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INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA – UAW

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Testimony by Beverley Brakeman  
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Labor and Public Employees Committee Public Hearing  
February 9, 2021

**IN SUPPORT OF SB 842: HB 326: AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE AND HEALTH CARE IN CONNECTICUT.**

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

My name is Beverley Brakeman, and I am from West Hartford, Connecticut. I am the Regional Director for the United Auto Workers Region 9A. I support S.B. 842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care In Connecticut. This bill will make health care equitable, dependable, and affordable by creating new public options for health insurance in our state.

This pandemic has greatly touched us all, laying bare the racial and socio-economic inequities in our communities. Like the rest of the nation, Connecticut is facing a health crisis. Workers and families are losing their health coverage in great numbers due to the pandemic. Small businesses are struggling trying to offer health care that is too expensive to their employees. Expensive, high-deductible plans make health care inaccessible to many, and racial health disparities have gone unaddressed, worsening long-standing inequities in our state.

Connecticut needs to act boldly to curb the ongoing health care emergency. We can no longer wait for the federal government to act, especially while the Supreme Court considers arguments to strip coverage and consumer protections from hundreds of thousands of Connecticut residents.

The UAW is a proud member of the Connecticut Campaign for Affordable Healthcare; a growing coalition of advocates, lawmakers, and experts, proposing that new public options for health insurance be created to make health care in Connecticut more accessible, affordable, and equitable.

The constant struggle that every labor union faces at the bargaining table with their employers is how to provide quality, affordable health care benefits to their members while also leaving even enough money on the table to negotiate wages. Non-union workers face even greater costs, leaving many with high co-pays and high deductible plans. These types of plans do not provide dependable health care. Out-of-pocket costs can be prohibitive, causing many to forego routine medical care and having a negative effect on wellness, long-term health, and financial security.

The pandemic has also shown the need for new options for workers who lose their jobs, since most workers access their health care through their employment. No one should have to worry about losing affordable health care access for themselves or their family along with losing a job.

Reducing health care expenses will expand the state's economy and ease the financial burden on families and small businesses. Expanding access and lowering costs also puts more money in the pockets of working families, which, in turn is good for Connecticut's economy.

It is beyond time to put people before profits. Profits are rising for private insurance plans as millions of Americans line up at food banks and homeless shelters. We need to act now to help the people of this State by creating public options to address the urgent crisis of affordability and dependability in this pandemic and beyond.

I urge the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers to support S.B. 842 this session to expand high-quality, dependable, and affordable health care by creating new public options for health insurance.

Thank you for your time,  
Beverley Brakeman  
Regional Director  
United Auto Workers Region 9A