



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senators Ritchie and Akshar to Host Hearing on Program that Helps Small Business Land State Contracts

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State Senators Patty Ritchie and Fred Akshar, Co-chairs of the New York State Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise program (MWBE) Working Group, will join several of their colleagues in Watertown Tuesday to hear directly from various businesses and union groups on ways to improve the MWBE program.

Tuesday's hearing, which will be held on the 11th floor of the Dulles State Office Building in Watertown at 10 a.m., will be a follow up to a similar hearing held on May 30th in Albany. At that hearing, 13 different businesses and organizations provided testimony on their experiences with the MWBE certification program, including their concerns over what they described as a lengthy certification process, participation thresholds, project delays and more. They testified that as a result projects costs are driven up, projects are delayed, and in some cases businesses are forced to hire contractors from outside the area.

On Tuesday, local businesses leaders from companies such as Purcell Construction and 84 Lumber are expected to testify, as well as officials from the Central-Northern New York Building & Construction Trades Council and more.

"The MWBE program is well-intentioned, but the truth is it has also created significant hurdles, especially in the rural areas of our state," said Senator Ritchie. "I am hopeful that we can use this hearing to identify these issues, and work towards common sense solutions that not only address the concerns, but allow this program to benefit business owners, their employees and the interests of our hardworking taxpayers.

"One size does not fit all communities, and unfortunately, meeting the requirements of the MWBE program is a huge challenge for many businesses throughout Upstate New York," said Senator Fred Akshar. "Real solutions come from listening to stakeholders at the ground level. I'm hopeful we can take the feedback provided and improve on the program to help more entrepreneurs expand their businesses, create jobs and be part of the revitalization of New York's economy."

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.

There are five more hearings on the MWBE program scheduled to take place across New York State later summer and fall.