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Testimony of Rochelle Palache, District Director, SEIU 32BJ

Human Services Committee

SUPPORT for S.B. 956 (with modifications)

An Act Providing Medical Assistance to Certain Individuals Regardless of Immigration Status.

March 9, 2021

Co-Chair Marilyn Moore, Co-Chair Catherine Abercrombie, and Members of the Human Services Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

My name is Rochelle Palache and I am the Connecticut State Director of SEIU 32BJ. 32BJ represents over 4,500 men and women in the state of Connecticut and 175,000 members up and down the East Coast. Our members form the backbone of the property services industry- building workers, security officers; and office, school, theater, stadium and window cleaners.

We are grateful that this important bill is in front of the committee today. In the time of a global pandemic, all residents of Connecticut need access to healthcare, regardless of their immigration status. Our members have been at the frontline of the pandemic since the very beginning, and will be until the emergency has passed. Building service workers have paid a heavy price during COVID. Many lost their lives or their jobs, and others go to work every day fearful that they would bring the virus home to their families.

Yet, despite being on the frontlines for nearly a year, many of these essential workers do not have access to affordable healthcare. We applaud the efforts of SB 956 to expand access to care, but we feel strongly that all HUSKY programs A-D should be accessible to all, regardless of immigration status. In addition, because some of the programs carry significant costs, we urge you to make these programs free to all who qualify.

We ask that you stand with our state's working families by passing HB 956.