

Comments & Testimony in Support of SB 956 AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS.

**Testimony of Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, MPH
Executive Director of The Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, Inc.
Before the Human Services Committee**

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case, and esteemed members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin and I am testifying on behalf of the Connecticut Oral Health Initiative (COHI). COHI is a nonprofit oral health advocacy organization with the mission of increasing access to quality, affordable oral health services for all Connecticut residents. Thank you for the opportunity to offer **comments on and testimony in support of Senate Bill 956: An Act Providing Medical Assistance To Certain Individuals Regardless Of Immigration Status.**

Opening HUSKY to income-eligible residents regardless of immigration status would make Connecticut a safer and healthier state. In this horrible pandemic we saw that our neighbors health impacts ours. Lack of coverage and the high cost of care is the main reason people forgo health services, including dental care. Regular and routine oral health care improves health outcomes and creates health savings. Dental coverage in Medicaid helps adults obtain and maintain employment, helps kids stay in school, and reduces expensive emergency room visits and uncompensated care costs.¹ Health and dental coverage are essential to accessing care and preventing costly, serious health conditions.

We believe all income-eligible immigrants should be able to enroll in HUSKY. **The current language of SB 956 leaves out children, parents, and care takers (covered by HUSKY A) and elderly persons and people with disabilities (covered by HUSKY C). We urge the Human Services Committee to include those groups in this bill and to pass this crucial legislation out of committee.**

Thank you for your time. We welcome the opportunity to further discuss this matter and offer our assistance. I can be reached at pareesa@ctoralhealth.org or 860-246-2644.

Respectfully,

Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, MPH
Executive Director

¹ Medicaid Adult Dental Benefits. DentaQuest Partnership for Oral Health Advancement. 2020.
<https://www.dentaquestpartnership.org/system/files/Medicaid-Adult-Dental-Benefits.pdf>