



November 17, 2011:

Yesterday the Ann Arbor / Ypsilanti Regional Chamber's Executive Committee approved the following statement voicing the A2Y Chamber's opposition to HB 4770 and HB 4771. These bills would prohibit public employers from including domestic partner benefits in their public employee compensation packages, and would make domestic partner benefits a prohibited subject in collective bargaining. The statement makes the business case for rejecting these bills on the grounds that they are detrimental for the business community because they will be perceived as discriminatory.

Sean Duval, Chair of the A2Y Chamber's Public Policy Committee, said "As a state, we cannot afford to be exclusionary when we're trying to attract and retain talent. We are a better place because of the diversity of wonderful people who call this region home and we want our public institutions to use every tool they have to attract and retain each and every bright individual. Look no further than our nation's best companies to see that competitive health care benefits are one of those important tools. These bills would take that away and they send the wrong message. I urge our senate to oppose their passage." Andy LaBarre, the Chamber's Vice President of Government Relations, stated "We will send copies of this statement to our legislative delegation and to Governor Snyder. It is our hope that these bills will not pass the Senate and if they do that the governor will veto them."

The full statement is below. For more information contact Andy LaBarre at (734) 214-0101.

**Ann Arbor / Ypsilanti Regional Chamber
Resolution of Opposition to HB 4770 and HB 4771**

November 16, 2011

While we understand the fiscal arguments for HB 4770 and 4771, the A2Y Regional Chamber does not support these bills and joins with our universities to respectfully ask our state legislature and governor to oppose them. These bills would prohibit public employers from including domestic partner benefits in their public employee compensation packages, and would make domestic partner benefits a prohibited subject in collective bargaining. We advocate for government at all levels to find costs savings and consolidations whenever and wherever practical, but we cannot support these bills because of the detrimental effect they could have on our current residents and members, as well as the possible stifling disadvantage they could impose for attracting the best potential residents who seek to come to our community.

At the heart of this issue is the ability to attract employees who will bring value to our universities and our communities. Recent Census Bureau data from 2010 shows that unmarried

households were 45% of all U.S. households and nearly 9,400 employers in the U.S. offer domestic partner health benefits for their employees. Of these companies, 95% offer the benefits to both same-sex and opposite-sex partners. Well over half of Fortune 500 companies offer domestic partners benefits and 80% of Fortune 50 companies offer the benefits. In Michigan this includes Chrysler, Delphi, Dow Chemical, Ford, GM, Visteon, Whirlpool and Delta Airlines. We support the rights of businesses to decide on their own what types of benefits they will provide their employees so that they can be the most competitive. At a time when government needs to adopt the practices and efficiencies of private industry, these figures also highlight the need for our government to attract the very best and brightest employees. We believe government should provide a framework for commerce, establish rules that all should follow and then get out of the way of our businesses and institutions so that they may succeed or fail on their own merits. In this case our state universities have their own governance provided under the Michigan Constitution and this action being undertaken by the Michigan Legislature is both unneeded and unwise.

While these bills do not directly affect private businesses, we value the wonderful university system we have in this community and the myriad benefits that derive from their presence, including the many wonderful people who work for and with that system. Our community prospers when our public university system prospers. Those institutions would be at a competitive disadvantage in attracting and retaining the most talented employees if these benefits are prohibited. Again, while we appreciate any attempts to find cost savings in government, we join with the University of Michigan, Eastern Michigan University and our university community in opposing these bills because of their detrimental effects on our business community.