

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

My name is Grace Lemire. I am a student at the University of Connecticut in Storrs.

While I do not identify as undocumented myself, I am writing in support of my undocumented peers and community members. I stand in support of SB956: AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS, *but with modifications*. SB956, as currently written, leaves out many in the immigrant community. It leaves out low-income parents, low-income elderly, and disabled folks. I support modifying SB956 to include ALL CT residents that qualify under the full current HUSKY eligibility.

I stand in support of H.B. No. 6334: “AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO LOW\_INCOME RESIDENT REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS.” This bill would provide medical assistance to low-income residents regardless of immigration status.

Again, I do not identify as undocumented or an immigrant myself. However, that does not change the fact that I see how the humanity of immigrants is not prioritized through our current legislation. As a citizen, I have the privilege of having access to health insurance through my mother’s employer. However, it is still expensive. In 2018, I began to have severe stomach pains. I saw several doctors who wrote it off as one specific diagnosis. In 2019, I saw one last doctor. He ordered several tests other doctors would not order, only to find that I had a very large gallstone. I was sent to surgery just a few weeks later to have my entire gallbladder removed. Even with my health insurance at the time, I paid thousands of dollars out of pocket when the bill came in the mail. This bill did not include the money lost when my mother had to take the day off of work to bring me to the hospital, or the money lost when I was having a slow recovery and she had to take more days off of work. This bill did not include the cost of gas to get to the hospital, the special food I was encouraged to eat post-operation, or the follow-up appointments to make sure everything was healing properly. This was my experience *with* health insurance.

When I place myself in the shoes of an immigrant without access to health insurance, I realize that my situation could have been entirely different. I would likely not have been able to attend the several appointments I did before finally getting an answer. I likely would not have been able to afford the surgery, knowing that the cost would be much greater without health insurance, possibly delaying it entirely. Had the gallstone continued to increase in size, it could have ruptured, which can be fatal. *No one, regardless of immigration status, should have to delay their health issues to a point of near death simply because they do not have access to health insurance.* This bill is crucial in providing a sense of humanity and dignity to immigrant communities.

I support S.B. No. 956 with modifications and H.B. No. 6334 as written, and I hope the committee will vote in favor of such.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Grace Lemire