

Insurance and Real Estate Committee

H.B. 5251: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS IN THIS STATE

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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-six years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate of policy solutions that enhance women's economic security, freedom from violence and harassment, and reproductive rights.

CWEALF encourages the Committee to support House Bill No. 5251: *An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Health Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in this State*, which illustrates the importance of ensuring all Connecticut residents have access to healthcare as a human right.

Access to affordable health care is a critical component to advance the economic security of women in our state. Forty-four percent (44%) of undocumented immigrants in Connecticut are women. Women-led households with access to affordable health care are less likely to forego or delay much needed medical treatment and preventive care for themselves and their families.

People of color disproportionately make up the population of undocumented immigrants in Connecticut. Lack of access to affordable health care disproportionately impacts women of color, who make up the majority of the undocumented immigrant population in Connecticut. Women of color already face a significant gender wage gap and disparities in health outcomes, and often lack access to affordable and comprehensive health care and services.

Due to racism, sexism, and other systemic barriers that contribute to a lack of access to affordable, quality health care, women of color experience significant health disparities. Black women are 40% more likely to die from breast cancer than white women and also experience a higher rate of maternal mortality, as they are 3 to 4 times more likely to die during childbirth than non-Hispanic white women. Latina women also often face serious health disparities and have the highest incidence rate of cervical cancer in the United States.¹

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4955974/>

Undocumented immigrants pay Connecticut about \$145 million into state and local taxes annually. Taxes fund state healthcare programs utilized by Connecticut residents; however, undocumented immigrants are unable to access the healthcare programs that their taxes fund simply because of their immigration status. As taxpayers, undocumented immigrants in Connecticut deserve an equal and fair opportunity to access the healthcare programs.

A task force to study how health insurance will impact undocumented immigrants in Connecticut will shine a light on healthcare disparities across race, gender, and citizenship status. CWEALF urges the Committee to support House Bill No. 5251: *An Act Establishing a Task Force to Study Health Insurance Coverage for Undocumented Immigrants in this State.*