

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 956: An Act Providing Medical Assistance to Certain Individuals Regardless of Immigration Status

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee,

My name is Purven Parikh and I am a fourth year medical student. I write **in support** of Senate Bill 956: An Act Providing Medical Assistance to Certain Individuals Regardless of Immigration Status.

4 years ago, at the start of medical school, I took an oath to work in the best interest of all of my future patients, to care for them regardless of race, income, or immigration status. Unfortunately, our state laws do not reflect that same commitment. Although the rate of overall individuals who are uninsured in Connecticut is low, an estimated 52% of all undocumented immigrants in the state are uninsured. They cannot even participate in HUSKY, the state's Medicaid program for low-income residents, or even purchase private health insurance on Access Health CT, the state insurance marketplace that was established under the Affordable Care Act. Instead, these members of our society, who are here to work toward a better life, must rely on under-funded clinics and emergency rooms. It is difficult to pay for health care without insurance, and therefore, many cannot afford care. Through my education, I have seen the consequences when patients' illnesses go untreated, causing catastrophic complications and, it is important to note, requiring expensive hospital-based care that is ultimately supported by the state. These consequences are preventable, but the prescription must be written at the level of state policy.

Connecticut has already begun to recognize the moral responsibility and sensibility of making sure all communities in the state have access to health care. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Connecticut has used Emergency Medicaid funds to cover COVID-19 testing and treatment for residents who didn't qualify for Medicaid based on immigration status. **This decision surely saved lives.** As you know, the morbidity and mortality associated with COVID-19 are devastating, and thus providing access to care for these members of our community was wise. But the wisdom of this decision should not be restricted to COVID-19 alone. Preventing disease and treating it early is the right approach to community health, from both a fiscal and moral perspective.

As a medical student and future healthcare provider, I understand the devastating human consequences of restricting access to health care. I ask that you support legislation that would remove immigration status from HUSKY eligibility rules and would finally allow our most vulnerable community members to access quality medical care.

Sincerely,

Purven Parikh