

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

My name is Shannon Leslie, I am a resident of New Haven, Connecticut. I stand in strong support of S.B. No. 956: "AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS," with clear language that extends eligibility to all HUSKY programs to all Connecticut residents, regardless of immigration status.

I am a graduate student pursuing a PhD in neuroscience at Yale University. I choose this pursuit in order to be a part of developing novel therapeutics for neuropsychiatric illness. I have seen family members suffer from these illnesses and know how sorely needed better care and treatment options are for many families. It is with this hope of improving the health and wellbeing of our communities that I choose my career. However, the discoveries we make in the lab are only useful if they are accessible to patients. Far too often limited access to healthcare, not a lack of treatment options, is the barrier patients face. Preventative health care options and early treatment interventions can dramatically reduce the healthcare burden on individuals and communities; however, those options are only available to those who have access. No one should be denied the medical care they need for any reason and S.B. No. 956 is one step toward ensuring that is true in our state.

My family is lucky enough to have access to health insurance. However, it is only through requirements made by the government that this is even possible and it is the government's responsibility to make sure that is the case for all Connecticut residents. My husband and I both receive our health insurance through our jobs, which is required under law. My husband is a type 1 diabetic who would have faced limited insurance options and high premiums if not for the assurances of the Affordable Care Act. The government has enacted many laws to protect and ensure access to healthcare; however, there are still hundreds of thousands of people in Connecticut that do not have healthcare coverage because of the requirements of our state. If my husband and I did not have access to health insurance it is clear that the consequences would be dangerous and even deadly, as it has been for many individuals with chronic illness and lack of health care access. Connecticut immigrants contributed 1.8 billion dollars in state and local taxes and yet many are kept from accessing health care due to the restrictive eligibility rules of the HUSKY program. This is wrong and this is dangerous. It is the responsibility of our government to ensure that all residents, regardless of immigration status, are able to live healthy lives and a key part of that is access to medical care.

I support S.B. No 956, with clear language to extend current HUSKY eligibility rules to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status. This is an urgent issue and I ask the committee to support this legislation.

Thank you for your time,

Shannon Leslie

Resident of New Haven, CT