

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

I am Rose Reyes from Willimantic, Connecticut. I am the Working Family Party Town member of the Windham Town Council and a public school bilingual educator who supports Senate Bill 842: An Act Concerning Health Insurance and Health Care In Connecticut because it is timely and working towards the idea of health equity we so badly need. It is a step in the right direction in addressing health insurance gaps and inequity throughout the State.

S.B. 842 will make health care more equitable, dependable, and affordable by creating new public options for health insurance in our state. I am of the position that high quality health care ought to be a human right and I am aware that there are thousands that are either without insurance or are underinsured in Connecticut.

In the context of the pandemic we have witnessed what research has indicated regarding the quality of and access to health insurance especially for those in lower wage jobs and in communities with growing populations of people of color. Their health insurance loss is approximately double across the United States with immigrant and Latinx populations being impacted most disproportionately. Latinx patients are the most uninsured population in the United States today. Latinx individuals make up a large portion of the workforce that is unable to get adequate health coverage.

As a public school, bilingual educator I am encountering a growing number of families trying to piece together health care services and insurance during this pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the pre existing healthcare gaps for my families and their communities. Up in the quiet corner, Willimantic is a small city that would benefit greatly from the passage of S.B. 842. Our city's profile incorporates all the attributes that warrant the need for such a bill: We are young yet vulnerable (median age under 30 with a poverty rate of over 25%); we have a large and growing Latinx population (at least 45%) with varying degrees of citizenship status; most of their employment revolves around the service industry and educational services\*.

S.B. 842's particular points:

- Restoring eligibility for HUSKY A parents to 201% FPL
- A public option for small employers and nonprofits
- A system similar to Access Health CT to include undocumented individuals/families
- Subsidies to purchase health insurance on Access Health CT
- Connecting those applying for unemployment benefits to Access Health CT for insurance options

will certainly help in addressing the gap Wilimantic residents may be facing in today's healthcare and insurance crisis. Each point highlights the specific needs Willimantic, and by extension, Connecticut has been experiencing for far too long.

Lastly, we ought not overlook the potential savings for municipalities once access is expanded. Less reliance on emergency room visits especially now, during the pandemic will relieve the municipalities of this expense so that more resources can be allocated to stemming the pandemic's tide.

I hope the Committee and our lawmakers will support S.B. 842 this session so that high quality, reliable and affordable health care via a new public options component for health insurance. It is a step in the right direction in meeting the needs of all of Connecticut and especially of Willimantic.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
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\* <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/willimantic-ct#:~:text=Civics-,About,%2439%2C489%2C%20a%2017.7%25%20increase.>