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Rochester can be No. 1

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Guest essayist

Our goal is to make Rochester the healthiest community in America. That means improved cost and quality for every resident.

In June, I had the honor to testify before the U.S. House of Representatives Education and Labor Committee on the new health care proposals.

The cornerstone of my testimony was that we owe it to each American to collaborate and to find common ground just as we have done in Rochester. If we can do it here, it can be done in Washington and around America.

Rochester has a rich health care history. Four years ago the Rochester Business Alliance created a health care partnership of seven employers. It is led by the CEOs of Bausch & Lomb, Jasco Tools, Kodak, Paychex, RIT, Wegmans and Xerox.

Health care experts from each company created the RBA health care planning team. The team selected five areas to work on. They are greater efficiency in our hospital systems, physician pay, creating a regional health information system, greater utilization of generic drugs, and implementing a wellness program called Eat Well, Live Well.

Each program has been successful. For example, last year, 44,000 employees from more than 300 organizations participated in this wellness program making it, to our knowledge, the largest community-wide wellness program in the world. The U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services gave Rochester two awards for our efforts — one for our overall efforts and one for our wellness program.

Recently, our employer group has entered into a partnership with the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency (FLHSA).

We will be working on a sixth major community-wide initiative together that will be announced shortly.

The FLHSA currently has more than 1,100 Rochesterians working on 21 initiatives.

It was created by New York State, is the only organization of its kind, has had success with its initiatives and represents many community stakeholders. In my written and oral testimony in Washington, I invited President Barack Obama, his staff and members of Congress to come to Rochester to learn what we have done.

The FLHSA has extended the same invitation. We hope our joint invitation will be accepted.

Together, we have accomplished much, and more than most communities in America, but we need to continue to work together as there is much more to be done.

Everybody loves to be a fan of something like a sports team.

As we move toward being No. 1 in health in America, we will, indeed, give Rochester fans something to be proud of.

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