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NYC business owners sick over ObamaCare

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Rohit Arora runs a small business credit service. His firm provides the much-needed capital for companies to grow, expand and to hire.

So when Arora, the CEO of Biz2Credit, a Midtown finance company, says his latest research shows businesses large and small are making every effort to avoid hiring full-time workers, Washington should take notice.

The reason, Arora says, is because of rising health-care costs and fears about ObamaCare, the red tape and paperwork. He is also practicing what he hears with his own firm.

"ObamaCare has cast a long shadow over my plans to hire more staff," Arora said.

Employers across the metro area have had to put off hiring workers. They blame spiraling health-care costs and the uncertain future price tag of ObamaCare.

Another owner, Frank Passantino, is furious. "We have approximately 20 employees, and we have held off on hiring because we do not know what's going to happen with the law," said Passantino, president of Printech Business System on 35th Street in Midtown. "It's very definitely scary."

Passantino thinks he could incur higher health-care costs if he expands his payroll today. "That could be devastating."

As drafted, ObamaCare is suppose to allow small businesses with 50 workers or fewer from having to provide their health insurance.

But Passantino doesn't buy it. "You just don't know, they may change the ruling," he said. Paul Levine, vice president of finance at Powersmith Home Energy Solutions in Bay Shore, Long Island, said this kind of uncertainty doesn't help any business.

Small to mid-size businesses, which generate close to 70 percent of US jobs, fear ObamaCare could bury them in colossal bills and future paperwork, and are now paying the price as premiums have soared in anticipation of the new regulation.

"ObamaCare has been very negative for our business," Moishe Heimowitz, principal at First Medicare, a 50-employee medical practice based in Canarsie, told The Post. "The high costs of ObamaCare and our present health-care costs have impeded our efforts to hire more people."

Heimowitz says his company's health insurance plans have skyrocketed in price. His outlay has jumped by 50 percent on average in the past 12 months -- monthly increases of \$200 for single employees, \$350 per couples and a perplexing \$1,000 for family plans.

Said Levine: "All I know is, my health-care premiums for employees this year went up by 19 percent, which is fairly steep."

Martin Stevens, CEO of Forum Publishing in Centerport, Long Island, knows the feeling. His assessment of ObamaCare: a "big disappointment."

He says ObamaCare is preventing him from expanding his full-time payroll of 12 people. "It's impacting our bottom line," said Stevens.

As the statewide unemployment rate is stuck at 7.9 percent -- and 8.6 percent in the five boroughs -- these businesses have the means and desire to hire, but not the will because of the unknown costs and regulations.

This brouhaha is happening against a backdrop of 12 consecutive dismal weeks of initial jobless claims above the 400,000 mark.

It's evidence, say the business experts, of a damaging local and national employment malaise.

Companies large and small -- many hoarding serious cash on their balance sheets -- are reluctant to hire workers as long as the cloud of ObamaCare hangs about, they say.

Other costs associated with ObamaCare are pumping up costly new premiums, according to Michael Tanner, an expert at the Cato Institute who has extensively studied ObamaCare.

Cases in point: Children can now remain on their parents' insurance plans until they're 26, and lifetime caps are prohibited on insurance benefits.

The increases in premiums could also be the insurance companies loading up early, anticipating future restrictions on how much they charge because of ObamaCare, according to Tanner.

That's even though President Obama once vowed that health-care reform would "bend the cost curve down."

There's no sign of that. Tanner contends that ObamaCare will cost the nation \$2.7 trillion in its first 10 years. It will expand the national debt by \$823 billion, he says.

That, Tanner notes, does not take into account this astonishing sum: More than \$4.3 trillion in costs will be transferred to businesses, individuals and state governments under ObamaCare. And over its first 10 years, the law adds more than \$569 billion in new or increased taxes.

Heimowitz makes the ObamaCare cutoff with his 50 employees at First MedCare. But it doesn't matter to him. "The thing is, if I don't offer health insurance, I won't attract good staff and professional staff," he said, anxiously weighing his potential future liabilities.

Some will take the option of paying a fine of \$2,000 per worker instead of insuring them. Analysts think many will do just that. Not surprisingly, a new McKinsey & Company study estimates that 78 million Americans will lose their current coverage. That defeats the ObamaCare's goal of universal health-care coverage, analysts say.

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