

Testimony for the Human Services Committee in Support of SB 956

**From; Mark Kosnoff, Executive Director
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Support of Senate Bill 956**

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie and members of the Human Services Committee, My name is Mark Kosnoff, and I am the Executive Director of United Action Connecticut, a faith-based organization that advocates for social justice causes. I would like to express my support, and that of the members of United Action, for senate Bill 956, An Act Providing Medical Assistance to Certain Individuals regardless of Immigration Status.

There is a famous phrase, "If you have your health then you have everything." There is a lot of truth to that statement. But, on the other hand I feel that you can also say, with certainty, "If you don't have health insurance you have nothing." In this day and age health insurance is a "must" and without it you cannot afford to get sick. The fact that there are still close to 200,000 people in Connecticut without health insurance coverage, over 60,000 of who are immigrants, is shameful. At United Action, we believe healthcare access is a human right, not something that is reserved for only those that can afford it.

For the past decade our organization has advocated support for many social-justice issues, but the two issues that we argued most vehemently for, are universal healthcare access and rights for undocumented immigrants. Therefore it is most natural that we would support SB 956, since it addresses both of these issues. It's obvious that the high cost of healthcare is the most prohibitive cause for the lack of access to medical care, but that is a separate issue. Because of the high cost of healthcare, Medicaid and the Connecticut HUSKY programs were created, thus allowing low-income individuals to get the care they might need. Unfortunately the way the HUSKY program is structured, it still prohibits thousands of working people without an affordable option to get care. Then there is the issue of the undocumented immigrants that reside in Connecticut, who have little, if any, way to access medical assistance. The inhumane treatment of undocumented immigrants is, again, a separate issue. But let me say that most Americans silently accept the hard work at low cost that immigrants provide but then are quick to vilify them as being "illegal" when exposed. In Connecticut, we should be focused on solving these two unjust issues, lack of healthcare access and rights for immigrants. SB 956 can help with this process by guaranteeing healthcare access to all Connecticut residents regardless of immigration status.

No one should have to make decisions on whether to seek medical care or go without because of its cost. A year and a half ago, an immigrant friend of mine was experiencing extreme abdominal pain but put off going to the doctor because she had no health insurance. When the pain became too much to bear she went to the hospital and was diagnosed with a cancerous tumor. Surgery to remove the tumor was needed or she would die. Without insurance her options were limited. It took the efforts of several friends and a GoFundMe campaign to get her the surgery she needed. Is this what all low-income people

and undocumented Connecticut residents will continue to be faced with in this state? GoFundMe pages or possible death if you get seriously ill! Lack of healthcare, and its high cost, exacerbates so many other problems.

I urge all the members of the Labor Committee to support SB 956 and make Connecticut a healthier State and one all our residents can be proud of. Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today on this important issue and please support Senate Bill 956 and healthcare for all.

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