

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Katherine Villeda and I am from Stamford. I am a Community Organizer within the reproductive health and rights and immigrant rights communities in Connecticut.

I am testifying in support of raised S.B. 274: *An Act Concerning Increased Funding To Planned Parenthood And Other Family Planning Clinics* which will provide critical funding for continued access to preventive sexual and reproductive health care for the people of Connecticut who already struggle to get the care they need.

When I was uninsured for 2 years as an undergraduate student, I did not have the access or the ability to purchase my prescription long-term and rescue asthma inhalers, which roughly cost \$600 out-of-pocket a month. When I called the community health centers in the area and told them I could not breath well and my chest was always tight, they all told me there was nothing they could do and I had to wait three to four weeks for their next available appointment.

I remember feeling absolutely devastated and defeated and having to mentally prepare myself to have an asthma attack- one that was entirely **preventable**. I continued my search to find a provider in my area who would see me and I stumbled upon Planned Parenthood of Southern New England and learned that they had just started providing primary care services at their Stamford location. I immediately called and got an appointment within 48 hours.

To this day, I am eternally grateful for the clinicians who saw me that day, that listened to all of my concerns, and comforted me. For the first time in that process, I did not feel shame for the circumstance I was in and felt supported. They checked in on me on a weekly basis to ensure I was back on my medication and on a path to become insured. I was also able to receive reproductive health care during that same visit. And the best part was I didn't have to worry about the cost of care because my services were all low-cost thanks to their sliding scale that is possible because of Title X funds.

This initial experience with Planned Parenthood is why I strongly support SB 274. All people need and deserve equal access to comprehensive health care, including sexual and reproductive health care, because health care is a human right. Planned Parenthood plays an indispensable role in providing family planning care in Connecticut, serving over 41,000 Title X patients in Connecticut in 2018, accounting for 88% of those served by Title X in the state. As a first-generation, working-class student, community organizer, and daughter of immigrants, I know the impact the Title X program has in addressing health care inequity by serving populations that have historically faced significant barriers to care, including people of color, people of low income, LGBTQ+ people, immigrants and people living in rural areas. Without the Title X program, many patients, including myself, will lose access to free or low-cost basic care like birth control, STI/STD testing, and cancer screenings.

Thank you to Governor Lamont and elected leaders for supporting family planning funding in the budget and continuing our state's strong commitment to protecting and improving women's health care. I strongly support raised S.B. 274 and urge the committee and legislature to vote favorably to support funding for family planning providers, including Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, and protect access to sexual and reproductive health care for those most in need in our state.

Thank you for your time,
Katherine Villeda
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