

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

My name is Katherine Villeda, I am a resident of Bridgeport, CT and U.S Citizen. I am a leader with CT Students for a Dream and Organizing Specialist with Planned Parenthood of Southern New England. I am also part of a mixed-status family.

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.

I believe that **healthcare is a human right** and that no one should be denied the care they need because of their immigration status. Growing up, I witnessed first-hand the barriers my parents, extended family, and many community members faced in accessing primary and preventative services because of their status. Care was often delayed because of the fear and uncertainty that came with disclosing one’s status to a medical provider and the possibility of astronomical medical debt. Growing up home remedies were often used until they no longer helped with underlying ailments and emergent care was needed. When I was three years old my mother had a stroke and was admitted to the hospital. My family was fortunate that Emergency Medicaid covered the costs of my mother’s emergent care and saved her life. However, due to the lack of access to health insurance because of her status, the care she needed after she was discharged was costly and scarce. The underlying cause of her stroke was identified and had she had access to preventative care, her stroke may have been prevented.

As we continue to live in a global pandemic, it is imperative for CT to continue to be a leader to show what it means to respect and honor immigrants in our state. Immigrants have been at the forefront of the pandemic as frontline and essential workers- including my mother as a home health aide. Despite their essential work, immigrants continue to be excluded from federal and state aid. Although Emergency Medicaid has been expanded to include COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccinations it is not enough. Our families and our communities deserve comprehensive and affordable access to healthcare that goes beyond COVID-19. In order for Connecticut to fully recover from this pandemic and effectively reduce its uninsured rate, we must ensure immigrants have the right to healthcare to truly live healthy lives.

Immigrants should be treated with dignity and respect. I believe Connecticut has the resources, moral obligation, and political will to be a leader in what it means to treat health care like a human right and treat immigrants with dignity.

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.

Thank you for your time,
Katherine Villeda
Bridgeport, CT