



**Testimony on S.B. 842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance
and Health Care in Connecticut.**

My name is Grace Damio. I live in Mansfield, Connecticut and am speaking in my role as Director of Advocacy of the Hispanic Health Council. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of 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.

S.B. 842 would be especially helpful to organizations like the Hispanic Health Council. The Hispanic Health Council is a statewide, community-based organization that seeks to improve the health and social well-being of Latinos and other diverse communities. Our work is largely conducted by community health workers who are uniquely positioned to enhance and complement the work of healthcare providers by addressing the social determinants of health that keep them from using healthcare effectively and from being able to lead healthy lives.

Ironically, due to the escalated cost of health care insurance over recent decades, we have been unable to provide health insurance that is affordable to our invaluable community health worker staff and their families. Therefore, the first benefit to our organization of S.B. 842 is that it would help us to apply our mission directly to our own staff.

Secondly, our staff serves approximately 20,000 vulnerable individuals and families annually from communities across the state, many of whom are people of color who experience inequities in health status and healthcare access, including health insurance coverage. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted communities of color in Connecticut disproportionately, both financially and in terms of incidence of the disease, serious complications, and mortality.

Healthcare is a fundamental human right, one which should be assured through universal access to quality, affordable health insurance coverage. S.B. 842 would put Connecticut on the path toward ensuring this right.

I encourage you to vote in favor of S.B. 842.