

S.B. No.956: “AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS”

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

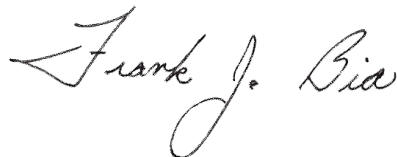
My name is Frank J Bia MD MPH and I am a Professor Emeritus of Internal Medicine [Infectious Diseases] at Yale University and a resident of Guilford. I stand in support of S.B. No. 956: “AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS,” but with modifications that would ensure that this legislation extends HUSKY eligibility to *all* low-income residents, regardless of immigration status.

I was born in The Bronx, NYC in 1945, a grandson of four immigrant parents from southern Italy. My career has encompassed considerable work both in the developing world and here in New Haven. Specifically, my recent 4 years at the Fair Haven Community Health Clinic has brought me into close contact with our own immigrant communities and their health care needs. My volunteer work with Yale’s free clinics for the underserved has underscored the needs of our immigrant community in my professional life. My specialty in both infectious diseases and tropical medicine has taken my expertise to many parts of the developing world. However, the plight of our own immigrant communities is often no better than those living in that world, and at times worse.

My patients here in New Haven who are without health insurance coverage often only receive sporadic care for their acute emergencies but not for their chronic health needs. Most importantly appropriate medications are very often beyond financial reach. Access to health care is the first step towards consistent follow up in primary care. Most importantly the expansion of Husky to cover patients regardless of immigrant status provides the necessary bridge to an unbroken supply of medications to address issues such as hypertension and diabetes in addition to all the necessary health maintenance.

As a provider, this would obviate the need for me to commit time that should go to patients but instead must be spent on closing the social and financial gaps that prevent good medical care. My own experiences at free clinics and a federally qualified health have highlighted these problems on many occasions. Often this pathway to good health care is diverted such that patients wind up in the emergency room, because these gaps only expand further until the only answer is emergent care as opposed to closely attuned primary care,

As it is currently written, SB 956 appears to leave out some groups of undocumented immigrants. It is critical that we emphasize that this legislation should cover *all* members of the undocumented community. I believe it is essential that they be included in this legislation. I urge the committee to modify the language of SB 956 to extend current HUSKY eligibility rules to *all* CT residents, regardless of immigration status.



Sincerely,

Frank J Bia MD, MPH
Professor Emeritus Internal Medicine [Infectious Diseases}
Yale School of Medicine
Clinical Professor of Medicine
Netter School of Medicine
Quinnipiac University

