

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

My name is Stefan Keller and I live in Hartford, Connecticut. I am a member of CT Students for a Dream and Make the Road Connecticut, two organizations that are led by and work in support of immigrant families and young people across the state. I am writing today in strong support of S.B. 842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care In Connecticut and urge you to ensure that undocumented families are included in the bill as it moves forward.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, over 50% of undocumented immigrants living in Connecticut are uninsured. That is over 60,000 people. That is 60,000 people that many times do not have a primary health care provider, that rely on emergency rooms and walk-in clinics as their primary source of healthcare, that are living with chronic conditions that go untreated, and that face huge medical bills that they cannot pay off. S.B. 842 includes coverage options for undocumented individuals and families which will go a long way towards increasing the health and well-being of tens of thousands in our state. All of our residents deserve equitable, dependable, and affordable health care and SB. 842 does that by creating new public options for health insurance in our state.

I worked for several years doing college access work with CT Students for a Dream. I will never forget a high school senior that I met a few years ago. They were looking to go to college and when we talked about why that was important to them, they said because they needed health insurance to get a surgery done that their family currently could not afford. Can you imagine being 18 and making your college decisions based on the health insurance options that they have? For many of us with health insurance, this is not something we even think about when applying to college but for low-income and undocumented families this is a strong consideration. I talked to many students about how college may be the only time in their lives that have access to health insurance and how to make the most of it. This should not be happening in our state. Undocumented young people should have access to quality and affordable healthcare as children, as teenagers, and as working adults, not just for the few fleeting years they are in college.

The consequences of not passing this bill and including undocumented immigrants are serious for all of us. We see this in the higher death rates for black and brown residents during the pandemic, resulting from lack of access to quality healthcare before the pandemic and the chronic conditions caused by this lack of access. We see this in the undocumented and uninsured residents who suffer from chronic conditions and have to wait until they are so sick that their life is threatened to receive sub-par band-aid care that does not help them manage their chronic conditions but just holds them over to the next emergency. This is one of the reasons a report by Data Haven shows that a child born in Bridgeport has a life expectancy of 19 years less than a child born in Westport. We see this in the continually rising cost of healthcare caused by undocumented and uninsured residents having to use emergency care, not being able to afford it, and hospitals and insurance companies passing the cost down to the rest of us.

With this bill, Connecticut has a chance to right some of these wrongs. I like to believe that all of us want to live in a world where everyone can live longer, healthier lives. This bill is an opportunity to move us closer to that vision here in Connecticut. 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 and ensuring undocumented residents are covered as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stefan Keller  
[kellerst3@gmail.com](mailto:kellerst3@gmail.com)  
203-215-4311