



My name is Danna Ward.

I am Office/Quality System Manager at Vigon International in East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. Among my responsibilities is managing employee benefits at Vigon. I have been a benefits administrator for 20 years.

Vigon is a privately owned manufacturer and supplier of high quality flavor and fragrance ingredients. Vigon employs approximately 66 people, most coming from Monroe, Pike and Northampton counties.

The company has been recognized as a leading small business in Pennsylvania. Our company has been awarded the Governor's ImPAct Award by Governor Corbett this year and has also been recognized as one of the Best Places to Work in Pennsylvania.

One of the reasons for the company's success is that its leadership understands that to be competitive, you need an efficient and productive workforce. There is no doubt that if employees are healthier, there will be less absenteeism and greater productivity. Healthier workers also mean lower health care costs.

In partnership with Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania, which has been Vigon's health insurer for 25 years, our company has developed wellness programs to help our workers stay healthy. All of our employees participate in at least some of those activities. These programs include cardiac risk assessments, skin cancer screenings, and breast cancer assessments, as well as programs to help workers stop smoking, lose weight, or change their eating or exercise habits.

As Vigon's employee benefits manager, I have seen the positive effect of these programs on our workers' fitness, morale and work performance. I also have discovered that we can have some fun with these programs, with workers competing individually or as teams.

I believe this is having an effect on our health insurance premiums because it is helping our employees stay healthier. There is a connection between what the employees are doing to manage their health and wellness and how much our company is paying to cover them.

Vigon's partnership with Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania is helping make this happen.

Our satisfaction with Blue Cross is based on more than that. Blue Cross also has a large network of doctors and hospitals. I have been pleased with the broad choice of doctors and hospitals that our employees can select from in the Blue Cross system.

I am encouraged that the merger between Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania and Highmark will not only allow the merged companies to continue this service, but to build on it.

I understand that Highmark has the same commitment to health and wellness programs as Blue Cross. Like Blue Cross, Highmark works with employers to help them develop wellness programs that encourage their workers to improve their health, lower their risk of disease, and manage chronic health conditions. But as one of the largest health insurers in the country, Highmark will be able to do this with greater resources and more advanced technology over time.

Vigon International, Inc.

127 Airport Road East Stroudsburg, PA 18301-9629 USA | Tel: +1 570-476-6300 | Fax: +1 570-476-1110 | Email: sales@vigon.com | Web: www.vigon.com

The same is true for their provider network, which will expand the current Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania service area to cover most of the rest of Pennsylvania, which is already serviced by Highmark. That is important to companies like ours, since some of our workers live outside the current Blue Cross region, in the Lehigh Valley.

So as both as benefits administrator for Vigon and as an individual member of Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania, I believe that this merger will only expand and improve on the quality products and services that the company currently provides.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views about the merger.

Danna Ward