

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

My name is Vanessa N., and I am a freshman in college in Connecticut. I am the daughter of immigrants 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.

As the daughter of immigrants, securing healthcare coverage has always been a major issue in our family lives. Without securing appropriate coverage, my mother would not have been able to pay for her medical expenses due to debilitating illness. The passage of this bill would allow many families to feel at ease and assured in their position in society. Fear is a common part of the immigrant experience and it should not be a part of the healthcare system as well.

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 in our state pay roughly 145 million dollars into state and local taxes every year. These undocumented taxpayers are funding state healthcare programs our CT residents use, but due to their status are unable to access any of these health programs. As taxpayers funding state health programs, undocumented residents deserve an equal and fair opportunity to access the very programs we fund.

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,
Vanessa N.