

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

My name is Sangini Sheth, and I am an obstetrician gynecologist at Yale School of Medicine, providing clinical care to primarily low income women with Medicaid or no insurance in New Haven County. I am a resident of Madison. 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 for all HUSKY programs to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

I grew up and went to college in Connecticut and have proudly provided obstetrics and gynecology care for women in New Haven County since joining faculty at Yale School of Medicine 8 years ago. Until recently, my primary clinic was the Women’s Center at Yale New Haven Hospital which recently merged with Cornell Scott Hill Health as part of the Primary Care Consortium. I serve as the Associate Medical Director of the obstetrics and gynecology clinic and also serve as a co-Lead for the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism Task Force of the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences. I have extensive experience caring for women with HUSKY insurance as well as women who have no insurance, delivering essential prenatal and gynecologic care that will have lasting effects on her family and future generations. And yet, I commonly spend more time thinking through the logistical hurdles to deliver the care an uninsured patient needs and deserves than thinking on the clinical care and decision making associated with her medical concerns. We grasp at various programs with their myriad eligibility requirements to patchwork a net by which we hope patients will be able to get all the tests, procedures, and follow up that are required without slipping through the gaping holes in the net. This patchwork system is resource intensive, inadequate, not sustainable, and not available to many uninsured patients.

As physicians, my colleagues and I struggle every day with the moral dilemmas of delivering two tiers of healthcare – one to the insured and another to the uninsured, hoping that our attempts at minimizing the gap between these tiers will be actualized. However, when there is no insurance coverage for expensive medications or no physicians available in a selected sub-specialty to care for uninsured patients, the gap inevitable widens. We see adherence to medications suffer, preventable diseases flourish, and chronic medical conditions worsen in the setting of being uninsured.

We need all HUSKY programs to be inclusive of all residents regardless of immigration status. Expanding the major HUSKY programs is a needed first step, but more needs to be done as HUSKY is only available to a limited population and not everyone would be covered. In addition, COVID-19 has highlighted the unfair inequities in access to care, economic opportunities, and everything we need to thrive. We must address the crisis now, but without ongoing access to health care, undocumented immigrants will continue to struggle long after many are able to move on after the pandemic.

Connecticut legislators have the opportunity to be leaders in expanding Medicaid to all members of the undocumented community, making it a place where young people like us want to stay. Diversity in age, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability and immigration status in our state's population brings endless skills, perspectives, and ideas to Connecticut. We can’t continue to build a diverse, exciting state without giving all of our friends and neighbors what they need to live here successfully, like access to health care.

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,

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