

Testimony to the Insurance and Real Estate Committee of the CT Legislature

February 25, 2020

Testimony in support of H.B. 5251

Honorable Chairs and Members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Camila Bortolletto, I live in Brookfield, CT and I am founder of and a leader in CT Students for a Dream, C4D is a statewide, youth-led network that fights for the rights of undocumented youth and their families. Today I am here to stand in support of **H.B.5251: "An Act Establishing A Taskforce to Study Health Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in This State"**. The bill would establish a task force to study health insurance coverage for undocumented immigrants in this state, the task force can research and propose policies that would help increase access to health care coverage for immigrants.

This issue is very personally important to me. I am undocumented myself. I came here when I was 9 years old from Brazil with my family. I grew up here and consider it my home. Access to healthcare growing up was always a haphazard affair. We didn't have a doctor for much of my grade schools years, so getting care was a mix of going to school nurses, long lines at the community health center, and emergency rooms.

I now am privileged enough to have good health insurance now through my employment. I have DACA, deferred action for childhood arrivals, a renewable temporary protected status for undocumented immigrants who came here at a young age like me. However, most immigrant families do not have DACA or a work permit, my parents don't, and they cannot get insurance through their employer. Undocumented immigrants are also barred from buying into the Access Health CT and ineligible for state health HUSKY programs. As a result, the health coverage options for undocumented families are severely limited and many families cannot seek the proper health care they need due to the combined factors of their status and inability to pay.

Which is why I support HB5251 to create a taskforce to study access to health coverage for the undocumented community. In the creation of the taskforce CT Students for a Dream wants to ask the taskforce to first, study both private insurance access and HUSKY access. Second, we are asking that the membership of the committee includes not only legislators and members of the administration, but also includes advocates and members of the community.

Access to healthcare should not be a commodity only 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 ability to pay or immigration status.

I urge the Committee to support HB5251 as a starting point for our state to work on ensuring that our whole communities have access to healthcare.

Camila Bortolletto
Brookfield, CT