

Testimony in Support of SB 956 AN ACT CONCERNING PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS

Public Health Committee

Kenneth Barela

March 10, 2021

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, and Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Kenneth Barela and I live in Glastonbury, Connecticut. I am writing to provide testimony in support of SB 956, “An Act Concerning 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 serve as Chief Executive Officer of the Hispanic Health Council, and I submit my testimony on behalf of this statewide community-based organization. The Hispanic Health Council’s mission is to improve the health and social well-being of Latinos and other diverse communities. Senate Bill 956 is of major relevance to the health and well-being of the communities that we serve.

SB 956 addresses a major gap in healthcare coverage that impacts thousands of Connecticut residents. There are thousands of immigrants in Connecticut without access to healthcare, due to lack of insurance coverage. These community members make strong contributions to Connecticut’s economy, as they pay approximately \$145 million dollars in state and local taxes annually. They also impact the well-being of the state’s population, as they often fill frontline service and agricultural positions. Their critically important contribution has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, as they have continued to do crucial work that has at times put them at risk, so that others would be able to shelter at home.

Healthcare is a human right that should not be denied due to immigration status. In addition, failure to provide coverage to comprehensive primary care often leads to more expensive care provided in Emergency Departments when health conditions have become more complex and require more intensive treatment.

The Hispanic Health Council witnesses on a regular basis the desperation of immigrant residents who face multiple barriers to health and well-being. Lack of healthcare coverage is one of those barriers. Extension of healthcare coverage to this population would go a long way towards helping us to achieve our mission as we serve this very disenfranchised population.

For moral and economic reasons, it is essential SB 956 be passed.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony regarding “An Act Concerning Providing Medical Assistance to Certain Individuals Regardless of Immigration Status.”

Sincerely,

Kenneth Barela, MBA
Chief Executive Officer
Hispanic Health Council