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Resident of New Haven

Support for S.B. 956  
Healthcare for All Regardless of Immigrant Status

Honorable Members of the Human Services Committee:

I am a trans woman who has been working for more than 20 years in Human Rights issues. I have a Master's degree in Human Rights and several postgraduate studies in different fields. My skills took me to places unthinkable for a Trans woman.

Unfortunately, discrimination and hatred towards my community brought me to the USA. I lived and suffered political harassment, one of my daughters was threatened with death. Numerous groups of people have prevented my personal and professional development, and the day I could no longer sustain myself, I had to leave my native country.

Today, I am a resident of this beautiful city, New Haven, but I have also encountered the same discrimination that I struggled with all my life, starting from scratch once again my dream of being happy.

Unfortunately I found that the health system here is more unjust than in many other countries, I could not believe that the number one country in the first world has so much inequality, where people, citizens or not, do not have job security or labor rights, where women do not have full freedoms, having several decades fighting for a constitutional amendments to extinguish gender inequality in my country. Truly, I could mention many things I have seen with my own eyes being a volunteer in Unidad Latina en Acción. I've heard hundreds of testimonies of sexual harassment and above all of the non-existence of sexual harassment in the workplace, sexual assault and above all the non-existence of the RIGHT TO ACCESS TO A HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, which I also had to face.

I saw people who, because of COVID, had sequelae, like a woman who I saw today who cannot work because of glaucoma and the slightest effort brings her closer and closer to blindness. A worker who was left leaning on a chair bleeding for hours without care and whose employer told her to call someone to pick her up. They never called an ambulance, and even less did they want to take responsibility for the accident. The employer did not want to induct the company's insurance policy.

Entire families were left without work because of the quarantine. Without medical leave or insurance, they were unable to get the healthcare they needed, let alone pay the cost of rent and basic services. In the case of one man, he had surgery and post-operative care during the beginning of the pandemic. By the month of June, his employer did not want to reinstate him to

his work and by that date more than half of his coworkers were suspended. All the operative expenses, the postoperative recovery had come out of his savings, and by the middle of the past year he no longer had any savings. If he had insurance, his case would have been different.

A colleague of mine had his leg amputated by a drunk driver. He was robbed of 100% of the amount of the insurance indemnity, all that money went to the hospital. Not having insurance, the bill was so high that he was left without a dollar of the reimbursement from his court case, with even less to live on and nothing for a prosthetic leg. Another member of our organization lost her baby due to medical negligence. Preeclampsia led to the death of her unborn baby, this negligence will remain in the impunity of our stories.

For each one of the hundreds of testimonies I have heard in the last year I am heartbroken. Helplessness invades my being, so I decided NOT TO BE SILENT, I must not, because if I let silence win, I would be an accomplice.

Many people did not dare to give their testimony today, because fear of reprisals, of being denounced by immigration, or the simple fact of being fired from their jobs. These fears, many times well founded, leave them in a state of defenselessness, which is why I use my right to freedom of expression to be heard, and I implore you to listen to those who have no voice, as is your obligation. As public servants, you have the opportunity to be heroes or villains.

Generating and managing this public policy would be a way to get these taxes back to us. Today, the right to health care is a public investment. History tells us that in order to get out of an economic recession, there must be public investment. This is how we got out of the great recession of the last century. You may ask how an expense in the health service is a public investment. Well, if we are healthy we can work and if we work we will be the many hands of work that can get us out of the recession and move the economy forward.

For every white person of working age who dies from COVID-19, EIGHT Latinxs die. The simple fact of being aware of this statistic and not doing anything underlines a genocide in our community. Why do they let us die when we are the ones who take care of their Seniors, we take care of their children, we take care of their children, we take care of their children. We take care of their children, not only as nannies or home workers, but also keeping their schools, hospitals, universities, the city clean, we are essential workers, that is why we are exposed to the Covid virus, and all its sequels, that is why we die. We are essential workers, that's why we are exposed to the COVID virus, and all its consequences. That's why we die more. An insurance would give us a better quality of life to keep on giving our chests to this nation.

My words may bother some people and that's fine, they have the right, but there are people in this room who know that I do not only speak from the heart but that reason also accompanies my voice, because my voice is that of the vilified, of the mistreated, of the humiliated.

I was also a public servant like you, I also received my salary from the taxes I paid and the taxes paid by the people, but I also came from the social movements and the struggle of social

sectors. In October 2003, I participated in a hunger strike, I had the opportunity to listen to the wise words of the ombudsman of my country (Ana Maria Romero). She told me - Tamara you have to have one foot in the streets and one foot in the institution - these words are wise, we cannot govern without listening to the people. I know that public management is difficult and that bureaucracy and political games sometimes slow us down - the foot in the streets and the foot in the institution - these words are wise. We cannot govern without listening to the people. Sometimes what slows us down is the foot in the institution, but it is necessary to be in the streets with the people and listen to them. In the search of that balance we will be able to achieve the best outcome for the people. In the end that is what we, public servants, are paid for, to serve the people.

So with all the knowledge of the cause, I ask you, listen to the voiceless, be our heroes and ensure that history remembers you as the people who made change possible.

Finally, I want to speak as an undocumented migrant trans woman: I am also a victim of the health system that does not allow me access to comprehensive care, not only do I need hormones, urological and gynecological treatments, but my simple condition of being a trans woman increases the risk of breast cancer by 42%. According to the WHO, my life expectancy is 38 years, and without psychological support, transgender people commit suicide 41% more than any other vulnerable population.

This situation of vulnerability, in addition to the fact of being a migrant and undocumented as many of us here are, this doubles our need for medical services. Today I am completing a month and a half of being with a chronic urinary tract infection, the possibility of having kidney failure increases every day. Just by having a visit to the urologist at Yale New Haven Hospital in August of last year, a 20 minute visit and without any study, cost me 600 dollars. Today, I relapse again and I am without medical attention for lack of insurance. The truth is that I do not want to be part of that statistic of death for being trans. I want to live. I want to see my children grow up. I want to heal to continue contributing to the construction of a more dignified and equitable society.

Thank you for your time,  
Tamara Nuñez del Prado  
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