



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senators Ritchie, Akshar and Colleagues Hear Concerns Over MWBE Program at Watertown Hearing

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*****[CLICK HERE FOR VIDEO OF TUESDAY'S HEARING](#)*****

At a special hearing in Watertown Tuesday, State Senators Patty Ritchie and Fred Akshar, along with several of their colleagues heard feedback from stakeholders—including business owners, industry leaders and union representatives—on ways to improve New York State's Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise program (MWBE).

Tuesday's hearing, which was held at the Dulles State Office Building, was a follow up to a similar hearing held on May 30th in Albany. More than a dozen different organizations provided testimony on their experiences with the MWBE program including Purcell Construction, the Central-Northern New York Building and Construction Trades Council, U.A. Local 73 and GYMO Engineering, among others.

Those who testified shared their broad based support of the program's intent, but witnesses expressed frustration with participation thresholds, the certification process, and the lack of a uniform waiver process. Witnesses were also hopeful changes could be made to reflect geographical differences, improve the certification process and protect the interests of taxpayers.

"It is extremely helpful to hear directly from the stakeholders on how this program affects them as they try to do businesses here in Central and Northern New York," Senator Patty Ritchie, who serves as a co-chair of the Senate's MWBE Working Group said. "I look forward to using the feedback provided today and joining my colleagues to discuss and implement ways to improve the program and in turn, help business owners, employees and taxpayers throughout our region."

"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."

Senators Ritchie, Akshar and their 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 second of a series of hearings on the MWBE program, with five more hearings scheduled to take place across New York State later this summer and fall.

Video of Tuesday's hearing can be found by clicking [here](#).

(ATTN PHOTO EDITORS: Pictured at Tuesday's hearing—from left to right—are Senator Betty Little, Senator James Sanders, Senator Patty Ritchie, Senator Fred Akshar, Senator John Bonacic, Senator Tom O'Mara and Senator Kemp Hannon)