

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

My name is Mary LaPorte, I am a resident of the City of Hartford, and a volunteer with Hartford Deportation Defense.

I stand in support of SB956: AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIRATION STATUS, but with modifications. S956 as currently written leaves out many in our immigrant community, it leaves out low-income parents and children under HUSKY A and low-income elderly and disabled folks under HUSKY C. I support modifying SB956 to include ALL CT residents that qualify under the full current HUSKY eligibility.

Previous to the outbreak of COVID 19, I volunteered on a fairly regular basis to accompany undocumented immigrants to deportation check-ins and hearings at the Federal Court House in Hartford. When the pandemic became a clearly established reality, the Trump Administration drew back from the wholesale round up that so many of these individuals faced. But their futures remain precarious. As someone who was present to bear witness, it was hard to accept the reality that these individuals were in such fear that they avoided visiting health care clinics or physicians and refused to seek assistance when the financial challenges they faced were overwhelming and threatening their very right to exist. For some, the only time they came out of the shadows was to go to work if they had employment, attend required hearings, or meet with volunteers from agencies such as Connecticut Undocumented or the CT Deportation Defense Team.

What touched my heart the most were the elderly and the children. The elderly included many who had been here for many years – always in fear of deportation. They worked – often as essential workers – and they paid taxes, but still they were “unseen” members of our community. They faced the greatest physical challenges when Covid struck. Both the children and their families suffered because the parents were fearful of exposure and held back seeking healthcare when needed. They lived in the shadows from day to day. They spoke of their reluctance to seek assistance in any public form because they knew they probably would be denied and the exposure would risk their ability to stay in this country

Knowing that they could obtain health care for themselves, their children, and their elderly through the HUSKY Program removes one of the many

overwhelming challenges and threats that they face. In addition, in this pandemic, health care can save lives and protect all members of our community. We are supposed to live in a loving and caring community and we have a chance to prove this by passing this bill.