

Dear Editor,

One of the greatest challenges for keeping a business in Maine is the cost of healthcare for employees. The restaurant industry has a particularly high percentage of seasonal part time employees who have had difficulty accessing healthcare due to the cost to both the employer and employee. There are certain times of year when 70% of our staff is part time. For Ricetta's, the issue of health insurance has been an ongoing challenge.

The state of Maine has taken a lead role in helping uninsured Mainers and families access health insurance through the Dirigo Health Agency (DHA). One of the new programs now accepting enrollees is a voucher program that provides financial assistance to help uninsured part time or seasonal workers and their families participate in their employer's health insurance plan. It is administered by DHA, through a federal grant awarded to the Governor's Office of Health Policy and Finance.

Our company is proud to have been one of the first Maine companies to offer the new plan to our part time employees. Employee retention is also a challenge in the restaurant industry, but we know from experience that happy and healthy employees are more likely to stay.

I hope other Maine businesses will look at Dirigo's Voucher Program and consider adding it as a benefit for uninsured part-time employees who need it for themselves and their families. It's an affordable program, and it's the right thing to do.

Ron Stephan, President  
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