

**TESTIMONY OF HARTFORD CITY COUNCILMAN JOSH MIGHTOM
IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 842**

Senator Lesser, Representative Wood, and esteemed members of the Committee:

I come before you to testify in favor of Senate Bill 842. I am here in my capacity as a Hartford City Councillor, and what I say is also informed by the work I have done with our city's undocumented population through Hartford Deportation Defense and my knowledge of the realities our poorest families face, from my work as a public defender. What I can tell you is that Hartford families suffer every day, and in more ways than you can imagine, from their inability to get adequate healthcare.

You may hear opponents of this bill cite the fact that our state's overall percentage of uninsured people is down and appears to be holding steady. But Connecticut is the land of disparities, and as is frequently the case here, positive aggregate numbers hide acute need among the most marginalized. Experts say that the cost of a basic family health insurance plan in our state is about \$20,000 a year. If that seems like a staggering chunk of the state's median household income of \$76,000 a year, imagine what it means in Hartford, where the average family makes less than half the state median. Then consider that Hartford residents are more likely to have seasonal and sporadic employment, more likely to work for small businesses, more likely to be undocumented and unable to access established insurance systems. Consider, too, that our city already faces more environmental health risks, from hosting the region's trash-burning plant to breathing in the exhaust from the confluence of highways that bring workers from other towns to their downtown offices. The life expectancy in Northeast Hartford is eleven years shorter than it is a few miles away in West Hartford.

The results radiate outward beyond health and into other areas of life. Sick parents struggle to get children to school. Children who miss school struggle to advance and classrooms with more absences overall slow the progress of every child, no matter their attendance. Uninsured people depend on emergency rooms for non-emergency care, slowing down care for those with acute need. Depending on emergency rooms or free clinics means more travel time to fewer appointments for the people most likely to depend on public transportation and least likely to be able to miss work, making employment and housing more precarious. Hartford's families are already not on an even footing with our suburban neighbors. This bill will start to close that gap and I urge you to vote for it.

Sincerely,


Josh Michtom
Hartford City Councilman