

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

My name is Brigith Rivera, I am a student from the University of Connecticut and a resident from Hartford. 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 taskforce with the objective to study of any means available to promote and increase health insurance coverage for undocumented immigrants in the state.

I was born and raised in Peru and moved to the United States when I was eight years old. My family has lived in Connecticut for more than 10 years. I graduated Capital Preparatory Magnet School in 2019 and through dual-enrollment I was also able to graduate from Capital Community College in 2019. Currently, I am a junior at the University of Connecticut working to earn a Bachelor's of Political Science and Latin American Studies. I am involved with CT Students for a Dream, a non-profit organization working for the rights of immigrant families and students.

My family's access to health care and insurance is extremely limited. Not a single family member has healthcare insurance. My father who worked in construction, a labor intensive job, was unable to go to the hospital due to cost despite his enormous hip pain. My father's pain does not allow him to work leaving my mother to be the sole provider of income. My mother now works three jobs in order to provide the bare living necessities; due to the how many hours she is working, it is only a matter of time before she gets physically injured or has an occupational illness. If both my parents do develop an illness, I will have to leave school and get multiple jobs in order to provide financial support to my family.

For my family, I know that having access to healthcare would help tremendously. I would be allowed to continue to pursue post-secondary education and my father would cure his illness. It is important to understand how intertwined healthcare is within many families. If, and when, the committee decides to provide healthcare to undocumented families you will not only be allowing them to go to the doctor but allow for many other opportunities to be pursued. For my family, having access to healthcare is a link to allowing me to obtain post-secondary education. For other families, having access to healthcare could minimize stress-level conditions individuals have or could save the lives of someone who is in critical condition.

It is essential that a task force be implemented in order to analyze how the state could benefit members of the community. The task force should study all individuals who are undocumented or ineligible for Husky and/or other health insurance coverage in the State of Connecticut. The taskforce should also analyze the cost of expanding Husky A, B, C, and D coverage. A critical part of the taskforce members is being able to listen to the voices of the immigrant community. Members should include folks from CT Immigrants Rights Alliance, Make the Road CT, CT Students for a Dream, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, CT Voices of Children, Universal Health Care Foundation, as well as Health Equity Solutions.

It is essential that HB5251 passes because not only is healthcare a human right, and undocumented residents already invest in our Health Programs through taxes, but undocumented individuals are part of the community and need to be treated with the same benefits as any other person. Undocumented individuals are counted in the population when it comes to assigning how many seats each state has within the U.S. House of Representatives, yet they are not allowed to vote, and not provided the same benefits. It is simply unjust to count the voices of undocumented individuals when it is beneficial to the government. Since undocumented folks are counted in the population it is time their voice be heard and their issue addressed.

I support HB5251. and hope the committee will vote favorably. I thank you for taking the time to read this and hope you will represent our community accordingly.

Thank you for your time,

Brigith Rivera