

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Anthony Barroso, I am a student, parent, and resident from New Haven CT. I am also a recipient of DACA and a member of CT Students for a Dream and 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 modification to the language so that it clearly extends eligibility to all HUSKY programs to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

I was born in Ecuador and came to the United States when I was seven years old. I have lived in New Haven for most of my life and experienced the many barriers of being undocumented until I received my work authorization through DACA, an organizing win from the immigrant community, when I was 21. Being undocumented has impacted many aspects of my life. For example, when I was in high school I did not think going to college was a possibility because I knew I wasn't eligible for any financial support from the government and my single mother did not have the means to financially support me with tuition. I also avoided after school activities that could cause injuries such as sports out of fear of getting hurt and putting my family in a difficult financial situation by having to pay out of pocket for medical costs. Overall, being undocumented in the U.S. means living in constant fear of getting sick, encountering police, or worse being separated from your loved ones. A lack of status also limits one's ability to provide for yourself and your family. I know this all too well, I had my son when I was 18 and I started working multiple jobs to keep up with the costs of providing for my family and paying for living expenses. At one point, I was working three jobs with some days working 19 hours straight. One night after leaving my last job at around midnight, I fell asleep behind the wheel of my car and barely missed a gas pump as I crashed into a jersey barrier located in the parking lot of a gas station close to my apartment. I woke up disoriented and in pain, my first thought was not if I was okay but that I needed to reach out to a friend to pick me up to avoid the police and consequently ICE. My friend insisted I go to the emergency room where I had x-rays and other diagnostic evaluations. I was in the facility for less than 4 hours and fortunately, determined to be slightly bruised but okay. My car was totaled and a couple of weeks later I received a bill from Yale for a total \$8,000, I panicked. I knew there was no way I could afford that with an infant son, while working bare-minimum wage jobs.

My story is not unique, immigrants all across the U.S. face unfair barriers to health care that they need. Lack of coverage, no language access, fear about immigration status and discrimination in doctor's offices and other aspects of the health system all make it more difficult for immigrants to get preventive and long-term health care. Ensuring that all immigrants can access Medicaid will take away one of the many barriers to care for immigrants, an important step toward health justice in our state. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the inequities in our society, many people have lost their jobs and undocumented people are excluded from all forms of safety nets including unemployment, stimulus checks, and various other services. This has impacted people's ability to afford basic necessities such as housing, nourishment, and safety. Throughout the pandemic I've organized and been in community with many undocumented families throughout the state and I've listened to countless of stories of people who develop chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, or become disabled due to untreated injuries or cannot afford life saving medicine. I know our people are resilient and will find ways to stand in solidarity with one another but we shouldn't have to suffer like this. Access to affordable healthcare is a human right and should not be negotiable. We will continue to stand together until we win access to affordable care for all.

In conclusion, I support S.B. No 956, with clear language to extend current HUSKY eligibility rules to ALL CT residents, regardless of immigration status, and I ask the committee to support this legislation.

Thank you for your time,

Anthony R. Barroso, CT Students for a DREAM & Semilla Collective