



Planned Parenthood of Southern New England

**Testimony of Gretchen Raffa, MSW
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In support of raised House Bill 5251 An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Health Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in This State

February 25, 2020

Senator Lesser, Representative Scanlon and honorable members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee my name is Katherine Villeda, Community Organizer at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying in support of raised House Bill 5251 *An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Health Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in This State*. Planned Parenthood of Southern New England serves over 68,000 patients yearly for reproductive and sexual health services in 16 health centers across the state. At Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, we believe everyone in Connecticut deserves access to quality health care as a basic human right regardless of income, insurance, or immigration status.

With 120,000 estimated undocumented immigrants residing in our state, and approximately 52 percent being uninsured, this is a public health concern. HB 5251 seeks to better understand the necessary steps needed to promote and increase health care coverage for undocumented immigrants. Access to preventive health care will lead to better health outcomes for people, communities, and our overall state. Preventive health care coverage not only keeps people healthier, contributes to public health outcomes we all want, but it saves public and personal dollars at the same time.

We urge the committee to ensure that this task force not only study health insurance coverage for undocumented immigrants, but to also study other immigrant populations that are also vulnerable to high uninsured rates because of their immigration status. For instance, green card holders are barred from HUSKY if they have lived here for less than five years, as well as certain visa holders. As the daughter of formerly undocumented parents this is also a personal issue to me as access to health care has always been difficult for my parents.

People who are denied health coverage because of their immigration status depend on health care providers like Planned Parenthood who will provide them affordable, basic primary and preventive health care. Yet threats to accessing reproductive health care at community health centers and Planned Parenthood because of policies like the Title X gag rule make it more difficult for immigrants to access health care. Undocumented immigrants in our state pay roughly 145 million dollars into state and local taxes every year. Undocumented taxpayers are funding state health care programs our residents use, but due to their status are unable to access any health programs. They deserve an equal and fair opportunity to access the very safety net programs they help fund.

The taskforce should also study and analyze the cost of expanding HUSKY A, B, C, and D coverage for all immigrants regardless of status and time of residency. In ensuring that this task force can recommend equitable and necessary legislative proposals to the Connecticut General Assembly, the voices of the people directly impacted need to be at the forefront of this task force and therefore should include representatives of immigrant communities, such as CT Students for a Dream, Make the Road CT, and CT Immigrant Rights Alliance, and health care advocates, such as Universal Health Care Foundation, Health Equity Solutions, and Planned Parenthood.

Planned Parenthood of Southern New England will continue to fight for policies that protect the rights of all people to ensure our patients and communities have what they need to live healthy and self-determined lives. No one's health should be compromised because of their immigration status. We strongly support raising HB 5251 and hope the committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote favorably to ensure that all people will have access to health care, a fundamental human right that should be guaranteed to all people in our state. Thank you for your time and consideration.