

March 10, 2021

Dear members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly-

My name is Fana Hickinson, and I am a resident of New Haven and a teacher at a New Haven public high school. I am here to join the chorus of united voices insisting that all of our residents, regardless of immigration status, be afforded their basic human rights. And this is a fact: access to affordable health care *is* a human right. As such, it is imperative that we bring to your attention the many residents of Connecticut who need SB No. 956 to be passed, especially during this unprecedented pandemic and global crisis, in order to be able to survive and thrive both now and beyond this moment.

SB No 956, "An Act Providing Medical Assistance to Certain Individuals Regardless of Immigration Status", with essential modifications, will undoubtedly positively impact the lives of individuals in our state. Those who are vital parts of our communities, many of whom have been on the front lines of the COVID 19 pandemic, would have stable health insurance and affordable access to care. While the impact on individual lives is hugely significant, it does not have to be the only incentive for passing this bill. Ensuring that all of our residents have access to Connecticut's HUSKY program, which receives a portion of the 1.8 billion dollars contributed by immigrants and 145 million dollars contributed by undocumented immigrants, only strengthens our communities, our state, and our nation.

Speaking from my experience as a public school teacher in New Haven, it is certainly true that our community is as strong as those most vulnerable within it. The Covid-19 pandemic has proven as much. I think it appropriate to bring our attention to the promises that our state makes to its students and their families. Our State's Board of Education rightly points to the fact that "whole child" models for K-12 education directly connect to the health and safety of students and their families to their academic achievement and to our society's overall success and prosperity. Specifically, our five year comprehensive plan for *Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Connecticut Students* sets a goal to "deliver fully on our promise to our children, state, local, and federal policymakers [by sharing] this common vision and work in concert on behalf of all students." How can we expect our students to meet their potential if they themselves, or if their caretakers, do not have access to their basic human rights? How can we be in service of equity if we do not address the needs of all students? SB No. 456 is an opportunity to act so that our legislation matches our purported values.

Live unafraid is not just a hashtag or a request. It is a call to uphold the rights we claim to believe in and to support our most vulnerable community members, who also happen to be some of the most deserving. Each of us, including undocumented immigrants, has the right to live unafraid of an emergency trip to the hospital, of exorbitant medical bills, and the right to be supported by timely, affordable preventative options for healthcare. I am here today to stand in full support of SB No. 956, including the proposed modifications that extend eligibility to all HUSKY programs to all CT residents. All immigrants are *essential*, just as it is essential that we pass SB No 956 to provide all with the care they need during this public health crisis and into the future.

Thank you for your time,
Fana Hickinson