

Dear Senator Lesser, Representative Scanlon and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee:

My name is Yenimar Cortes, I am a New Haven resident and part of the organization Connecticut Students for a Dream. I am testifying in support of raised H.B. 5251 *An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Health Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in This State*. Everyone in Connecticut deserves access to health care as a basic human right regardless of income, insurance, or immigration status. Most importantly this bill will be a step forward in allowing undocumented immigrants to obtain a basic human right and saving a lot of immigrants lives.

I myself am undocumented, and have directly been affected by the lack of preventative health care. I've been without any health insurance for my whole life causing me to live in fear everyday for not just my health but of my family who is also restricted from health insurance. I visit the doctor about every 3-5 years due to how expensive it is and the lack of health coverage. The last time that I did go to the doctor was for an emergency when I could no longer bear the chest pain that I have been feeling for over a year. I remember entering the emergency room so scared thinking I was going to have a heart attack but also so hesitant hoping I didn't make a mistake. My mom quickly came to the emergency room when I told her I was there frightened for both the cost and my health. She sat down next to me holding her breath and hugging me to sooth the pain I was in. After waiting for so long at the emergency room I was told I had chronic gastritis something that could have been preventive if I was going to the doctor regularly. My

doctor assured me it wasn't something manageable but it still didn't take away the terrifying experience that myself and family had.

This is not the first experience where because I am restricted from seeking preventive health care, I waited until things got worse, and I had to seek emergency care. I am not the only one as well there are millions of undocumented people in this country, and many in Connecticut.

Undocumented people pay 145 million dollars into state and local taxes every year but are barred from accessing health care, which means we are exploited every year by the state of Connecticut.

The implementation of this task force is important because it will study the way the state of Connecticut could help increase access to health care coverage, and a step towards saving a lot of lives in Connecticut. The taskforce should include representatives part of an immigrant rights organization like Connecticut Students for a Dream, CT immigrants Rights Alliance, Make the Road CT because they are directly impacted, and it will be hearing their voices.

I strongly support raised HB 5251 *An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Health Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in This State* and I hope that the committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably and move towards defending health care which is a human right that everyone is entitled to.