

Hector Castro
Member of Unidad Latina en Acción
Resident of West Haven

In support of SB 956 (with modifications)

Honorable Members of the Human Services Committee:

I am a long time resident of West Haven, a taxpayer, and an immigrant who puts food on the table for Connecticut residents. I want to share my story and ask for you to support SB 956. I ask you to make healthcare a human right for everyone, regardless of immigrant status.

On February 28, 2018, I suffered an accident at my workplace, a New Haven food packing plant where I processed meats, fruits, and vegetables. At 7:00 am, I fell from the forklift onto my back. I hit my neck, injuring my spinal column, and I damaged my left knee. The company refused to call an ambulance. Instead, the company forced me to wait until 8:00 am when the clinic opened – the clinic where the business sends workers when they have accidents.

In the end, I went to Yale Hospital, where I was hospitalized for four days. When I left, they charged me \$30,000. Obviously I could not pay because I was left without a job or anything else. I could not even do light work. The lawyer told me that if I could no longer work, I should go back to my country and have my family take care of me. I did not think that response was correct, because I served this country, I paid taxes, and I put food on the table for the residents of this state. Now I am truly living off whatever little job I can get, every once-in-a-while. I have a permanent, partial disability in my spinal cord, but I cannot receive any government assistance or health insurance because of my immigrant status.

I paid for medical treatment for three years. I went to a lawyer to help me get compensation for the medications, since I was on medication for two years. The lawyer pressured me to settle the case. I received \$60,000 for my knee surgery and for a hernia that I have as a result of improper movement and abdominal stress from not being able to walk. In those three years, all I received was \$60,000, which was not enough to cover pre-operation, operation, and post-operation costs. I also had another negative effect from the fall, which was an imbalance in my ear.

I believe that health care should be public, because it is a human right for every human being. Other countries have good healthcare systems that I greatly admire. It is worse here in this country, where medicine and healthcare are a business, where everyone wants to profit off the sickness of poor people. Thousands and thousands of immigrants sacrifice everything here, and we do not even have basic health care.

Thank you.