

**TESTIMONY OF
KATHLEEN SILARD
PRESIDENT & CEO
STAMFORD HEALTH
SUBMITTED TO THE
INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE COMMITTEE
Tuesday, February 25, 2020**

Good afternoon. Stamford Health supports **HB 5251, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Health Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in This State**, as it would promote the health and well-being of the communities it serves.

Stamford Health is a comprehensive, independent non-profit health care system that serves a region of approximately 650,000 people. We employ more than 3,600 people, making us the largest employer in the city of Stamford and one of the largest in Fairfield County. Beyond the lifesaving care we provide 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, we contribute more than \$1 billion to our state and local economy and provide more than \$80 million in uncompensated care to the residents that need it most. We are committed to providing friendly, personal care coupled with the most sophisticated services to all residents of lower Fairfield County.

Although Stamford Health is the fifth largest system in Connecticut, it provides the second highest level of uncompensated care. Our recently completed Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) indicated that thirty-five percent, or roughly 36,000, of city residents were born outside of the United States. This compares to eleven percent overall in Fairfield County. Some portion of Stamford's population includes uninsurable individuals for whom we provide care.

HB 5251 would create a task force to study ways to insure undocumented individuals in Connecticut. The task force would report on recommendations next January. We note that six other states and the District of Columbia have considered and adopted ways to subsidize insurance for undocumented children. California has recently expanded its program to cover young adults.

Connecticut has many residents that would stand to benefit from an expansion of coverage to the undocumented. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that 102,000 people living in Connecticut are undocumented. The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that 45% of

the nonelderly, undocumented population is uninsured compared to 8% of those with citizenship. By these estimates, at least 40,000 undocumented individuals in Connecticut lack access to insurance.

Access to health insurance promotes the regular use of primary care including preventive care, which increases early diagnoses of conditions and diseases when treatment is less invasive, less expensive and has the greatest chance of success. In addition, having insurance reduces medical debt that can cause substantial stress.

Stamford Health's CHNA contained two positive data points that could be correlated. The number of residents with access to health insurance substantially increased, especially among LatinX residents, over the previous three years. Over the same period, mortality rates decreased.

Stamford Health encourages the state to consider how it might ensure access to insurance for the undocumented to ensure their well-being. Thank you for your consideration of our position.