

Middlesex Coalition for Children

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

My name is Izzi Greenberg, I am from Middletown, Connecticut. I am the director of the Middlesex Coalition for Children which serves to improve outcomes for children and families in Middletown, Middlesex County, and state wide. **I support S.B. 842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care In Connecticut which will make health care equitable, dependable, and affordable by creating new public options for health insurance in our state.**

Too many children in our communities do not have access to affordable, high-quality health care. We have a significant number of families who are uninsured because they are over limit or are undocumented whose families are not getting the preventative care they need because of a lack of insurance. The pandemic has made this situation all the more apparent as they don't go in for COVID-like symptoms, putting their families and communities at risk.

A public option addresses the urgent crisis of affordability and dependability in this pandemic. There is an ongoing health care emergency that demands urgent action. It's 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.

Health care is a racial justice issue. Before the pandemic, Connecticut's overall uninsured rate was 5.3%, but it reached 6.8% for Black residents and 13.1% for Hispanic or Latino residents. Today, the pandemic is sickening and killing Black, Latino and Native Americans at higher rates than whites, reflecting and compounding health care disparities that have long gone unaddressed. This plan seeks to address the lack of racial equity in our system by expanding access to care.

A public option is good for our economy and will lower costs for everyone. 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.

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.

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.

Additionally, I believe that any public option should: not impose out-of-pocket costs that keep people from getting care, require standardized collection of race and ethnicity data, and include a pathway for consumer input. 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,

Izzi Greenberg, Director, Middlesex Coalition for Children, February 8, 2021