

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

My name is Kae Vargas, I am a Connecticut resident originally from Bolivia currently living in New Haven. I am a U.S citizen and I was in a domestic partnership with an undocumented immigrant also from Bolivia who had underlying health conditions.

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 to all HUSKY programs to all CT residents, regardless of immigration status.

In my previous relationship I was able to experience the unfairness of the healthcare system for undocumented people. My partner was undocumented and suffered from a thyroid problem that required daily medication in order for her to have a functional life. The thyroid is a very small gland in the inside of your neck that ends up regulating the main functions of the human body.

When she moved here from Bolivia she was able to bring enough medication for about a year. From my experience as a U.S citizen with health care, I wrongly assumed that she would be able to access a PCP and get a referral for an endocrinologist to get her thyroid situation checked out. We made several calls to different physicians who asked for insurance and some were flat out denying new patients without insurance. When we were finally able to find a physician the cost was extremely high around 600 just for the referral and over 2k for the endocrinologist and testing. On top of this, the cost of the medicine would've been around 2k yearly without insurance. As we were only relying on one income, there was no way we were ever going to be able to afford the doctor visits, and medicine she needed to give her a quality healthy life. Without this medication, she experienced x, y, z. Eventually, out of desperation, we were able to find the medication through a friend from Canada who were able to bring it to us, but unfortunately we were not able to test the effects or know if the medication was working as it should because she was unable to see the doctors because of her immigration status.

Eventually my ex-partner returned to Bolivia where she could finally have access to health care and be properly treated. If this bill was active when all this happened, she would have been able to be treated for her condition and live a quality healthy life.

Everyone regardless of immigration status, should have access to quality affordable health care. We should not have undocumented Connecticut residents living here and suffering the consequences of an inept health care system that leaves them in financial ruin or completely deprived of basic quality health care that should be a basic understanding of human rights of a society. This is why I support S.B. No 956, 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,
Kae Vargas