

Testimony in Support of House Bill 5249, House Bill 5253, and Senate Bill 369
March 9, 2020
Claudena Pruitt, Manchester CT

Senator Lesser, Representative Scanlon, Senator Kelly, Representative Pavalock-D'Amato, and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee,

My name is Claudena Pruitt and I am a registered voter in Manchester, CT. I am here today in my role as a future dental provider and as a family member to testify in **support of House Bill 5249, House Bill 5253, and Senate Bill 369.**

It is no secret that finding and obtaining coverage, both dental and medical is as difficult as going to the DMV to register for a new license, and it shouldn't be that way. I am a dental hygiene student and I come into contact with countless patients per semester that tell me how much they wish they could afford dental insurance in order to maintain oral health or achieve it for the first time. I have recommend further care and continued treatment for many patients who simply will not seek care for serious medical and dental issues due to lack of coverage based on age, and confusion when trying to apply.

I am a young female who recently underwent open-heart surgery. Not many people understand the link between bacteria in the oral cavity and the heart, but my doctors made it clear to me that I cannot afford to go without dental insurance because the slightest infection in my mouth would travel through the bloodstream directly to my heart and cause an infection in my heart leading to a potential fatality. Without dental insurance and medical insurance, where would I be today? Without dental and medical insurance, a simple cavity that goes untreated for so many young adults, could be causing underlying conditions or worsening medical conditions without anyone knowing.

I am here to speak about this issue not because I need dental insurance for myself, I am here because due to my medical condition and my close call with a life-threatening bacterium. **I am urging you to pass the bill to keep dental insurance until age 26 for my siblings.** My heart condition is hereditary, and I am terrified knowing that although they are not diagnosed with the same heart condition as me, that they are neglecting treatment due to costs they can't afford while still unemployed and in school.

I urge you to extend dental coverage on family plans to young people up to age 26. College students and recent graduates should be focused on creating their footprint on the world as they find their passion and create avenues for change, instead of wondering how to afford or obtain dental insurance without a source of income. Thank you for your time and for supporting young people in Connecticut.

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