

Members of the Human Services Committee,

I write to you in support of legislation being considered by the Human Services Committee S.B. No. 956 An act providing medical assistance to certain individuals regardless of immigration status.

I support this legislation on moral, financial, and medical grounds. As a future family physician and current medical student, the Hippocratic Oath charges me to care for all patients, regardless of immigration status. The current prohibition of undocumented immigrants from participating in HUSKY is in direct discordance with these values. This system causes moral injury to providers who are forced to discharge these patient's from the emergency or urgent care setting with the knowledge that they will receive no follow-up care. Immigrant communities rely on under-resourced clinics and emergency care through hospitals. This discontinuous model of care results in patients' illnesses go untreated, causing catastrophic complications and, it is important to note, requiring expensive hospitalization. From a financial perspective, uncompensated care (i.e. care provided by hospitals to patients who are uninsured and cannot pay) collectively costs \$35 billion in annual costs to the collective medical system.¹ A Georgetown University Study estimated the total two year cost of the proposed HUSKY expansion at \$25.3 million. Much of this is passed on to taxpayers. This discrepancy in quality of care provided is further exacerbated during pregnancy and early childhood, when the standard of care involves primary care visits as frequent as every week.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Connecticut has used Emergency Medicaid funds to cover COVID-19 testing and treatment for residents who didn't qualify for Medicaid based on immigration status. This was a wise decision, both to prevent illness and treat it early. It almost surely saved lives. Preventing disease and treating it early is the right approach to community health, from both a fiscal and moral perspective. I urge you to empower primary care physicians by supporting the legislation that would remove immigration status from HUSKY eligibility rules and would finally allow our most vulnerable community members, namely pregnant women and children, to access quality medical care. I thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

Garrett J. Fontaine

References:

1. Uninsurance I of M (US) C on the C of. *Spending on Health Care for Uninsured Americans: How Much, and Who Pays?* National Academies Press (US); 2003. Accessed March 10, 2021. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK221653>