

March 10th, 2021

Written Testimony In Support of S.B. 956

Dear Senator Marilyn Moore and Representative Catherine F. Abercrombie,

I am a medical student, and soon-to-be physician.

I write to you to express my **strong support** for legislation being considered by the Human Services Committee that would expand HUSKY eligibility, **without** regard to immigration status.

Cost is often cited as a reason to prevent this type of change. An individual who has a medical need will go to an Emergency Room, which costs much more than a visit to their primary care physician or even an UrgentCare. These costs are then gone unpaid largely because who has the funds to outright pay for hospital-level care. The funds needed for this program will end up **saving** money in the long run in Connecticut.

As a health care provider, I recognize our responsibility to care for all patients, regardless of race, income, or immigration status. Unfortunately, our state laws do not reflect that same commitment. While the uninsured rate in Connecticut is roughly 5.9%, an estimated 52% of undocumented immigrants in our state are uninsured. Undocumented immigrants are prohibited from participating in HUSKY, the state's Medicaid program for low-income residents, or from purchasing private health insurance on Access Health CT, the state marketplace established by the Affordable Care Act. Our laws have eliminated the pathways to reliable health insurance for undocumented individuals. Instead, immigrant communities are forced to rely upon under-resourced clinics and emergency care through hospitals. We as health care providers have all seen the consequences when our patients' illnesses go untreated, causing catastrophic complications and, it is important to note, requiring expensive hospital-based care that is ultimately supported by the state. These consequences are preventable, but the prescription must be written at the level of state policy.

Connecticut has already begun to recognize the moral responsibility and sensibility of making sure all communities in the state have access to health care. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Connecticut has used Emergency Medicaid funds to cover COVID-19 testing and treatment for residents who didn't qualify for Medicaid based on immigration status. This was a wise decision, both to prevent illness and treat it early. It almost surely saved lives. But the wisdom of this decision is not restricted to COVID-19. Preventing disease and treating it early is the right approach to community health, from both a fiscal and moral perspective.

As health care providers, we understand the devastating human consequences of restricting access to health care. We ask you to support legislation that would remove immigration status from HUSKY eligibility rules and would finally allow our most vulnerable community members to access quality medical care. We thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Thank you,
Moe Uddin
New Milford, CT