

Connecticut General Assembly Human Services Committee
Co-chair State Senator Marilyn Moore
Co-chair State Representative Catherine F. Abercrombie

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

My name is Jen, I am a social worker and student from New Haven, Connecticut. I stand in support of S.B. No. 956, "AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS."

I was born in the United States and my husband, an immigrant, joined me in 2020, after several years of navigating the spousal visa process. When I lost my job during the COVID-19 pandemic, I was fortunate to be eligible for Medicaid. Yet some of our most hardworking residents—who happen to be undocumented immigrants—cannot say the same. My husband—an immigrant and U.S. resident of less than five years—is also not eligible for Husky despite us meeting the income requirements. This put a burden upon my family. Although my husband can now buy health insurance because he has the privilege of having a social security number, this process took months.

While we were waiting, I asked the AccessHealth office and Department of Social Services about his eligibility for Emergency Medicaid, should something happen. Every representative I spoke to did not know about such program. Turns out after some research, Emergency Medicaid isn't something that can be pre-approved, instead you basically show up to the hospital during a life-threatening emergency and hope some of that bill might be covered once submitted to a review team at the Department of Social Services. Our situation isn't as extreme as what members of the undocumented community face because ultimately my husband now has a social security number. However, this process was truly eye opening. I know what it feels like to not be able to sleep at night because you're worried someone you love might become sick or get injured. Any number of situations could easily have bankrupted us should my husband needed medical care during that time.

A misconception persists that immigrant rights do not affect the lives of U.S. citizens, when in reality over 50,000 citizens living in Connecticut live with at least one family member who is undocumented. One in twenty children also live in a household with one undocumented family member. I am a 33-year-old grad student paying my way to become a clinical social worker and public servant. I shouldn't have the added anxiety of worrying what happens if my husband gets sick or hurt. Both of us having health insurance means that we can invest in our futures here in Connecticut and focus on our careers and communities. I want everyone in our state to be able to say the same thing.

I support S.B. No 956, with clear language that extends HUSKY to undocumented immigrants and new residents, who otherwise meet eligibility. I urge the committee to vote favorably for this legislation.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Orlando

