

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

My name is Camila Guiza-Chavez, I am from New Haven, Connecticut. I am involved with the Semilla Collective. 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.

As a young woman from California building a life in New Haven, I've always considered myself lucky. I came to CT to attend Yale, where I graduated in 2019. During my time in college, I had the privilege of meeting community organizers in the immigrant justice movement here who inspired me with their fire, clarity of conviction, and love. They were (and still are) some of the most important teachers I've ever had, and the desire to keep learning in community with them is largely what led me to stay after graduation.

I am lucky that I've been able to keep my job during the pandemic. I work at a nonprofit cafe in Downtown that seeks to support and build power with immigrant and refugee women. We currently work with women from Arabic and Spanish-speaking backgrounds, who work with us for 6 months in our cafe and attend our English, political education, and computer skills classes, among others. Our long-term goal is to be an organizing space, and cultivate our community's capacity to mobilize itself.

I'm still under 26, and my parents have jobs that provide health insurance benefits in California. If I need to, I can schedule a video call with my primary care doctor in California, and she can prescribe me medicine that I can pick up at a nearby pharmacy. And yet, as someone living comfortably with a stable job and no dependents, I can't access a doctor in the state of Connecticut. I've needed to in the past year: a year ago I needed care for a finger that I jammed while playing frisbee. I tried going to Cornell Scott Health Clinic, but was told it would cost me hundreds of dollars out of pocket that I couldn't pay. I went to a CVS Minute Clinic, and they told me I needed an X-ray, which would also cost hundreds of dollars out of pocket. This was a simple, silly injury, but without proper care, it turned into what is now a permanently disfigured finger. To get care that I could afford, I would have had to buy a plane ticket and fly myself to California. My income places me above the poverty line so I don't qualify for Husky, but the monthly cost of private health insurance packages is nearly half of what I pay in rent.

I write about my own experience to add my drop in the ocean of stories that will push this bill forward. A key part of my experience is that I have friends and mentors who can't access any healthcare at all because they don't have a social security number. This makes no sense to me, and is why Husky Expansion NEEDS to pass. It's nothing less than a crime by the state to

categorically exclude any group of people from healthcare, and to allow private insurance companies to do the same. The pandemic should show us if nothing else did that that our health and wellbeing is interconnected. Protecting the wellbeing of a community means ensuring that every individual in that community is cared for.

I support the bill for Husky Expansion and the Public Option, because I believe healthcare is a human right. Every single one of us deserves to know that if we have an accident, if we catch the virus, if our human bodies ail and need care as human bodies do, that we will be supported.

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,

Camila Guiza-Chavez,
Semilla Collective