

**Testimony in SUPPORT of Proposed S.B. No.956: “AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS”  
and H.B. No. 6334: “AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO LOW\_INCOME RESIDENT REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS”**

**Public Hearing: March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

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

My name is Dr. Claire Gibson, MD. I am a psychiatrist-in-training and I work at Yale New Haven Hospital, the West Haven VA, and the Connecticut Mental Health Center. I stand in support of SB956: AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS, but with modifications. SB956 as currently written leaves out many in our immigrant community, including low-income parents and low-income elderly and disabled folks. I support modifying SB956 to include ALL CT individuals that qualify under the full current HUSKY eligibility.

I also stand in support of H.B. No. 6334: AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO LOW\_INCOME RESIDENT REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. This bill would provide medical assistance to low-income residents regardless of immigration status.

I have cared for undocumented patients since medical school and have witnessed the harmful effects of restricted access to health care. During my first year at Yale, I took care of a thirty-something year-old gentleman who was undocumented and had lived and worked in Connecticut for many years. He was hospitalized because he had stones in his gallbladder that were causing a serious infection. The cure for this condition is straightforward – removing the gallbladder.

Gallbladder removal is a quick and easy procedure; however, if the gallbladder is already inflamed or infected, the surgery often has to be delayed. When I met this man, he was very ill. Because of his condition, the hospital surgeons refused to do the surgery. It would be too risky. He would have to leave the hospital and wait until his infection improved.

When I explained this to my patient, he was disappointed. He told me that his gallstones had actually been diagnosed many months earlier. “Why didn’t you have your gallbladder removed back then?” I asked. He explained that he could not find a surgeon willing to operate on him. They told him he was undocumented and could not pay – they refused to treat him. He was now worried that the same thing would happen. He would not be able to find someone in the community willing to operate on him. He could get sick again, leading to more hospital bills, missed work, and threatening his life.

These situations are incredibly demoralizing for doctors in training. We have been taught how to heal people and how to keep people from dying unnecessarily. But this man was in the prime of his life, and I couldn’t help him. Of course, my devastation paled in comparison to his. If he had insurance, I could have easily arranged the procedure and he would have recovered.

Physicians cannot tolerate watching our patients grow ill needlessly, and our patients cannot live under these conditions. I have heard many progressives decry, “Healthcare is a human right!” If you believe this but don’t support S.B. No 956 with modifications or H.B. No. 6334, I want you to ask yourself, who do you see as human? It is time to transform this prejudiced system and expand healthcare access to all Connecticutians, regardless of their immigration status.

Thank you for your time,  
Claire Gibson, MD