

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

My name is Ashley Antao, I am from Hamden, Connecticut and I am a member of the Semilla Collective. I support S.B. 842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care In Connecticut.

I have lived in Connecticut for many years without health insurance. I have not been to a doctor in over three years, even for a physical or check-up. My wife pressures me to go in and get checked out, but I know that we cannot afford the bills. If I need medication, I can only buy what's available over the counter, and I don't know if I'm taking the right medication for my symptoms.

Even though I never choose to see a doctor, I have had to go to the emergency room. I work at a gas station, and I was stabbed there in August 2019. When the ambulance arrived, I told them I could not afford to go to the hospital, but when they saw that I was bleeding, they forcibly took me in. The hospital asked if I had insurance, and I told them I did not. They sent someone to see me from social services, but I still got a huge bill for x-rays and blood work. I have received some help from social services to pay for it, but they do not cover the ambulance costs. I'm paying for the ambulance in installments, several dollars every month. The experience of being attacked was traumatizing, and I am seeing someone for my mental health. While that is paid for, it's incredibly unjust that I can't access care for my physical health.

My wife is also not insured, she has only been able to get medical care when she's pregnant. We've tried to find clinics that will see undocumented people like us, but no one will help. People are also scared to go to the clinics because they worry about having to disclose their status. Sometimes it's not safe. It is incredibly difficult to live in this country when you are undocumented and do not have health insurance.

If the Public Option was passed, my life and the lives of my friends and family would be transformed. So many people I know don't go to see the doctor. They are getting sick, they are having heart attacks. It would change my life if my community members got the care they need. Something has to be done. Please, I urge you, support S.B. 842 this session to expand healthcare access to people like me and my family.

Thank you for your time,

Ashley Antao,
Semilla Collective Member