

Testimony in **SUPPORT** of SB 956
“An Act Providing Medical Assistance to Certain Individuals Regardless of Immigration Status”
March 11, 2021

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and Distinguished Members of the Human Services Committee:

I am a physician in private practice in New Haven, on the clinical faculty of Yale-New Haven Hospital and the Yale School of Medicine, and I reside in Branford. This testimony reflects my own personal opinion and does not reflect the opinion of Yale-New Haven Hospital or the Yale School of Medicine.

I am submitting testimony in support of SB 956 although I have concerns about the language of the current bill. As written, SB 956 appears to leave out low-income parents and children under HUSKY A and low-income people who are elderly and/or disabled under HUSKY C. I support new language for SB 956 that clearly includes these populations, with the goal that all CT residents who qualify for the full range of HUSKY eligibility will be included regardless of immigration status.

I believe that health care is a human right, and that access to health care should be available to everyone who lives in CT, regardless of their immigration status. Unfortunately, that is not the case in 2021.

All people, and especially children, need access to preventive care, like vaccines and health screenings, as well as routine care to prevent minor health problems from becoming major health crises. The adage “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is no truer than in health care.

Unfortunately, earlier legislative efforts in 2019 to expand HUSKY to include undocumented low-income children – our state’s most vulnerable population – failed, perhaps out of concern about the high fiscal note offered by the CGA’s Office of Fiscal Analysis.

However, that older fiscal analysis relies on questionable assumptions, and in response, the Connecticut Health Foundation and Georgetown University’s Kelly Whitener JD, MPH, conducted a new analysis, using other states as models. This September 2020 report identifies more accurately the “key factors that should be considered when estimating the costs for expanding HUSKY to children who are undocumented.” **The report’s take-home message is that the fiscal costs to the state are far lower than previously estimated and would be “approximately \$25.3 million over a two-year period.”**

This report be accessed on the CT Health Foundation’s website:

<https://www.cthealth.org/publication/expanding-husky-coverage-for-children-in-connecticut/#:~:text=Expanding%20Connecticut's%20Medicaid%20and%20Children's,care%20coverage%20for%20all%20children.>

If there is one lesson that I hope we have learned during this pandemic, it is this: as a state, we are only as healthy as our least healthy members. Please ensure that all residents of Connecticut, regardless of their immigration status, have access to the critical health care services they need to keep them healthy. Thank you for this opportunity to comment. I urge you to support SB 956 with the modifications as described above. For any questions, please contact me at: katherine.kennedy@yale.edu

Sincerely yours,

Katherine G. Kennedy MD