

My name is Kathleen Emily Powers; I am a former English teacher and a resident of West Hartford. Though my teaching experience spans grade school to graduate school, I spent most of my career working with high school seniors in Bristol, Connecticut.

I am writing in support of SB 956: An Act Providing Medical Assistance to Certain Individuals Regardless of Immigration Status with clearly written modifications that extend eligibility for all HUSKY programs to all Connecticut residents, regardless of immigration status.

The year before my retirement, I mentored an immigrant student who had no access to affordable health care. Her desire for education impressed me: she supported herself by cleaning offices from 10:00 p.m. - 3:00 a.m. and still showed up for school at 7:30 a.m. She was responsible, high achieving, and self-reliant, reluctant to ask anyone for help unless it was for explaining an assignment. After she graduated, I gave her my number to use in case of an emergency, knowing there were no other adults in her life.

Two years later she called me at 3:00 a.m. to ask for a ride to the emergency room. Living without medical care, she'd waited until her head and ear pain had become unbearable. Her eardrum, had ruptured, but we didn't know that until later. I brought her in. While she was being examined, a hospital representative asked me who would be responsible for a bill she couldn't pay. Besides trying to stay awake at that hour, I was dealing with unknowns in territory where I have no expertise. Afraid she might need surgery that she wouldn't get if I didn't sign (this is not the case), I was aware that meeting medical costs could affect my own financial stability as a retired person. She was at risk, and I had taught ethics in literature all my life.

No one should be put in this position, especially when there is a legal remedy.

Today this former student has a master's degree in micro-biology but still has no healthcare because her immigrant status [without papers] bars her from employment in a regular job. Having access to health care would lift a huge burden of uncertainty she and so many immigrants working for minimum wage face. Residents who can live with less fear make our communities healthier places, and we all benefit from that.

In closing, I support SB 956 with clear language to extend HUSKY eligibility to all Connecticut residents regardless of immigration status, and I ask the committee to support this legislation. Thank you for all your work on this essential issue.

Appreciatively,

Kathleen Emily Powere, Ph.D. [Kate]