

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

My name is Yenimar Cortes and I am a resident from New Haven. I am one of the many undocumented people in the state, and in this country that have gone through life without healthcare. I am also currently the New Haven organizer for Ct Students for a Dream a youth led statewide network fighting for the rights of undocuemented youth and their families.

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 CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

Growing up without healthcare was terrible. My mom would always have to estimate if she had enough money to pay for simple medical appointments like a physical for my sisters and I. My parents had to always ignore any pain they had because going to the doctors was too expensive. They would instead seek home remedies and try to ease or numb the pain. One day when I was 12 years old my family took a trip to the park and unfortunately my mom fell hitting a sharp rock and hurting and cutting open her leg very deeply. When my sisters and I saw her leg and all the blood we panicked and suggested going to the hospital to get it stitched up because it was a very deep cut but my mom shook her head and said that she can treat it at home and that it didn't hurt that much. She didn't say it but my sisters and I knew it was because she was afraid of the cost. So we went home and for the next couple of weeks we watched my mom be in pain, not able to get out of bed and remember all of us being so afraid of her leg getting infected. This moment always reminds me of what it means to be undocuemented and not have healthcare, it means living in constant fear, and a lot of pain. Over the years I have watched many more family members, and community members suffer through pain and not go to the doctors in years because of the cost. I have also witnessed and suffered through the death of loved community members because they couldn't seek preventative healthcare.

And maybe to you all this bill might just be another bill that you have to hear or a controversial one that you have to sell but to me and to the undocuemented community it means less pain, trauma, and suffering and a little of our humanity given back. And that's something I want you all to remember.

I know money is always used as an excuse to continue killing, and stealing our Black and Brown, and Undocuemented community's humanity but I am sure y'all are aware that early treatment effectively reduces the amount an individual will pay for healthcare in the long term by preventing health issues from developing further. And also that In 2014, Connecticut immigrants contributed an estimated 1.8 billion dollars in state and local taxes, and 3.3 billion in federal taxes<sup>1</sup>. Undocumented immigrants alone pay roughly 145 million dollars into state and local taxes every year<sup>2</sup>, taxes that are then appropriated to fund Connecticut's HUSKY program. Yet, despite their contributions, many immigrant communities cannot access health coverage due to HUSKY's limiting eligibility rules for immigrants. Money shouldn't be used as an excuse and doing that is violent and it is actively pulling the trigger killing our communities. Healthcare shouldn't be denied to anyone.

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, Yenimar Cortes

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<sup>1</sup> “The Contributions of New Americans in Connecticut.” New American Economy Research Fund, n.d. <https://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/the-contributions-of-new-americans-in-connecticut/>

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