

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

My name is Juan Fonseca Tapia; I am an EMT and a community organizer from Danbury.

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.

I will not try to make a case for the committee members to see, acknowledge, honor, and respect the humanity of Undocumented Immigrants because I hope that you already do this as public officials serving in this committee.

I worked as a Medical assistant in Danbury in March last year. While I worked as a medical assistant, I witnessed the pain, trauma, and fear undocumented immigrants experienced when they walked into the exam room. Often, patients were more scared about their ability to afford the care they were seeking than the illnesses that got them to go to the urgent care in the first place. While I worked at this urgent care, I witnessed a broken system rooted in racism and designed to exploit and profit off of the trauma and lack of access to healthcare that undocumented immigrants experience.

90% of the patients I saw in this facility did not have a primary care physician because of their ability to access healthcare coverage. Each patient paid around \$125 for being seen by a medical provider. Some physicians automatically ordered a pregnancy test for all women. This pregnancy test cost \$35, while this test can be bought at a pharmacy for about \$5. Patients paid \$15 for a single Tylenol or ibuprofen, while pharmacies sell 225 capsules bottles for \$14.99, and the list goes on. Most times, patients left the medical facility with empty pockets or bills for over \$200.

For years lawmakers and politicians have used the monetary cost of services like healthcare to deny access to health care and other social services. Yet, they say that they care about our communities’ well-being.

529k people have been killed by a failed public health infrastructure and a healthcare system that legally discriminates and harms groups that have been historically violated, marginalized, and killed by systems rooted in racism and white supremacy.

Allowing all members of our communities, regardless of their status, to access affordable healthcare is the first step we must take as a state to build healthy communities and generational health for the generations that will come after us.

Many people continue to hold on to the idea of going back to normal, yet their privilege does not allow them to see that there was never a “normal.” Denying affordable healthcare access to thousands of people will never allow us to build the safe and robust public health infrastructures that we need in the state. Strong public health infrastructures designated to do prevention instead of treatment will save our municipalities money and allow us to be prepared to protect our communities and save lives if we find ourselves facing another public health crisis like the covid19 pandemic.

I am asking you to 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,
Juan Fonseca Tapia