

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

My name is Mark Matera, and I am an undergraduate student at Yale University. I am a strong supporter of immigrant rights 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.

Healthcare is a human right that I firmly believe should be extended to all people living in our state to increase the quality of life for all. I have heard too many stories about people who suffer through illnesses or broken bones for fear of not having basic medical care covered. We should not treat our fellow community members as second class citizens in their own living spaces.

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.

Undocumented immigrants already invest in our communities through paying taxes and providing opportunities for job growth through the entrepreneurial visions that they bring to our areas. For the hard work that they bring to our communities each day, we should take care of them just as we would any other citizen living in Connecticut. It is only fair that they receive the human right of healthcare so that they can keep contributing to our municipalities and overall success.

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,

Mark Matera

Portland, CT