

My name is Angelina Santa Maria and I thank you for giving me this time to speak on this bill and why it is so important to me.

For 18 years now I've worked in healthcare for patients, insurance companies, and doctors.

Today I am advocating for my family. My step dad, Jim, who I love as if he was my biological father is my role model.

He has values, a strong work ethic, love for his country and family and a way of always finding the brighter side of things.

Today Jim is in the hospital, the 4th time in 6 months. He had a heart attack, triple by pass surgery and is diabetic. He has gangren in his foot and his kidneys are failing.

Jim is dependant on my mother take him to the hospital, doctor appointments, get his medications and care for him.

Jim is a veteran-with no medical insurance.

The only facility that can care for him is over an hour away from their home.

For this reason and for I know many other veterans, they go without quality healthcare. They delay doctor appointments, filling prescriptions and treating serious healthcare problems for reasons like transportation and distance, work or looking for work, finances and impositions on family.

Mental healthcare, a need for many veterans, especially those returning home from Iraq, is not easily accessible.

This bill, will allow Connecticut veterans without private medical insurance, regardless of income, access to emergency care, mental healthcare and prescription drug coverage for those times that they can not get to a VA medical center.

Though he **didn't** serve the 20 years that would have made him eligible for medical insurance, Jim, like other veterans put his life on the line for us, defending freedom and democracy.

He was honorably discharged and worked up until a few years ago until his diabetes and poor health prevented him from doing so.

The least we can do for our Connecticut veterans is have healthcare that is easily accessible to them when they need it without delay. SAGA can provide the additional care to veterans so they can take care of them selves the way they so were so willing to care for us.