

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut:

My name is Ashley Antao, I am from Hamden, Connecticut and I am a member of the Semilla Collective.

I stand in support of S.B. No. 956: "AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS," with clear language that extends eligibility to all HUSKY programs to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

I have lived in Connecticut for many years without health insurance. I have not been to a doctor in over three years, even for a physical or check-up. My wife pressures me to go in and get checked out, but I know that we cannot afford the bills. If I need medication, I can only buy what's available over the counter, and I don't know if I'm taking the right medication for my symptoms.

Even though I never choose to see a doctor, I have had to go to the emergency room. I work at a gas station, and I was stabbed there in August 2019. When the ambulance arrived, I told them I could not afford to go to the hospital, but when they saw that I was bleeding, they forcibly took me in. The hospital asked if I had insurance, and I told them I did not. They sent someone to see me from social services, but I still got a huge bill for x-rays and blood work. I have received some help from social services to pay for it, but they do not cover the ambulance costs. I'm paying for the ambulance in installments, several dollars every month. The experience of being attacked was traumatizing, and I am seeing someone for my mental health. While that is paid for, it's incredibly unjust that I can't access care for my physical health.

My wife is also not insured, she has only been able to get medical care when she's pregnant. We've tried to find clinics that will see undocumented people like us, but no one will help. People are also scared to go to the clinics because they worry about having to disclose their status. Sometimes it's not safe. It is incredibly difficult to live in this country when you are undocumented and do not have health insurance.

Us immigrants are always excluded from many things, not just health insurance. We are most affected by the pandemic but we are excluded from these programs. We are humans, we need access to healthcare. I urge the committee and CT lawmakers to support S.B.956 this session to expand high-quality, dependable, and affordable health care by expanding access to HUSKY medicaid for all members of the undocumented community.

Thank you for your time,  
Ashley Antao, Semilla Collective