



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie, Colleagues Hear Feedback on Program That Helps Small Businesses Land State Contracts

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At a special joint hearing in Albany Wednesday, State Senator Patty Ritchie and several of her colleagues heard feedback from stakeholders—including business owners, industry leaders and union representatives—on ways to improve the state's New York State's Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise program (MWBE). The certification

program is an initiative designed to promote and encourage participation by minority and women-owned businesses in state contracting opportunities.

At the hearing, 13 different organizations provided testimony on their experiences with the MWBE certification program and shared concerns over what they described as a lengthy certification process, participation thresholds, project delays and more.

At the hearing, those who testified shared that while the program is both well-intentioned and needed, changes need to be made to reflect geographical differences, improve the certification process and protect the interests of taxpayers.

“While everyone is supportive of the State’s MWBE Certification Program and its goals, meeting its requirements can sometimes be a challenge, especially in rural parts of our state,” said Senator Ritchie, who serves as Co-chair of the MWBE Working Group said. “I am hopeful that we can take the feedback provided today and improve on the program to help even more entrepreneurs expand their businesses, create jobs and be part of the revitalization of New York’s economy.”

One organization testifying Tuesday was the Northern New York Builders Exchange. Through their testimony—which was provided by the organization’s executive Director Phil Reed and Northern New York Builders Exchange Board Member Robert Porter—they shared their challenges with the program, including a recent experience where they had to put a project out to bid four times because they could not find a MWBE certified company to finish the job.

Both individuals shared that the lack of MWBE certified businesses in the North Country forces them hire people outside the region in order to comply with regulations, which as they testified, defeats the purpose of the program and results in missed opportunities for

economic growth in our region.

Also testifying Wednesday were representatives from the Associated General Contractors, the Women Builders Council, Unshackle Upstate, the General Contractor Association and more.

Senator Ritchie and her colleagues will review the testimony offered Tuesday and consider potential legislative solutions to create a more effective and efficient program to enhance New York's business climate. This was the first of a series of hearings on the MWBE program, with future hearings scheduled to take place this summer and fall.

(In the first photograph, Senator Ritchie is pictured at Wednesday's Joint Hearing)

(In the second photograph, Northern New York Builders Exchange Executive Director Phil Reed and Board Member Robert Porter are seen testifying at Wednesday's Joint Hearing)