

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

My name is Abigail Bellos and I am a student intern with Planned Parenthood's Generation Action program. I am also a senior at the Sports and Medical Sciences Academy in Hartford, Connecticut.

I stand in support of S.B. No. 956: an act providing medical assistance and support from all Husky programs, to all who reside in Connecticut, regardless of immigration status.

As a teenager growing up in the suburbs of Essex, CT, I was extremely sheltered from the harsh realities of the world around me. I never had to worry about what would happen if anyone in my family got seriously injured or sick, and I did not recognize that this health care security was not available to all CT residents, that is, until I started school at SMSA in Hartford. Going to a magnet school in the city opened my eyes to the cruel treatment that immigrants are exposed to. In this new community, I met someone whose story I would like to share. This community member describes the inhumanity their family was treated with after giving birth. This family was undocumented, coming to America to escape the brutality and violence plaguing their country, they just wanted a better life for their children. They came to America pregnant and undocumented. Upon giving birth to their child in the hospital, which should be the safest place to receive treatment, they were greeted with disdain. Shortly after giving birth, the hospital staff realized the family lacked insurance and documentation. Mom and baby were sent to a holding cell in a CT jail to be deported back to their country. A member of their family, also undocumented, went to retrieve the baby in hope of providing it a better life in America, and in this process, all three of them, including the baby, were sent back to their home country. As a young woman who has been sheltered and secure my whole life, I was appalled at the cruelty this

family was treated with. Why is my health more important than that of undocumented families? Healthcare should not be a right only for the privileged, it is a human right, and I for one am no more human than that family or any other undocumented families in America. So why is it that I get to feel more secure in my health and wellbeing? Being born in America is not a choice, so why are we punishing those who seek the same freedoms we reap everyday?

After hearing this story, and others like it, I urge the committee to support S.B No.956 to extend Husky eligibility rules to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

Thank you for your time,

Abigail Bellos