

Business group: County board must act on health contributions plan

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WHITE PLAINS — County lawmakers must act quickly and not overstudy having workers pay a portion of their health-care costs — it's a common practice, the head of a business organization said Friday.

Having nonunion managers pay 15 percent of their health premiums is an obvious and necessary step in reining in the rising cost of government, said William Mooney, president of the Westchester County Business Association.

"What we're calling for today is action, not another study. We don't have time for another study," Mooney said, standing in front of the county office building on Martine Avenue.

County Executive Rob Astorino, a Republican, proposed the measure last month — one that is considered to be a preview for union negotiations — as one of many ways to fend off a fiscal crisis and looming budget gap.

Astorino's plan affects just fewer than 400 workers and would save \$1.2 million a year.

The county Board of Legislators is considering the concept.

Earlier this week, board members discussed, then put off a vote on an alternative proposal to have some workers under the county executive's purview pay a percentage of their health package. The plan excluded the District Attorney's Office, Westchester Community College, the county clerk, the Board of Elections, the legislators and the judiciary.

It was criticized as rushed, watered down and not thought out.

Responding to concerns, Chairman Ken Jenkins, a Yonkers Democrat, formed a committee to find ways to provide quality care at a better price; its first meeting is Saturday.

Jenkins, who has said taxpayers deserved real relief and leadership, not "politics as usual with officials playing fast and loose with the numbers," welcomed WCA's involvement.