

March 11, 2021

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

My name is Laurel LaPorte-Grimes. I am a resident of Manchester and a member of Uniting for a Safe Inclusive Community – Manchester and CT Mutual Aid East of the River. I am writing today in full support of S.B. No. 956: “AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS,” with the addition of language that makes it clear that this bill extends eligibility to all HUSKY programs to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

I write as the wife of an immigrant who did not have health insurance for many years when he and his family first came to this country. I write as the friend of members of our community who are undocumented, who currently do not have health insurance, and who are therefore unable to seek health care until it is the absolute last resort, and then are left worrying and wondering how they are going to be able to pay for this care. I write as a member of community organizations that stand with our undocumented community members and for their human rights.

Health care is a human right. Everyone in CT should have access to healthcare, regardless of their immigration status. Not only is this the moral and ethical approach to take, it is also the equitable and practical approach. Immigrants work and pay taxes and fairness dictates that they should be able to access social services funded by those taxes. Immigrants are disproportionately represented in those populations of essential workers that are helping to keep the rest of us safe during this pandemic, and both equity and practicality dictate that we should take steps to ensure that they have access to healthcare. Additionally, immigrants are parents and many are in mixed status families. It is important for children to have parents who can access healthcare, otherwise they are left being uncared for. Again, not only is it morally and ethically important to ensure that our children are cared for, it is also practical to ensure that parents can remain healthy and continue to care for their children, otherwise their care will fall to tax payers. Any way you look at it, whether from a moral and ethical perspective, or a practical one, it just makes sense to ensure that all CT residents have access to healthcare, regardless of immigration status.

I care deeply about my friends who are undocumented. I know that they do not seek medical care until they have no other alternative, because they do not have healthcare. When they are forced to seek care because the pain is too much to bear, or they are so sick they cannot work, I have made the phone calls to try to find them a free or low cost alternative. And when they wind up with tremendous medical bills, I have helped them write letters to health care providers, asking for them to please reduce the cost because they cannot afford to pay the thousands of dollars they then owe. I know their children and I know they need their parents to be healthy. And I know how extremely lucky my own husband and his family was that they did not have a major medical issue while they did not have health insurance. I remember being shocked and terrified to find out that they did not have insurance, since as poor as my own family was, we could still go to the doctor when we were really sick because we always had health care.

When we have lost our ability to care for one another, we have lost our ability to be human. We have a unique opportunity to exercise our humanity in our response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This bill is an important part of how we do that. I thank you for your time and ask that you please support this legislation with clear language to extend current HUSKY eligibility rules to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

Sincerely,

Laurel LaPorte-Grimes, PhD  
Manchester, CT