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**Testimony in Support of
House Bill 5251: An Act Establishing A Task Force To Study Health Insurance Coverage For
Undocumented Immigrants In This State**

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Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut thanks the Insurance and Real Estate Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of House Bill 5251: An Act Establishing A Task Force To Study Health Insurance Coverage For Undocumented Immigrants In This State.

Our mission is to serve as a catalyst to achieve universal access to quality, affordable, equitable health care for all in the state. The Foundation envisions a health system that is accountable and responsive to the people it serves, and that supports our health, takes excellent care of all of us when we are sick, at a cost that doesn't threaten our financial security.

We support HB 5251 because we believe that health care is a human right and that everyone should have access to quality, affordable, equitable health care. Health insurance coverage is crucial for our immigrant communities to be healthy. No one should have obstacles to getting to the care they need based on their immigration status.

There is a persistently high uninsured rate for immigrants in our state. According to the Migration Policy Institute, 30.1% of foreign-born non-citizensⁱ (legal permanent residents, such as green card holders) are uninsured. In undocumented communities, the uninsured rate is 52% (that is roughly 53,000 fellow state residents without health insuranceⁱⁱ). While Connecticut has a relatively low uninsured rate (5.3%ⁱⁱⁱ), we will never truly achieve 100% universal coverage in this state without addressing the needs of our immigrant communities, including the undocumented.

Currently, undocumented immigrants are shut out of public and private health insurance. Medicaid / HUSKY covers "qualified immigrants," but this does not include the undocumented community, nor some other groups of immigrants, such as those who are Legal Permanent Residents but have not been in the United States more than five years. Medicare also does not cover the undocumented and other immigrants.

In the private market, if families want to purchase their own coverage, private health insurance companies require either a Social Security card or some other proof of legal status – limiting access to the undocumented immigrant community. The cost of private health insurance may also be a barrier for

some immigrants. Undocumented immigrants are also unable to access financial help or purchase plans on the Affordable Care Act exchange (Access Health CT).

We support a task force that conducts thoughtful study on these and other issues immigrants, including the undocumented, face in receiving health insurance coverage, and offer some recommendations to ensure the task force is equipped to address this issue.

Some recommendations

- Expand the scope of the task force’s study to include all immigrants who are ineligible for health insurance due to their immigration status.
- The scope of the task force should be broad enough to include exploring options and creative solutions for covering undocumented immigrants and other immigrants currently ineligible for private and public programs in this state, both through private and public insurance programs, such as HUSKY A, B, C, and D.
- Those most impacted by this issue – the undocumented and other immigrant communities – should be at the table during this process and included in the composition of the task force. We recommend that a representative from an immigrant rights advocacy organization sit on the task force; we also recommend that a representative from a health care advocacy organization sit on the task force.

We hope that this task force is only the first step in the Connecticut General Assembly addressing the issue of health insurance coverage for immigrants, including the undocumented. Too often task forces are formed, recommendations made, but nothing is ever implemented. We hope that the task force is formed, and its recommendations will be implemented. Thank you for your time today.

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut’s mission is to serve as a catalyst that engages residents and communities in shaping a democratic health system that provides universal access to quality, affordable, equitable health care and promotes health in Connecticut. We believe that health care is a fundamental right and that our work is part of a broader movement for social and economic justice.

ⁱ State Immigration Data Profiles: Connecticut, Migration Policy Institute, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/state-profiles/state/income/CT#>

ⁱⁱ Profile of the Unauthorized Population: Connecticut, Migration Policy Institute, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/data/unauthorized-immigrant-population/state/CT>

ⁱⁱⁱ Selected Characteristics of Health Insurance Coverage in the United States, United States Census Bureau, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=Health%20Insurance&table=S2701&tid=ACSS1Y2018.S2701&hidePreview=true&lastDisplayedRow=71&y=2018&g=0400000US09>