

Testimony of Jasanea Hernandez
553 Orchard St. New Haven O6511
Connecticut General Assembly Public Health Committee
March 11, 2015
SB 809, 813, 815

Senator Gerratana, Rep., Ritter, members of the committee, I am a cafeteria worker at Conte West Hills School in the City of New Haven. I've worked serving children food for 10 years.

I have a 12-year old son with severe asthma. He hasn't had episode in past year, but has been hospitalized 4 times over the years. He does his part by keeping up with his medicine, but we know that with severe asthma he could end up in the hospital at any time. It's a constant worry.

You can see why at my job, our health care benefits are my number one priority. If my costs go up, we face real financial problems because there's always a threat of an expensive visit to the hospital.

In our last negotiations, we wanted to make sure we kept our health benefits without an increase in costs. But with premiums going up, it was hard to convince the city to hold the line. So we switched from Blue Cross Blue Shield to UNITE HERE Health, a national health plan set up by our union and employers for food service workers. That switch helped us and our employer keep our premiums and copays affordable.

Of course, we all have to do our part to control costs. As a shop steward I work hand in hand with coworkers that have chronic illnesses to make sure that they are up to date with check-ups and medicine. We've taken the time to educate ourselves about having a primary care doctor, and staying out of the emergency room.

We were willing to change to a new plan to make sure we kept good benefits without high out of pocket costs. We're willing to talk to each other about taking good care of ourselves.

But in New Haven we only have one hospital we can go to. We want to make sure that we get high quality health care but at reasonable prices. Hospital monopolies can raise prices and undermine all the good work that we've done on our health care.

I urge you to strengthen and pass SB 813 to make sure that all hospital prices are transparent. It's only fair for everyone to know what everyone else is paying for health care. Please pass SB 809 to make sure that when hospitals take over doctors' offices, they can't charge excessive facility fees and drive prices up further.