

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

My name is Catherine Bradley, and I am a resident of Ridgefield. 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 Connecticut residents regardless of immigration status.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, I moved back to Connecticut to be with my family and got a job in a grocery store. Like many hourly wage jobs, this job does not come with health insurance. Because I am a U.S. citizen, I was able to go on the Access Health CT marketplace and choose from a variety of exchange plans or enroll in HUSKY Part D. But for many undocumented immigrants who are working jobs similar to mine, this is not an option. Particularly during a pandemic when hourly wage workers are regularly interacting with the public and are therefore more likely to contract Covid-19, it is inexcusable to exclude thousands of people from accessing medical care because of their immigration status.

In January, I was exposed to Covid-19 at work. I quarantined without pay for 10 days and took two Covid tests for my safety and the safety of my family. The tests are fully covered by my insurance, but according to my latest benefits statement, they would have cost a total of \$345 without insurance. I also recently had to see a doctor for a separate medical issue, and he prescribed me two medications. Without insurance, the visit and medications would have cost over \$500. So, within the first three months of 2021, I have incurred health expenses that would cost me \$845 if I were uninsured. Many undocumented immigrants cannot afford a sudden \$845 expenditure, and as a result do not seek necessary medical care until the situation becomes truly dire. Healthcare should not be available to a select few; both preventive and emergency care should be accessible to every person in our state.

I have recently enrolled in graduate school to pursue my Master’s in Social Work. In my Welfare Policy class, we have talked about how lack of access to benefits such as healthcare not only causes physical health problems, but also increases risk for mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. I want to live in a state where everyone’s physical and mental well-being is prioritized, for the good of my future clients, my current co-workers, and the health of Connecticut overall.

I support S.B. No 956 with clear language to extend current HUSKY eligibility rules to all Connecticut residents regardless of immigration status, and I ask the committee to support this legislation as well. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Catherine Bradley