



**Testimony for Public Hearing
Human Services Committee
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**Liz Gustafson, MSW
State Director
NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut
1 Main Street, Suite T4
Hartford, CT 06106**

**S.B. No. 956 AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS
REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS**

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Human Service Committee, My name is Liz Gustafson, and I am the State Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut. I testify in strong support of S.B. 956 An Act Providing Medical Assistance to Certain Individuals Regardless of Immgration Status, with clear language that extends eligibility to all HUSKY programs to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

The current healthcare system is one built upon decades of burdensome & discriminatory policies, and it is clear that barriers continue to put access to essential and quality healthcare out of reach for many Connecticut residents. Healthcare is a human right, and everyone deserves access to high-quality, affordable healthcare regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, zip code, immigration or economic status. As a State that prides itself on leading the fight for reproductive freedom, we have been provided with an opportunity to act on behalf of health equity & reproductive healthcare access for all. We have the power to help individuals and families, we have the power to make a difference.

As mentioned, our current system has been built on decades of racism and white supremacy, causing millions of people who can get pregnant to face structural barriers when trying to obtain such coverage and care, based solely on their immigration status. Research by the Guttmacher Institute found that among those who are of reproductive age, the percentage of noncitizens who are uninsured is nearly three times higher than their naturalized and U.S. born counterparts¹, underscoring the importance of ensuring no one is left behind when implementing policies that expand access to healthcare. Barriers & exclusion from coverage harms everyone's health, and our state has the responsibility to ensure every resident regardless of immigration status can exercise their basic right to protect their health, their families' health, and their economic well-being.

¹<https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2020/01/us-insurance-coverage-2018-affordable-care-act-still-under-threat-and-still-vital>

Immigrant communities face a number of barriers which includes; a lack of reliable transportation, language barriers and restrictive immigration policies- expanding access to quality, affordable healthcare coverage is just one, but a crucial step towards addressing reproductive injustice & health inequity. Early treatment effectively reduces the amount an individual will pay for healthcare in the long term by preventing health issues from developing further, and as taxpayers funding state health programs, immigrant communities deserve an equal and fair opportunity to access the very programs they fund. Furthermore, insurance coverage is even more critical as we continue to navigate the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as people are now seeking care in an overburdened healthcare system in unprecedented circumstances.

Storytelling is a powerful tool for change, and courageous testimony provided in today's hearing in support of S.B. 956 has only affirmed that our state's immigrant residents & their families cannot wait. We all deserve access to essential healthcare, and deserve dignity and respect when doing so. Advancing the sexual and reproductive health and well-being of families and communities requires action from policymakers, and S.B. 956 is a clear step we can take to support residents who continue to be shut out of the healthcare system. I urge the committee & the legislature to support S.B. No 956, with clear language to extend current HUSKY eligibility rules to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Liz Gustafson, MSW
State Director
NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut