

March 10, 2021

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

My name is Stephen R. Smith, M.D., M.P.H. I reside at 899 Montauk Avenue in New London and practice as a family physician at the Community Health Center of New London. 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 frequently take care of immigrants in my practice. Just today, as I write this, I have two recent immigrants on my schedule. The first, whom I saw this morning, was a 14-year-old girl who fled Honduras a few days ago. Her mother is in California and, we hope, she will soon be reunited with her. And a 5-year-old girl is waiting for me right now in the exam room. Fortunately, these lovely children are healthy and won't need more than their immunizations and a few blood tests today.

The same can't be said for most of the immigrants I care for. They are older with multiple chronic diseases ranging from diabetes and hypertension to more exotic connective tissue disorders. One 81-year-old Nigerian immigrant with myositis requires intravenous infusions of a monoclonal antibody that costs about \$9,000 a year. Fortunately, a local rheumatologist is willing to see her for free and obtain the medication from the drug manufacturer. This patient joined her daughter and her family, all of whom I care for including one granddaughter who is applying to medical schools. This three-generation immigrant family is typical of the immigrant families I care for—hard working, close knit, community-minded (the son-in-law is a local pastor), and aspiring American citizens.

I, like most of us who aren't indigenous, came from immigrant ancestors. This country was built on the courageous immigrants who escaped oppression and poverty in their countries of origin and set out to build a new life in the United States. These immigrants were our past and will be our future, all to the good of this country. They deserve our respect and support.

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.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Smith, M.D., M.P.H.