

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

My name is Chelsea Connery, I am from New Haven, Connecticut. I am a former public-school teacher and currently full-time doctoral candidate in Leadership and Education Policy at the University of Connecticut. I support S.B. 842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care In Connecticut.

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

There is an ongoing health care emergency that demands urgent action. It is critical that we expand health care coverage and make dependable health care more affordable in the face of a deadly pandemic, especially with so many workers losing their jobs and health coverage.

This issue is deeply personal to me. I am currently one of the very fortunate graduate students in our state with access to private insurance through my employment as a research assistant. Indeed, living with a chronic illness, I would not have been able to pursue such a degree if it were not for this benefit. However, the lack of quality, affordable coverage has shaped my life immensely. My husband, then boyfriend, recently decided to make a career change. In this pursuit he began a new job but did not have access to health care through his employer and could not afford insurance. He would avoid going to the doctor when sick. He was regularly in pain, unable to continue physical therapy he needed from breaking his back a few years prior. While we always saw marriage in our future, this unsustainable burden inaccessible health care coverage was a significant reason behind our decision to get married.

Knowing I will soon complete my PhD program is both exciting and daunting – the latter simply because I worry putting my family's access to good health insurance at risk. I was always interested in various types consultancy, having done such work part time throughout the years. However, pursuing such a professional path full time feels like something I cannot pursue given the uncertainty around health care access. Access to a quality, affordable public option would help mitigate these concerns.

I am not alone in believing in the importance of this bill. A majority of voters (84%) in Connecticut believe making a change to our healthcare system as a result of COVID-19 is important and 7 in 10 voters support a public healthcare option. Offering public plans will provide quality, dependable, and affordable health coverage for workers and their families. This support is bipartisan - 71% of people in Connecticut support a public health care option, including: 85% of Democrats; 64% of Independents; and 58% of Republicans (data source: Working Families Party).

Beyond this widespread support, there are a number of other considerations that make this public option bill both necessary and common sense legislation. First, making health care more affordable is good for our economy. Expanding access and lowering costs puts more money in the pockets of working families, empowers workers to seek better job opportunities, levels the playing field for small businesses and strengthens our economy by keeping our workers healthier and more productive.

Moreover, a public option would lower costs for everyone. When people without insurance cannot pay for their care, hospitals and insurance companies pass the cost along to the rest of us. This proposal ensures that people have affordable health insurance and are able to get the medical treatment they need, which will bring down costs for everyone. Reducing health care expenses -- especially for working- and middle-class residents -- will expand the state's economy and ease the financial burden on families.

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,
Chelsea Connery
Chelsea.connery@uconn.edu
Doctoral Candidate - Leadership and Education Policy
University of Connecticut