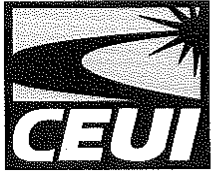


SEIU Local 511



CONNECTICUT EMPLOYEES UNION INDEPENDENT

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**Testimony by Carl Chisem, President
Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511**

**February 9, 2021
Insurance and Real Estate Committee**

In Support of S.B. 842 AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE AND HEALTH CARE IN CONNECTICUT

Senator Lesser, Representative Wood and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, my name is Carl Chisem and I am President of the Connecticut Employees Union Independent, SEIU Local 511. We represent over 3,600 blue collar maintenance and service State workers. Our members provide valuable services within our state facilities. They cook, clean, repair, maintain and deliver in Connecticut's State buildings, hospitals, college campuses, airports, roads, bridges, and parks. They represent the true diversity of our great state.

I submit this testimony in strong support of S.B. 842, An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care in Connecticut. S.B. 842 creates public options for Connecticut small businesses, nonprofits of any size, and unions to access affordable, high-quality health insurance. By leveraging the negotiating power and existing programs of the state employee health plan, new health care options can be developed that provide affordable, quality health care to the thousands of people who cannot afford insurance.

There are so many reasons why we need to enact S.B. 842 now. Even before the pandemic, more than half of Connecticut residents struggled to afford their health care, and 43% of Connecticut adults reported foregoing or delaying care because of cost, leading to a less healthy workforce and a stagnant economy. With unemployment at its highest levels, thousands of workers and families are losing critical coverage when they need it most.

The high cost of health care exacerbates racial injustice by preventing minority residents from accessing the services they are entitled to. Expanding access to health care will address the inequity issues in our state and expand the state's economy by easing the financial burden on families and small businesses. Providing an additional health insurance option for the more than 350,000 small businesses will allow owners who are struggling to provide more affordable coverage to their employees.

S.B. 842 is especially needed at this critical time. It will expand eligibility for the state Medicaid program so that more working-class families can access dependable, high-quality health insurance they can afford as well as for undocumented individuals and families who are currently shut out of the health care market. S.B. 842 will also expand subsidies for the individual market, lowering premium out-of-pocket costs for middle-class Connecticut residents.

We must put an end to the health care crisis that we have faced for so long. It is time to come together to ensure that everyone is guaranteed access to affordable, quality health care. It is the right thing to do. I urge the Committee to support this legislation.

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