

Testimony
in support of S.B. #956, "AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN
INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS"

Rev. Josh Pawelek
Glastonbury, CT
March 11, 2021

Representative Abercrombie, Senator Moore, and members of the Human Services Committee: Thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 956, "An Act Providing Medical Assistance to Certain Individuals Regardless of Immigration Status." I am the Rev. Josh Pawelek, minister of the Unitarian Universalist Society: East in Manchester. Our church is among those in the state who identify as Sanctuary Congregations. We are committed to supporting undocumented immigrants in any way we can.

One thing we know is that, like citizens, undocumented people sometimes get sick and require medical attention. Undocumented people sometimes suffer injuries and require medical attention. Undocumented people sometimes develop cancer, or heart disease, or diabetes and require medical attention. Illnesses and injuries that go untreated due to lack of access to health care can worsen, can make it impossible for a person to work, can land people ultimately to the Emergency Room, can result in death. SB 956 takes this reality seriously. It offers a pathway for some undocumented people to access medical care when they need it. The impulse behind it is compassionate. It is loving. It is caring. It is justice-seeking. Having access to quality, affordable health care can make the difference between keeping a job and losing it, between putting food on the table or not, and sometimes between life and death. There's much at stake. That's why SB 956 makes sense to me.

Having said that, I am concerned that SB 956 doesn't go far enough. If I understand correctly, successful passage of this bill would open the state's Medicaid program to undocumented adults who meet the qualifications for HUSKY D, undocumented children who meet the qualifications for HUSKY B, and undocumented pregnant women. This would be wonderful. However, there's no reference in the bill's language to low-income, undocumented parents and children who meet the qualifications for HUSKY A, and no reference to low-income, undocumented elderly and disabled people who meet the qualifications for HUSKY C. Thus, I support modifying SB 956 to include all Connecticut residents who qualify for the full range of HUSKY programs regardless of immigration status.

I recognize the cost of opening HUSKY to undocumented people who qualify would be considerable. However, I am convinced our state can afford this cost and I urge you to take to heart the Recovery for All campaign's revenue proposals. We cannot forget that health care is a human right regardless of immigration status; and there is sufficient wealth in Connecticut to provide this human right to undocumented people.

I support SB 956 with this modification, and hope the committee will make this change and favorably.

Thank you for your time,

Rev. Josh Pawelek