

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

My name is Michelle Morales, and I am a student from Wallingford.

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 our immigrant community, it leaves out low-income parents and 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.

I am a student at Southern Connecticut State University. I was born in the U.S. but my parents immigrated from Mexico and have lived in Connecticut for 20 years now. My parents are undocumented and have not had health care coverage for said 20 years. When my dad complains about pain in his ear, he tries to sleep it off. When my mom feels sick, she makes herself herbal tea and hopes that home remedies will help her. In a way, the lack of health care coverage does not allow them to be human. There is no room for error because if they get hurt, they know they'll have to go to the hospital and incur bills we cannot afford. Growing up, I saw my parents lining up and waiting hours for free check ups provided by our church once a year. I heard stories from them about how scared they were about going to the hospital like when my mom was pregnant with me or when my dad had cancer when I was a baby. From an early age, I understood that getting the proper care was difficult for them, but I never truly understood until recently.

Last Sunday, my dad complained to us about an upset stomach. I have known this man my whole life and he has what some would call an "iron stomach," so to hear him complain about something like this meant that it was serious. My mom came up with her home remedies, hoping that it would alleviate the pain but to no avail. Later in the night, we heard him vomiting in the bathroom and a little while later, he came out, cold and pale, clutching his side and wincing with every breath. We thought he could handle it, but his pain became so much that he asked us to take him to the hospital. I drove us to the ER at around one in the morning and waited outside for three hours to hear how he was doing. My mom and I were frightened, not knowing what was going on or if he would be okay, but somehow the most prominent thought for both of us was that we could not call out of work later that morning because we were going to need money for the bill we were about to get from that visit. And that's what we did. We went to work like nothing happened and received the news that my dad had acute cholecystitis, or inflammation of the gallbladder, and needed emergency surgery in the middle of our shifts. Thankfully, he received the surgery and is recovering at home as we speak. I feel relief knowing that he is feeling better but that relief is temporary because what awaits us now is the medical bill. This was something they could not put off like every other illness or pain they put off. There was no choice but to go to the hospital.

We already know that we are going to need to apply to numerous financial aid programs and payment plans to get through this. We live paycheck to paycheck and any cost outside of our budget means we have to scramble to gather any little bit of savings we have because we are in no way prepared for this. As it stands, not only do my parents bear the burden of physical pain, there is also the added mental and emotional strain on them knowing that they do not have insurance. If my parents had coverage, we know there would still be a cost to this procedure but the weight of it would be reduced significantly. If my parents had coverage, they would be able to go in for routine check ups, or call the doctor when they felt sick. If my parents had coverage, they would be able to live life like everyone else, free to make mistakes, with room for error.

I support S.B. No 956 with modifications and H.B. No. 6334 as written and hope the committee will vote favorably.

Thank you for your time,
Michelle Morales.