

Testimony in support of **SB 842, AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE AND HEALTH CARE IN CONNECTICUT**

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My name is Nancy Burton. I live in Meriden Connecticut. I am a retired health care provider and on the Board of Directors of the Universal Health Care Foundation.

Many people will be testifying on the specifics and economics of the bill. This bill will involve some investment from the state in the development stages of the bill but will then be self-sustaining. I will leave it to the experts in those fields to flesh this out further.

Instead, I will focus my testimony on the humanity, morality, and reality that this bill addresses. As a health care provider for over 50 years, I have seen what happens when people cannot afford to access health care. Therefore, I believe my duty is to put a human face on what we are addressing today.

I will first tell you about a woman I saw several years ago. She and her husband ran a small business. They could not afford health insurance but they made too much to qualify for Medicaid. Several years before I saw her she had had surgery on her hand. Years later, they were still paying off the medical bills. So when she found a lump in her breast she didn't tell anyone. By the time I saw her, one of her breasts had been eaten away by cancer and it was spreading to her other breast.

I know of a young man in his twenties. He had asthma. He could not afford health insurance. He could not afford to see his provider or pay for his medication. He ended up in the emergency room with a severe asthma attack. The ER team could not bring him out of it and he died.

I had a patient who got a \$14/hour raise. That put her just over the threshold for Medicaid and she lost her health care coverage.

A family member is a minister and a licensed counselor with a serious autoimmune disease. For many years she worked for agencies that provided health insurance. Finally, her own health did not allow her to continue to meet the demands of that position. She went into private practice and applied for health insurance through the Exchange. She made a bit too much to qualify for subsidies and the insurance options were completely unaffordable for her, so in spite of her illness she went without health insurance. Finally, she had to cut back on her schedule due to her health and now qualifies for subsidies.

I had a patient who was a nurse. She was diabetic and had other health issues. She was in her early 60's so not yet of an age where she could get Medicare. Due to her age and her health, she could only work part time for a home health agency and did not receive any benefits. Her husband ran his own small business. Health insurance for them was also unaffordable so she too went without coverage in spite of her health issues.

I want to make clear the human cost of inadequate access to affordable health care. People suffer and die. You, and all of us, have a moral obligation to care for the residents of our state. We are a wealthy state in a wealthy nation. The current pandemic only makes it clearer than ever that health care is a right and a need. It makes it clearer than ever that our health care system is not equitable and is not adequately taking care of people. It makes it clearer than ever that relying on employment based health

coverage from large corporations is not the answer and leaves too many people uncovered and at risk. **SB 842** does not take care of all of the needs of people but it does address many of the people who are suffering. The provisions of this bill would have helped every one of the people about whom I have testified. It is your responsibility to pass legislation that helps address the needs of the residents of our state. I encourage you not be swayed by testimony against the bill that is motivated by those supporting large corporations making huge profits off the health care system.

Nancy Burton, CNM, RN