

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

My name is Teresa Sandoval-Schaefer. I am a resident from Hamden, an immigrant from Mexico and a member of The Semilla Collective – New Haven.

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.

I am here to speak on behalf of the thousands of undocumented immigrants that reside in the State of Connecticut and that everyday work so hard to contribute to the society and the economy of our State. It’s time to recognize that undocumented immigrants are not invisible. The United States government wants to pretend they don’t exist, so they can be left out of government stimulus and programs. But they are not invisible, they are the essential workers that have been cleaning up at hospitals, clinics, office buildings, public spaces, etc., risking their own and their families’ lives during a pandemic. They are the essential workers that have been growing, preparing, serving, and delivering our food, so privileged people like me and all of you, legislators, can safely work from home.

And yet, these essential workers have also been left out of one of the most essential human rights: access to healthcare. Access to healthcare is particularly critical for undocumented immigrants because the nature of their jobs put them at higher risk of injuries; because having long workdays for very low wages put them at higher risk of chronic, debilitating diseases. But especially during the Covid pandemic, leaving anyone out of healthcare access is immoral and repugnant!

Lack of access to healthcare could be the difference between surviving or succumbing to Covid-19. But even for those that survive, about 30% are considered ‘long haulers’ and may suffer sequela for months, years, or possibly the rest of their lives. I am a Covid-19 survivor and a long hauler. Since I got Covid a year ago, I haven’t been able to perform strenuous activities without feeling out of breath. I can’t even go hiking or walk long distances without having to pause to breath. Thankfully, my job doesn’t require this kind of stamina and I have access to healthcare in case I need it. But we need to recognize this is a crisis and it is not the time to keep anyone out of healthcare access.

As you listen to the testimonies and make a decision about supporting S.B. 956, please know that we don’t need a Hispanic Heritage Day, we don’t need a Margarita or Taco Day. All we are asking from you, is to recognize our Humanity. Please support S.B. No 956, with clear language to extend current HUSKY eligibility rules to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

Thank you,

Dr. M. Teresa Sandoval-Schaefer
Member of “The Semilla Collective – New Haven”