

Dear Chair Kitchel and Senate Appropriations Committee,

I'm writing to this committee to express my support for the Dr. Dynasaur 2.0 study.

As a native Vermonter and the Founder of Vitality Vending in Essex Junction, I have spent more than 25 years dedicated to investing in Vermont and improving the health of Vermonters. I have worked in small family owned businesses for most of my adult life, and then started my own business, Vitality Vending, 5 years ago. My goal for this business is to make natural, healthy food and beverage products available to people through vending outlet, when many people make the unhealthiest of impulse purchases due to the traditional business model of the industry. I work with many local businesses, colleges, and generally health conscious organizations and wellness committees to further the mission of making healthier products available to their students, athletes, and employees. Healthy food choices lead to healthy people and healthy communities.

Another integral part of healthy communities is access to health care. My interest in health care first started when I worked in human resources for a small local hotel. I can remember watching the costs of health care continue to go up and up, not just for the policy but the premiums, too. I remember looking at the workforce pay scales and thinking, "what do we do?" My company was spending more and more money on health insurance costs, which was driving up the cost of doing business, while the workers share of health insurance costs also went up. I can remember thinking "who is winning here?" – not the business, not the workers, but the insurance companies. We would do everything we could with our carrier to minimize increases, but increases never went away. We raised deductibles, cut limits, raised co-pays, eliminated some coverages in the plan - and still see costs to the company continue to rise significantly year after year, and costs to our employees rise as well.

When my children were young, they had health care through the Dr. Dynasaur program. It was always easy, affordable, effective and efficient. Plus, it was one less thing to have to worry about as a parent. Thanks to Dr. Dynasaur, I knew that my children were covered, and I didn't have to worry about unmanageable costs of family plans.

Once I started my own business, I learned more about the implications of the ACA on a personal and professional level. As a small business owner, especially as the business continues to grow, it will be important for my business partner and I to think about what we will be able to provide for our employees. As health care costs continue to rise, it becomes more and more difficult to be able to provide this benefit to employees and to myself.

I'm a big proponent of universal, publicly-financed health care and, personally, would like to see the state move toward that system. However, in the absence of that system, we need to look at how we can address our state's current health care crisis and what steps we can take toward ensuring that health coverage is affordable and accessible to young adults, families, and small businesses. The first step I see is the Dr. Dynasaur 2.0 study. This study will give Vermonters and the legislature the information needed to make informed decisions about the direction of health care reform in our state, and I encourage you to fund the study.

Sincerely,

Brent Farrell, Founder/Owner of Vitality Vending (of Vermont) in Essex Junction