



TOWN OF CAROLINE
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To: Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council

From: Don Barber, Caroline Town Supervisor

From my lay perspective finding ways for more people to create wealth is the pathway economic success. I've been producing wealth my entire life. As a child, I worked on the family dairy farm; then worked for Corning Inc for 10 years; and at 33 created a successful construction business that I sold to employees five years ago; now I operate my organic farm and have a guest cottage business that focuses on sustainable agriculture education. I recognize a major impediment that keeps individuals from unleashing their entrepreneurial drive, creating wealth and building a middle class.

Unfortunately this suggestion does not fit into the competitive grant framework you must respond to. It will facilitate the creation of local businesses buying local products and employing local people so their revenue is circulated several times in the local economy before it leaves.

My parents were able to operate a small farm 60 years in part because health care costs were affordable. 30 years ago, I was able to leave a Fortune 500 corporation and start a small business because I could purchase and provide affordable health insurance. Today two of my children, which live here in Ithaca NY, are not willing to take the risk of starting their own business; while my third child that lives in Massachusetts has. Both she and her husband are self-employed and have low cost state run health insurance. With the cost of health care so high in NYS, entrepreneurs are bound, by economic necessity, to work for large employers that provide health insurance with affordable co-pays for their employees.

The high cost of health insurance is arguably the biggest impediment to entrepreneurs developing their own economic foundation. There is a pathway to allow the entrepreneurial spirit to be unleashed and a middle class to grow again. That pathway is Medicare for all. It works in MA and every other industrialized nation in the world. The basic structure has been developed by NYS Legislators over the past decade. We just need to be brave enough to take that step.

For these reasons, I urge you to make Medicare for all the cornerstone of your Southern Tier economic development strategy.