Georgia's coverage gap this year. Please amend HB 1339 so that Georgians—regardless of their income—have quality, affordable health healthcare.

Sincerely,

Rachel Shanklin  
Georgia Director  
Small Business Majority