



**Testimony for Public Hearing  
Insurance and Real Estate Committee  
February 9, 2021**

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**S.B. 842 An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care In Connecticut**

Senator Lesser, Representative Wood and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, My name is Liz Gustafson, and I am the State Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut. 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.

The current healthcare system is one built upon decades of burdensome & discriminatory policies, and it is clear that barriers continue to put access to essential and quality healthcare out of reach for many Connecticut residents. Healthcare is a human right, and everyone deserves access to high-quality, affordable healthcare regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, zip code, immigration or economic status. Additionally, the ongoing pandemic has only further exacerbated health inequities that persist throughout our current healthcare system. Even before the pandemic, 51% of Connecticut residents struggled to afford their healthcare, and 43% of Connecticut adults reported foregoing or delaying care because of cost.<sup>1</sup> Connecticut has historically been a leader in the fight for reproductive freedom, and must meet the current moment by implementing policies such as S.B. 842 to address our current public health crisis. By passing S.B. 842, eligibility for the state Medicaid program (HUSKY) would be expanded, thus providing more working-class families with increased access to dependable, high-quality health insurance they can afford.

As mentioned, our current system has been built on decades of racism and white supremacy, which has lead to structural barriers that disproportionately impacts people with low incomes, people of color, and undocumented people. A crucial component of S.B. 842 is the expansion of health insurance options for undocumented individuals and families who are currently shut out of the health

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<https://www.healthcarevaluehub.org/advocate-resources/publications/connecticut-residents-struggle-afford-high-healthcare-costs-support-range-government-solutions-across-party-lines>

care market. Research by the Guttmacher Institute found that among those who are of reproductive age, the percentage of noncitizens who are uninsured is nearly three times higher than their naturalized and U.S. born counterparts<sup>2</sup>, underscoring the importance of ensuring no one is left behind when implementing policies that expand access to healthcare. Barriers & exclusion from coverage harms everyone's health, and our state has the responsibility to ensure every resident regardless of immigration status can exercise their basic right to protect their health, their families' health, and their economic well-being.

Finally, S.B. 842 would create a more accessible and affordable option for Connecticut residents, as well as small businesses, nonprofits, and unions. As a nonprofit & advocate for reproductive freedom, it is critical that we expand health care coverage and make dependable health care more affordable, especially with so many small businesses struggling and workers losing their jobs and health coverage. I urge the Committee to vote favorably in support of S.B. 842, as we can and must lower health costs, expand options, and ensure no one, especially marginalized communities, are left behind.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Liz Gustafson, MSW  
State Director  
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<sup>2</sup><https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2020/01/us-insurance-coverage-2018-affordable-care-act-still-under-threat-and-still-vital>