



Testimony SUPPORTING HB5251: An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Health Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in this State

To Senator Lesser, Representative Scanlon, and members of the CGA Insurance and Real Estate Committee:

My name is Alok Bhatt. I live in New Haven, CT. I serve as Community Defense Coordinator for the Connecticut Immigrant Rights Alliance (CIRA), a statewide coalition working to advance justice for immigrants and people of color in our state.

On behalf of CIRA, I write in strong support of HB5251: An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Health Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in this State. Although we emphasize the need to open public health coverage systems to all citizens and noncitizens alike as a basic human right, we believe HB5251 may produce data and insights into critical healthcare coverage gaps in an already underserved population.

While CIRA supports HB5251, we feel the task force contemplated in this proposal has too narrow a focus. We recommend that this task force examine individual, family, and public health issues related to health access disparities among all noncitizens in Connecticut. No one in our state, regardless of immigration status, should face barriers to healthcare. Undocumented folks presently cannot purchase health coverage on AccessHealthCT, lack access to alternative channels of public and private health coverage, and, under the current federal administration, face continuing threats to their healthcare options and well-being. Furthermore, the state's public healthcare market imposes arbitrary residency requirements for green card holders and other noncitizens. The State of Connecticut must explore means to expand health coverage to all residents to support greater population health, not engage in discrimination that deepens health disparities.

CIRA also has strong recommendations regarding the composition of the task force created under HB5251. We feel community members, public health advocates, and health providers must have a place any task force that examines health access in immigrant communities.

We appreciate your consideration of this critical issue to break down health access barriers for noncitizens, and improving the health of all Connecticut residents.

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The Connecticut Immigrant Rights Alliance (CIRA) is a statewide coalition of immigrant, faith, labor, youth, community, and ally organizations assembled to advance the rights of immigrants and people of color in Connecticut.