

Dear Senator Marilyn Moore, Representative Catherine F. Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Connecticut General Assembly Human Services Committee:

My name is Daisy Leon-Martinez and I am an OB/GYN physician at Yale-New Haven Hospital. I stand in support of S.B. No. 956: “AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS.” This bill would extend eligibility for all HUSKY programs to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

I moved to Connecticut in 2015 in order to start my training in Obstetrics and Gynecology. As an employee of the largest referral hospital in the state, I care for some of the most high-risk pregnancies. While I strive to provide the same quality of care to all of my patients, the current state legislation prevents me from doing so.

About 30-40% of our general OB/GYN clinic patients are undocumented. Under current legislation, if an undocumented person becomes pregnant, they do not qualify for HUSKY and are prohibited from purchasing private insurance. They must pay for all medical costs out-of-pocket or forgo care altogether. Ultimately, this creates wide disparities in healthcare outcomes, placing some of our most vulnerable communities at a disadvantage.

To provide some insight, I would like to share the story of my patient, whom I will refer to as ‘Jane’. Jane is in her mid-20s. She has three children and was recently pregnant with her fourth. She is an undocumented person with no formal education and limited financial resources. Due to her family’s inability to pay, she delayed seeking prenatal care until her 8<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy. Unbeknown to her, during the course of this pregnancy she developed overt and severe diabetes. Due to her lack of insurance, we were unable to emergently manage her disease in a way that she and her baby deserved. Exactly 3 weeks before her due date, Jane came to our labor floor for evaluation. When we put the fetal monitor on her abdomen, there was no heartbeat. The baby had succumbed to the effects of diabetes. Jane was admitted to the hospital, where she delivered an otherwise perfect stillborn little girl.

I wish I could tell you that Jane’s story ends here. Unfortunately, she suffered another known complication of diabetes, and at the time of delivery, Jane developed a life-threatening hemorrhage. In order to save her life, we performed an emergency hysterectomy. When she regained consciousness, Jane found herself in the ICU, without her baby and without her uterus.

I share this story not to bring sadness, but to encourage action. Jane’s disease is common, it is treatable. Her outcomes were completely and undoubtedly preventable. And while we cannot change the course for her, we can help others like her. By extending HUSKY to all residents, we are sending a clear message to all people of Connecticut that we value their health and wellbeing. We are helping them access critical healthcare, so that they may be a healthier and more productive population.

For this reason and many more, I support S.B. No 956, with clear language to extend current HUSKY eligibility rules to *all* CT residents, regardless of immigration status. I truly appreciate the committee’s time and consideration, and hope the committee with vote favorably.

Sincerely,

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