CONNECTICUT IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE COALITION

Members of the Human Services Committee

Testimony by Robert Fishman, Executive Director of the Connecticut Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (CIRC) March 10, 2022 in support of SB 284

My name is Robert Fishman and I am the Executive Director of CIRC, established in 1996. We are a broad based network of over 20 community organizations, religious and business groups, legal service providers committed to protecting the rights of and economic development of refugee and immigrant communities in the state. As an advocacy agency in support of all immigrants we thank the General Assembly for its valuable and important legislation passed last year for Husky health coverage for all Connecticut residents from birth to age 8. We fully support SB 284 which will now cover all children 18 and under regardless of their immigration status. Fortunately, our state is recovering from many years of budget deficits so we are urging you to unanimously increase the cost of Husky coverage for all children 18 and under as we all are committed to a healthy and vibrant state. Today, too many school age children lack health care and that creates difficulties for families, the public educational system and the work force.

I am proud to say that on February 12 of this year, CIRC cosponsored 2 families of 5 from Afghanistan. We were able to bring them off the Fort Dix base in New Jersey and resettle them in safe and secure apartments in East Hartford. Fortunately, they are all entitled to Health insurance and I can enthusiastically report the children are in our public schools and thriving. CIRC in its commitment to advocacy for all immigrants would hope to say the same for children who are not documented.

You will hear many powerful stories today from immigrants and their family members about the negative impact of lack of Husky health. I can state for the record that our office receives a minimum of 3 calls a week from a school nurse or administrator asking where they can send a child to a doctor when the child or family has no health insurance. I would like to be able to inform them that all of our school children are eligible for Husky health regardless of immigration status. The Human Service Committee has the opportunity to begin to make this happen.

Please pass Senate Bill 284 and help to make the State of Connecticut, the Immigrant State.

Yours truly,

Robert J. Fishman

Robert J. Fishman
CIRC Executive Director

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