



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Supporting
House Bill 5251, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Health
Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in This State**

Senator Lesser, Representative Scanlon, Ranking Members Kelly and Pavalock-D'Amato, and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee:

My name is Kelly McConney Moore, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 5251, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Health Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in This State. We strongly encourage the committee to support House Bill 5251.

The bill's creation of a task force to study the health insurance needs and barriers to insurance access for undocumented people in Connecticut is wise. Noncitizens are significantly more likely to be uninsured than citizens, with an estimated 45 percent of undocumented immigrants uninsured.¹ Children with at least one noncitizen parent are almost twice as likely to be uninsured as children with two citizen parents.² This could be a contributing factor to the low rate of healthcare utilization by undocumented people – who account for just 1.4 percent of the total medical expenditures in the U.S., even though they make up approximately 5 percent of the population.³ Clearly, there is a gap between the healthcare needs of immigrants, particularly undocumented immigrants, and their healthcare access.

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation, Health Coverage of Immigrants (Feb. 15, 2019), *available at* <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/fact-sheet/health-coverage-of-immigrants/>.

²² *Id.*

³ Courtney Hollands, "Do Immigrants Drain the U.S. Health-Care System?" Tufts Medicine Magazine (Winter2019), *available at* <https://sites.tufts.edu/medicine/winter-2019/do-immigrants-drain-the-u-s-health-care-system/>.

While this bill is timely and important, it can be strengthened in two major ways. First, the task force should be tasked with identifying barriers faced by all immigrants, not just undocumented immigrants. Insurers such as HUSKY exclude green card holders who have lived here for less than five years, for example.⁴ While undocumented people have the highest barriers to obtaining health insurance, we believe that the task force's focus can and should be expanded in a manner that does not shortchange the needs of undocumented people. We also urge this Committee to ensure that the task force includes impacted people, such as immigrants who unable to obtain health insurance coverage.

Healthcare is a right that should be afforded to all people in Connecticut. Undocumented people contribute hugely to our state and should not be punished because of their legal status. Connecticut should study the problem and help broaden access for undocumented people. The task force, which should include impacted people, should also study the needs of immigrants of all legal statuses in obtaining health insurance. Accordingly, the ACLU-CT supports House Bill 5251, An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Health Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in This State and encourages this Committee to support and strengthen the bill.

⁴ CT Voices for Children, *Husky Eligibility Manual: A Guide to Husky A, B, and D at 4-8* (Sept. 2019), available at <http://www.ctvoices.org/huskymanual>.