

Dear Members of the Insurance and Real State Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Michael Blicher, and I am a junior at college. I am an ally of immigrant communities and I stand in support of **HB5251- AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS IN THIS STATE**. This bill would create a task force to study the current state of healthcare access for undocumented immigrants, and to promote increased insurance coverage for these communities.

I was raised in an affluent suburb in Massachusetts, which has meant that throughout my life I have been blessed with some of the best healthcare in the world: every time I felt sick or needed medicine, my family has had the money and means to see excellent doctors and use world class facilities. With this experience behind me, I truly could not imagine what my life would be like in another part of the country or with a different socioeconomic status. I do not believe that my luck in regards to being born into privileged circumstances justifies my right to health. I believe that healthcare is a fundamental human right that should not be denied to anybody on the basis of their background.

The establishment of this task force is a *critical* step that our state must take in favor of *saving lives*. Being undocumented does not make any individual less deserving of healthcare, or any other basic human right. Citizenship status should not be a determinant of health and wellness — but by limiting undocumented individuals' access to healthcare, the state of Connecticut is perpetuating health disparities and systemic inequities within communities of color. This is no longer a matter of policy alone: this is a matter of life and death.

Expanding HUSKY coverage to undocumented immigrants is necessary, but this expansion must be done thoughtfully and with immigrants' lived experiences in mind. To this end, the task force cannot be comprised of politicians alone: diverse voices and representatives from advocacy organizations are key to the success of this task force. For this reason, we ask that individuals from groups such as the Connecticut Immigrants Rights Alliance, Connecticut Students for a Dream, the Universal Health Care Foundation, and Health Equity Solutions be included in the task force.

Access to healthcare should not be a commodity for the wealthy and privileged who can afford it. It is a human right and no person should be denied or face obstacles in obtaining the healthcare they need due to the inability to pay or immigration status. The discrimination that our immigrant community faces in accessing health insurance and health coverage is a violation of our human rights.

In conclusion, I would like to restate my strong support for HB5251. The state of Connecticut cannot remain complicit in systemic discrimination against immigrant communities — they are *people* worthy of

dignity and respect, and must be treated as such. The establishment of this task force is the least our state can do, and I ask the committee to vote favorably on this important and necessary measure.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Michael Blicher