



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Fred Akshar

## Senators Fred Akshar and Patty Ritchie Call for Reforms to State's MWBE Program

FRED AKSHAR December 28, 2018

| ISSUE: **MWBE (DIVISION OF MINORITY AND WOMEN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT)**



Senators Fred Akshar (R-C-I-Ref, Endicott) and Patty Ritchie (R-C-I, Heuvelton) today called for new reforms to New York State's Minority and Women Business Enterprises (MWBE) program to help businesses better utilize the program and further improve New York's business climate.

Akshar and Ritchie recommend establishing at least one local/regional MWBE certification project manager in each of the Empire State Development (ESD) Regional Offices to work exclusively on coordinating, reviewing, processing and expediting both current and new applications as well as re-certifications.

“New York State is excellent at establishing programs, policies and regulations for businesses to follow, but truly underachieves when it comes to helping businesses navigate its own governmental bureaucracy,” said Senator Fred Akshar. “One of the largest overall concerns about the MWBE program is the lack of timely, effective communication between applicants and the employees charged with processing applications. Given the importance of the program to many businesses in my community and across the state, it is incumbent upon New York State to have accessible, local points of contact.”

“Simplifying the application process and expediting the timely review of paperwork are critically important to ensuring the long-term success of the MWBE program, said Senator Ritchie. Placing MWBE personnel in Regional ESDC offices will enhance response times and provide small businesses a local contact to help address issues and avoid unnecessary delays.”

The proposed MWBE liaisons would process applications from start to finish, including performing on-site visits with local businesses. The additional local application processing staff will also help address the tremendous backlog of certification requests.

Akshar and Ritchie also recommend revisions to the existing process with a hard look at streamlining forms and requirements, where practical, while still achieving desired program goals.

Once additional MWBE staff are in place with a new streamlined approach, Akshar and Ritchie recommend the state establish a realistic timeline processing goal, with the timeline from initial application to certification decision not exceeding 90 days.

In 2018, Akshar, Ritchie and the Senate Republican Majority held a series of six hearings throughout New York on the MWBE program and heard testimony from business owners, industry advocates, union members, local officials, and program participants on ways to improve the program.

“The testimony they provided perfectly illustrates how mismanagement, lack of planning and unchecked bureaucracy in state government can derail well-intentioned programs and further contribute to the anemic upstate business climate,” said Akshar. “New York can and must do a better job creating opportunities for success for our businesses and the hardworking people they employ, not more hurdles and red tape. My Senate Republican

colleagues and I aren't satisfied with identifying the problems. We're here to fix them."

Akshar and Ritchie expect the full report and recommendations from the hearings to be released in the coming days.