

Camille Kritzman  
2/24/2020

**Testimony IN FAVOR of HB5251 ; AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR UNDOCUMENTED**

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

My name is Camille Kritzman. I am a case manager at IRIS - Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services in New Haven, CT. I work under the New Haven Universal Representation Pilot Project. My clients mostly consist of undocumented immigrants, asylum seekers, asylees, and legal permanent residents.

This testimony is in favor of HB5251- AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS IN THIS STATE. For many of my clients, healthcare is the most important issue, and the one that causes the most distress. I urge you to pass this bill to begin doing the work to get health insurance coverage for ALL CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

The majority of the people I work for are uninsured. Most of my clients have thousands of dollars in medical bills, or chronic medical needs they have been putting off due to not being able to pay. This goes for both undocumented clients and legal permanent resident clients who have not have status for the past 5 years. I am going to share 3 stories today, with permission from my clients, of some extreme cases that demonstrate the unnecessary danger and stress being uninsured can cause;

A single mother who had severe vaginal bleeding went to the emergency room, where she was told to find a primary care doctor. She went from clinic to clinic while bleeding, seeking someone who could help her. In the free clinics, she was told she had to complete a lengthy application for Free Care, get approved, then have an appointment scheduled out in a few months.

Family of 5, father has AIDS. As the father's health gets worse, the family relies on independent non-for-profits to access treatment. Even still, with help from independent organizations that drop the price for medication, the family is stuck weekly deciding between purchasing food for their 3 children or medication.

A single mother of 3. The 33 year old son is deaf, blind and mute. It was determined that he needed brain surgery. Unfortunately, the care needed is economically unfeasible for this family, so his health has continued to deteriorate. His mother has to stay home and care for her son, while her 2 teenage daughters work to support the family.

These cases I have shared are extreme, but some version of it is true for most of my clients. Since they are unable to afford a primary care doctor, when a health issue arises that is too

urgent to ignore, most clients get a ride to the emergency room. This causes an unnecessary strain of the time, resources, finances, and effectiveness of emergency services.

Clients who do have free care services administered by Yale or Hartford Hospital need to apply via getting a denial letter from Access Health CT, which may be putting themselves at risk. I have clients who after assisting them in applying for Yale Free Care via obtaining a denial letter from Access Health CT, receive a letter from Access Health CT saying the information from their application would be shared with DHS. People should not have to risk deportation in order to get denied insurance and hopefully qualify for free care.

This bill HB5251 presents a unique opportunity to study and suggest ways the state of Connecticut can increase access to health care coverage for uninsured immigrants. The task force must include membership from the immigrant community, and those most impacted by this policy. This will ensure that the experiences and voices of those affected by the ruling and living the reality of being uninsured are included. A solution is including representatives from immigrant rights advocacy organizations, including CT Immigrants Rights Alliance, Make the Road CT, CT Students for a Dream. In addition, we will need representation from organizations who have already been assisting uninsured people in accessing health care, including Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, CT Voices for Children, Universal Health Care Foundation, Health Equity Solutions.

According to a Yale study published February 15, 2020, providing medical coverage for all would be more cost effective and prevent thousands of deaths.<sup>1</sup> I want to live in a state where healthcare coverage exists for EVERYONE, regardless of immigration status. If administered effectively, doing so should prove to be more cost efficient than the current alternative.

Thank you for your time and implore the committee to vote favorably.

Camille Kritzman  
IRIS Case Manager  
235 Nicoll Street,  
New Haven, CT

[ckritzman@irisct.org](mailto:ckritzman@irisct.org)  
203-562-2095 x.208

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)33019-3/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)33019-3/fulltext)