



Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance

Testimony in Support of SB 843 An Act Concerning Health Insurance And Health Care In Connecticut

Senator Lesser, Representative Wood and members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill 842. My name is Merrill Gay. I am the executive director and lobbyist for the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. On behalf of our 94 members, I'm here today to urge you to support Senate Bill 842.

This bill does three important things. First, it raises the income eligibility for parents to use the Husky program. This is very important because we've seen that many of the parents who lost coverage when the income limit was dropped were not able to afford coverage in the exchange even with the subsidies under the ACA. Restoring the income limit to its 2015 level of 201% of the Federal Poverty Line would bring it back into line with the income limit for children. This will not only help those parents stay healthy but it also increases the likelihood that their children will be enrolled in the Medicaid (HUSKY) coverage they have been eligible for all along¹.

The second reason that we support this bill is that it would create a public option for health insurance administered by the Comptroller's office. This would take advantage of the purchasing clout of state government to create more affordable, better quality coverage that small businesses and not for profits could purchase for their employees. I know that our Early Childhood Alliance members would welcome the opportunity to purchase better coverage for a lower price. Our membership includes a wide variety of organizations united around the goal of ensuring that all children in Connecticut are healthy, safe and ready for lifelong success. Included among our members are child care providers, some of whom are not currently able to afford health insurance for their employees. This bill would help them.

Finally, Senate Bill 842 addresses one of the big injustices in our society, which is that undocumented immigrants who are here doing some of the hardest, lowest paid work in the economy have so much trouble getting health care. The Affordable Care Act specifically excluded them, as does Medicaid. This bill would create state subsidies to make it possible for undocumented immigrants to purchase health insurance. Many of these immigrants are parents and we know that when parents are healthy and able to work they are more likely to be able to provide for their children. As an organization focused on early childhood, one of the reasons we support this provision is that the evidence is pretty clear that when parents are connected to the health care system they are more likely to enroll their children in coverage. Without that coverage parents are far less likely to take their children to their well child visits that are so

¹<https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/expanding-medicaid-for-parents-improves-coverage-and-health-for-both-parents-and>



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important for vaccinations against preventable diseases and early diagnosis and treatment conditions.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.