



CT WORKING FAMILIES

**Testimony of
Carlos Moreno, State Director
Connecticut Working Families Organization**

February 9, 2021

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

My name is Carlos Moreno, State Director at CT Working Families Organization. We're an anti-racist, multi-racial, progressive political organization that builds power for working people.

We stand in support of SB842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care in Connecticut. S.B. 842 will make healthcare more equitable, dependable, and affordable by creating new public options for health insurance in our state.

Expanding access to care to those who have suffered the most from the pandemic should be a top priority. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing economic and healthcare inequalities between whites and people of color in the US. The loss of jobs among people of color has led to a health insurance loss that is approximately double across the US with immigrant and Latinx populations experiencing the most disproportionate impacts. That's why a strong health insurance expansion must include coverage for all undocumented residents in CT, and ensure individual health plans on the health exchange are affordable for economically marginalized people.

Medicaid Expansion to 201% FPL

Medicaid plays a critical role in communities of color, in part because structural factors limit economic and wealth building opportunities for people of color, thus people of color are less likely to be engaged in the labor market, often because of discriminatory hiring practices, and are more likely to be employed in low-wage jobs that do not provide benefits like health insurance. Medicaid plays an important role in connecting people of color to the care they need. An equitable public option should expand Medicaid coverage for individuals and parents to 201% of FPL.

Access to medical coverage regardless of citizenship status

Undocumented immigrants are barred from accessing health coverage writ large. As a result, they cannot seek the proper health care they need. Yet, they contribute more than \$120 million in state

and local taxes in CT.¹ They should have the same right to medical coverage as every other taxpayer does.

Expanding access for immigrants saves money for CT. Many undocumented immigrants rely on emergency rooms – which are required under federal law to care for patients who come through their doors – when they get sick because they don't have access to healthcare. That ultimately costs the state and federal government millions in reimbursements to hospitals. Making healthcare coverage accessible to all undocumented immigrants saves CT money in the end.

Lastly, the pandemic has clearly demonstrated the failure of our employer-sponsored health coverage system to support society when there is a sudden, very high rate of unemployment. Increasing subsidies to exchange and raising Medicaid income eligibility levels so more people can qualify for health coverage is particularly important at this point in the health crisis.

I urge the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers to support S.B. 842 this session. Thousands left out of the recovery need emergency care, now.

Thank you for your time,

Carlos Moreno
State Director
Working Families Organization, CT

¹ <https://itep.org/undocumented-immigrants-state-local-tax-contributions-2017/>