

Make the Road CT

850 State St, Bridgeport, CT
360 Farmington Ave, Hartford, CT



Insurance and Real Estate Committee Public Hearing 25 February 2020

Testimony SUPPORTING HB5251

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

My name is Mary Elizabeth Smith. I am the Development and Programs Organizer at Make the Road Connecticut, a statewide organization that builds the power of Latino and working-class communities to achieve dignity and justice through organizing, policy innovation, transformative education, and survival services. We have members in Bridgeport and Hartford, and I live in New Haven. 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 of studying how to promote and increase health insurance coverage for undocumented immigrants in the state.

Make the Road CT supports this bill as it would provide necessary information as to how health insurance coverage could be increased to include undocumented individuals in our state. Our organizational membership is made up of undocumented, documented and mixed status families across the state, who are limited on a daily basis by how they access health care for themselves and their children, to sometimes critical and life-threatening degrees. One of these members is Alicia, from Mexico, who has lived in this country for 17 years. She has two U.S. Citizen children and she and her husband have been working and paying taxes in this country, contributing state and local taxes that CT residents benefit from in their healthcare programs. However, Alicia is unable to access these programs because of her status. She has a heart murmur that was diagnosed when she was a teenager, and the different doctors she has seen at free and low cost clinics have referred her to specific treatments, that are too high cost to pay out of pocket and she is otherwise unable to access because of her status.

Another member, named Sofia, has a son who has been suffering from severe mental health crises as a result of the deportation proceedings Sofia is in. He has threatened to injure himself several times at school, and has attempted self-mutilation more than once at home. Although Sofia's son is a U.S. Citizen himself, and thus eligible for Husky, she was fearful of applying for Husky for him as she had heard so many stories of information being shared between health clinics/Access Health and Immigration, and so was paying exorbitant fees for mental health services, and many times going without.

I grew up poor, on food stamps, the free lunch program, Husky healthcare, and church donations, but my mother never once had to choose whether to take care of my health or not, based on her status. I hope that you will make the right decision so that other parents do not have to make that unfathomable decision.

The state of Connecticut needs to figure out how to solve this problem that affects us all one way or another. Providing a humane health care system for ALL is long overdue and establishing the task force to study how the lack of coverage affects immigrant families is the first step to providing the care people need.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Mary Elizabeth Smith
Development and Programs Organizer / [Make the Road CT](#)