

Dear members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee,

I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 842, an act concerning health insurance and healthcare in Connecticut.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only killed more Americans in one year than were lost in three and a half years of fighting in WWII, it has laid bare all of our societies inequities big and small. The most obvious of all being healthcare. The Nobel Prize winning economist Angus Deaton described our current healthcare system as if a foreign country, like Iceland, colonized us and made us pay an exorbitant tribute to them or they would kill us more, only we are doing it to ourselves. Since 2015 the CDC reported that average life expectancy in the United States has declined rather than gone up. Meanwhile health insurance companies have profited exponentially due heavily in part to government complicity that has licenced the upward redistribution of wealth towards pharma companies, hospital CEOs, and medical device manufacturers.

In 1970 the US's healthcare system was only slightly worse off than other similarly developed nations, but according to [Our World in Data](#) expenditures have grown and life expectancy has increased only slowly and is currently falling. When looking back at our nation's history of healthcare it becomes clear that white supremacy, and racial resentment played a very big role in why our healthcare system is a self-inflicted wound and a money pit. After WWII many nations around the world nationalized their healthcare, in the US however there was a lot of resistance to this because it would force hospitals in states with Jim Crow laws to desegregate and white people would have to pay for black and brown people to have equal access to healthcare. As the saying goes, "When you are accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression". The politics of racial resentment proved to be a winning for politicians like Ronald Reagan who referred to African Americans as "Welfare Queens" and the "Tea Party" Republicans who demonized the ACA and went so far as to refuse federal dollars to expand Medicaid in their state. Even at the expense of the health and wellbeing of their voters, who themselves admitted they were willing to die rather than be put on the same plane as people different than themselves. According to Dr. Johnathon MetzI in his book "Dying of Whiteness" one man he met in Tennessee who was dying of a preventable illness was against expanding Medicaid in Tennessee because in his own words, "We don't need any more government in our lives. And in any case, no way I want my tax dollars paying for Mexicans or welfare queens." We cannot afford anymore to pretend that our refusal to expand healthcare to all of our state residents is based on anything more than our refusal to lift up historically marginalized communities. We have the most expensive healthcare system in the world and yet not only does it deliver the worst healthcare in the developed world it is quite literally killing us. This bill is a very important first step towards rectifying these historic inequities and establishing Connecticut as a national leader in health outcomes.

In the words of Thomas Jefferson, "The care of human life and happiness and not their destruction is the first and only legitimate object of good government."

Thank you for your time,

Leanne Harpin

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