

Support for Senate Bill 842
February 9, 2021

Dear Senator Lesser, Representative Wood, and members of the Insurance and Real Estate of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Wildaliz Bermudez and I'm a Working Families Party City Councilperson representing Hartford, Connecticut. Thanks for taking the time to read my testimony today. I'm writing in support of S.B. 842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care In Connecticut.

S.B. 842 will make healthcare more equitable, dependable, and affordable by creating new public options for health insurance in our state.

As a city councilor, I get the honor of hearing personal stories from my constituents everywhere I go, from the grocery store to the post office to taking my daughter to the park. Yet for too many of my constituents, these stories center around their struggles with healthcare -- from being unable to afford basic (yet life-saving) prescription drugs to wondering how undocumented relatives can access healthcare. Senate Bill 842, the public option bill, will benefit many Hartford residents as well as folks all around the state, and I hope we all can count on your support.

When I first ran for office, like all of you, I knew that I wanted to make the lives of all of my constituents better. I believe that every person in Connecticut deserves the healthcare they need to survive and thrive. Yet right here in Hartford, the "insurance capital of the world," many folks struggle to make ends meet, fight with their insurance companies over charges large and small, and can't access the life-saving care they need. Particularly during a global pandemic, this is unacceptable.

As a city councilor, I've worked with my colleague Josh Michtom to ensure that undocumented families in our community have the resources they need to thrive, not hide in the shadows. Undocumented immigrants are barred from accessing health coverage writ large. As a result, they cannot seek the proper health care they need. A public option should provide undocumented immigrants with the same access as everyone else, allowing them to purchase insurance if they'd like to, as anyone else can.

And expanding access for immigrants saves money for our state, as well as does the right thing for our communities. Without access to traditional healthcare, many undocumented folks rely on emergency rooms when they get sick, ultimately costing our government millions in hospital reimbursements.

Thanks for your time and consideration. I strongly urge the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers, as well as Governor Lamont, to support S.B. 842 this session to expand high-quality, dependable,

and affordable health care by creating new public options for health insurance. Our state and our residents can't afford to wait.

Thank you for your time,

Wildaliz Bermudez
City Councilor

Hartford, CT