

Good morning. My name is Adriana Arreola and I am the Uninsured Children's Coordinator for the City of New Haven. In this capacity, I identify uninsured children throughout the city using various outreach methods. Once identified, we begin the enrollment process into the HUSKY program. I am here in support of Bill No.1.

Health care should be a right not a privilege but for the 400,000 uninsured Connecticut residents -- of which 70,000 are children-- this is not the case. Who are these children? They are the kids that play with your kids, the ones you see at the supermarket and the ones you pass on the street.

70,000 children statewide wake up every day playing the odds of life. That's more than enough to fill Yankee Stadium. In New Haven alone, we estimate that there are thousands of kids with no safety net should they fall ill.

In the Connecticut Health First Initiative there are provisions which I strongly stand behind and support for the following reasons.

Most uninsured children are eligible for HUSKY but are not enrolled due to changes and confusion about the program as well as increased application complexity. Bill No. 1 suggests restoring Continuous Eligibility, a process which makes enrolling and reenrolling in HUSKY easier. We support this since application renewal is annual and the fluctuation in income is most common among low income families. What this means is that the change in income among those who renew is very minimal and has little or no effect on the HUSKY eligibility of the family.

Even though HUSKY gives all children access to healthcare the process is less than easy. By combining HUSKY A and HUSKY B we can achieve efficiency and simplify the program for those applying.

We strongly support increasing outreach to enroll all uninsured children as well as their parents. Enrollment in the HUSKY program has dropped significantly from June 2005 to August 2006, with 25,000 fewer residents covered by the program; 18,000 of whom are under the age of 19. Among the factors that have caused the steep decline are changes and cutbacks, economic trends and revised federal mandates.

Better outreach efforts need to be implemented to reduce the number of uninsured in the state. Communities are energetic and enthusiastic about reaching out but with limited resources very little can be accomplished. Funding needs to be restored for community-based outreach and application assistance.

The Governor has a proposal that would help and the Democratic leaders have another more ambitious plan that would immediately insure 140,000 people. Encouraging to see-- but we don't need baby-steps right now. We need leadership to get universal healthcare implemented. Our children are depending on it.