

TESTIMONY to the Human Services Committee  
March 11, 2021

**Re: SB-956, AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS**

Ellen Andrews, PhD, Executive Director

**Thank you for this opportunity to offer our support for this important legislation** to offer health coverage to people regardless of immigration status. For twenty-one years, the CT Health Policy Project has worked to expand access to high quality, affordable healthcare for every state resident. We are a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates through detailed analysis of policy options to improve the health of our state.

Many uninsured workers in Connecticut labor in essential jobs preparing our food, caring for children and the elderly. Many of these workers are recent immigrants to our nation, providing critical care and services that keep us all healthy and safe. The COVID pandemic has highlighted how much our health is connected to our neighbors' health. My sister and her family live in Toronto. During this pandemic, and SARS before that, she doesn't have to worry that the people caring for her children or the last person to touch an elevator button couldn't see a doctor when they were unwell. **Coverage for everyone**, regardless of immigration status, is a critical investment in Connecticut's health.

Unfortunately, too many Connecticut residents in need don't qualify for HUSKY or coverage on Connecticut's Access Health CT exchange, including undocumented and new immigrants. However, undocumented immigrants support these programs with their taxes. **The cost of private health insurance in Connecticut is not realistic** for families living paycheck-to-paycheck. Uninsured immigrants are usually charged full price for the care they need, far higher than the prices for care provided to those of us with coverage. When they need healthcare, as we all do, they are likely to delay getting care because they can't afford it. When they do finally access treatment, they often go to an emergency room, which is a very expensive, and crowded site for care. The resulting bills can wipe out a family's savings and still not cover the full costs of care. In FY 2019, [Connecticut hospitals provided \\$806 million in uncompensated care](#), up 5.3% from the year before. **Those extra costs are eventually paid by all of us in higher taxes and higher premiums.**