

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

My name is [*Karina Torres Cervantes*], I am a student at Southern Ct State University from Meriden and I former DACA recipient.

I stand in support of SB956: AN ACT PROVIDING MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS, but with modifications. SB956 as currently written leaves out many in our immigrant community, it leaves out low-income parents and children under HUSKY A and low-income elderly and disabled folks under HUSKY C. I support modifying SB956 to include ALL CT residents that qualify under the full current HUSKY eligibility.

My family and I have been in CT since we immigrated from Mexico in 1994. We have all been undocumented until 2013 when I was the first to apply for DACA. In those 19 years, there were no yearly check-ups unless asked for by school, no trips to the emergency dept., or any referrals to specialists. We cured fevers, infections, and sprains at home with TLC, luckily we never reached a moment where ER trips were inevitable.

In 2013 I was became eligible and obtained my DACA status. I became eligible for healthcare for the first time in my life when I was 24 and began to work full-time after receiving my DACA status, it felt great to be able to see a doctor without having to worry about the bill. However, this joy is short lived when I think about my parents. My parents have lived in The United States, CT specifically, more than they have lived in their home country. They continue to live paycheck to paycheck, often having two full-time jobs to survive. The wear and tears on their bodies remind me that they will not be here forever, and as you can all probably relate, I see them aging a little more each day. I worry about the toll on their bodies as they continue to do manual labor often topping 12 hours a day into their 50s,

My dad is currently diabetic with high blood pressure and my mom is anemic and also struggles with her blood pressure. Some days, she sleeps off the headaches that may possibly be due to her high blood pressure or anemia because she does not want to pay the co-pay for the clinic they attend, she rather put it towards a bill.

My dad currently had his foot crushed by a boulder at work and waited THREE days to seek medical attention, he wasn't ready to pay the bill at the ER. When I saw it, I just wanted to cry. It showed me the superhumans my parents continue to be. My mother and father sacrificed it all for me, now as I resident, soon to be a citizen, I present my story to you all with hopes that I can make a difference in this bill to include people like my parents who continue to work as hard as other Americans, because that is actually how they see themselves, for a chance to have some relief when it comes to healthcare.

As a soon to be social worker, I was taught to live by the code of ethics. Well, one of them is dignity and worth of the person. I don't believe this is outlandish or exotic, I believe it is simply common sense. Undocumented people lose their dignity and self-worth to come to a country they believe will give them a better life. They pick up any job that comes their way and take any insults or discrimination that comes their way, especially because of the language barriers. But it is up to us, now more than ever to disposes of labels, we are not our status, we are human beings who deserve affordable basic rights.

I would like to leave you with the fact that the American immigration council stated in August of 2020 that there are 120,000 undocumented immigrants in CT, that is 23 percent of the immigrant population but only 4% of the state population in 2016.

I would like to thank you for your time and reiterate that I support S.B. No 956 with the modifications above, and hope the committee will make those changes.

Thank you for your time,
Karina Torres Cervantes