

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Brigith Rivera, I am a student from the University of Connecticut and a resident from Hartford. I am undocumented and unashamed. I stand in support of S.B. No. 956: “AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS,” with clear language that extends eligibility to all HUSKY programs to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

My family has lived in Connecticut for more than 10 years. My family’s access to health care and insurance is and *has* always been extremely limited. Not a single family member has healthcare insurance. My father who worked in construction, a labor-intensive job, was unable to go to the hospital due to cost despite his enormous hip pain. My father’s pain does not allow him to work leaving my mother to be the sole provider of income. My mother now works three jobs in order to provide the bare living necessities; due to how many hours she is working, it is only a matter of time before she gets physically injured or has an occupational illness. If both my parents do develop an illness, I will have to leave school and get multiple jobs in order to provide financial support.

For my family, I know that having access to healthcare would tremendously help. I would be allowed to continue to pursue post-secondary education and my father would cure his illness. It is important to understand how intertwined healthcare is within many families. If the committee decides to provide healthcare to undocumented families, they will not only be allowing working families to go to the doctor but give them the opportunity to live healthy lives. Opening access to healthcare could minimize stress-level conditions individuals have and *will* save lives.

It is essential that S.B. 956 passes because healthcare is a human right. It is unacceptable that an undocumented individual is able to be an organ donor, but not receive an organ transplant themselves. It is unacceptable for the state of CT to take undocumented people’s labor, money (145 million dollars in state and federal tax), and bodies without consideration for their existence as human beings. Moreover, health is a collective issue. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us that in order to have a healthy state, having everyone have access to healthcare is a must. Without healthcare coverage, individuals are less likely to receive the treatments they need and more likely to spread their own illness into the general community. There are around 130,000 undocumented individuals and to not offer health care access to them is deliberately neglecting their well-being and the well-being of the community.

In regards to finance, it is a well-known fact now that preventative care is cost-effective. By allowing undocumented people to have access to affordable care money can be saved by not having to pay for emergency medical visits. Before hearing excuses such as “the state is in debt”, “budget cuts”, and “limited amount of funds.” I must ask every single member of the committee to ask themselves what is the cost of human life? What price would be “too much” to pay to save the lives of a child? Of a mother? Or your child or your mother?

I reinstate that the state of Connecticut is capable and would benefit from providing access to healthcare for undocumented immigrants because it can serve as a form of preventive care that is cost-effective, acknowledges health as a human right regardless of one’s decision to migrate, and given that health is a collective issue, it would contribute to a healthy community.

I support S.B. No 956, with clear language to extend current HUSKY eligibility rules to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status, and I ask the committee to support this legislation.

Thank you for your time,  
*Brigith Rivera*

