

Dear Senator Marilyn Moore, Representative Catherine F. Abercrombie and distinguished members of the Connecticut General Assembly Human Services Committee:

My name is Carmela Portilla. I am a resident of New Haven. I stand in support of SB956: AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS, but with modifications. The current Senate Bill 956 excludes many in our immigrant community. It leaves out low-income parents and children under HUSKY A and low-income elderly and disabled folks under HUSKY C. I support modifying SB 956 to include ALL Connecticut residents that qualify under the full current HUSKY eligibility.

I have lived and worked in the U.S. since 1996. I have raised two children in this country. My health and ability to work has suffered because I am excluded from health insurance. I have long worked in landscaping, gardening, and painting houses, among other jobs. I worked on my knees in the gardens. My knees started to hurt badly. I was concerned that it was caused by the chemicals that we used in the gardens. Because of lack of money or health insurance, I waited for years before going to a doctor. The pain became so bad that I had to pay out of pocket to see a primary care doctor. It was very expensive. I had to pay for the consultation and all of the exams because of lack of insurance.

The pain in my knees only worsened. I had to stop working and I was always in pain. I could do longer climb up stairs or ladders. After working 25 years in this country and paying taxes, I don't have access to the same services those taxes pay for. I couldn't do the same work. I can only work sometimes cleaning houses or caring for children. I had to move and live with my brother who supported me, who died suddenly last year. He had tested positive for COVID.

If I had health insurance, I would be able to see a specialist to diagnose and treat this health issue. I would not have to pay out of pocket for any clinic visit or exams. As an immigrant in this country, life is very hard. We are human beings. We have suffered greatly to live and work here. To be excluded from access to health insurance is an injustice. Healthcare is a human right. We should have access to the very services that are funded by the taxes we pay.

I support S.B. No 956 with the modifications above, and hope the committee will make those changes.

Thank you for your time,

Carmela Portilla  
Semilla Collective of New Haven