

February 9, 2021

SB 842

Dear Members of Insurance and Real Estate of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Eden Almasude and I am from New Haven, CT. I am a physician at Yale-New Haven Hospital and a psychiatry fellow at Yale Mental Health and Counseling, as well as a community organizer with the Semilla Collective of New Haven. I support S.B. 842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care In Connecticut. This bill is crucial in making healthcare affordable and equitable by creating new public options for health insurance in our state.

I have seen countless patients in the emergency room of Yale-New Haven Hospital who have waited for weeks or months before seeking care, due to lack of affordable health care. During that time, their conditions deteriorate, and the cost of their visit is far more than a routine outpatient visit would have been. Most recently, I met a young man who was struggling with his experiences of trauma which manifested as a mental health condition and substance use disorder. He did not have any outpatient treatment with primary care or mental health as he is excluded from state Medicaid on the basis of immigration status. He stayed in the emergency room for four days as we tried to get him into the only rehab program in the state which would accept him without insurance. There were still no beds available. We discharged him to the street with no further options and no outpatient treatment. Left untreated, I anticipate his condition will continue to worsen, leading to hospitalizations for both medical and mental health complications. I have seen it too many times.

There is a health care emergency in the state of CT that requires taking urgent action to address this issue of racial and economic justice. Supporting a public option promotes health equity, which is more critical than ever given the ongoing pandemic which disproportionately affects our Black and Latino community members. Expanding access to routine health care will lower costs for everyone: a four-day emergency room visit is far more costly than preventative care, and those costs are passed along to all of us. Increasing options for affordable care supports workers and in turn strengthens our economy.

I urge you to support SB 842 to expand healthcare access by creating a public option.

Thank you for your time and for representing our workers.

Eden Almasude, MD

Semilla Collective of New Haven