

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

My name is Emmett Shell and I am a sophomore in college. I am an ally of the immigrant community 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.

While no one in my immediate family is an immigrant in the U.S., my mom has struggled to pay for healthcare on her fairly low salary. Without the ACA, paying for her cancer treatment would have been impossible. I can't imagine what this struggle would be like for undocumented that don't have access to the funds and programs that my mom did, and I hope Connecticut seriously considers creating this task force. Undocumented immigrants are people who need health insurance like the rest of us.

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.

Every year undocumented immigrants pay over \$100 million into funds for state-wide and local health insurance coverage, yet continue to fail to reap the benefits of the money they invest in our state. We must do a better job of protecting and empowering this community, especially by giving them the coverage they pay for.

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,

Emmett Shell