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Testimony of Ann Pratt, Director of Organizing CT Citizen Action Group and Co-Chair of the Medicaid Strategy Group
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
Wednesday, February 19th 2020

Regarding HB 5055- An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium ending June 30, 2021

To Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica and Representative Laveille and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Ann Pratt, Director Organizing at the CT Citizen Action Group and Co-chair of the Medicaid Strategy Group. Both organizations have a deep commitment to protecting, defending and expanding health insurance coverage for low-income parents and children in Connecticut.

We are pleased -and relieved- that this year's budget proposal HB 5055 keeps Medicaid's funding level – and – in particular-does not include any cuts to the HUSKY A program.

The HUSKY Health Insurance Program is one of the most important programs for children and families to get and sustain essential health care coverage for their families.

In 2016- cuts to CT's Medicaid program resulted in over 11,000 parents losing their health insurance. While CT took the necessary steps to stave off additional cuts in 2018 and 2019- there are still approximately 187,000 residents in this state that do not have insurance.

The uninsured population are more likely to be people with incomes between \$25,000-\$49,000 and from black and brown communities. It is also estimated that 30.1% of foreign-born, non-citizens (legal permanent residents such as green card holders) are uninsured, and the rate of uninsured for the undocumented community is even higher- estimated at 52%.

The uninsured are less likely to receive preventive care and services for major health conditions and chronic diseases.

The uninsured are at a greater risk of unaffordable medical bills and accumulating crippling medical debt.

Now it is time to continue attacking the uninsured rate in CT by restoring health insurance coverage to working parents- and by expanding HUSKY coverage to foreign-born, non-citizens adults and children.

We urge the committee to restore eligibility rates for parents in HUSKY A to 201% of the federal poverty level (\$43,657 for a family of three)- and take a significant step towards closing CT's health insurance gap by including undocumented families in the Medicaid program.

CONNECTICUT CITIZEN ACTION GROUP

Putting People First





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Restoring eligibility rates for parents- and expanding the HUSKY program to immigrants will achieve vital benefits for Connecticut residents including:

1. Increasing the likelihood of children gaining greater access to health care due to the fact that when parents have insurance – children see a doctor more frequently;
2. Lessen the levels of uncompensated care due to higher insurance rates;
3. Raising eligibility to 201% will significantly mitigate the impact of the “benefit cliffs” produced by the recent increase in our minimum wage levels- preventing the possibility of eliminating the benefit of a higher wage;
4. Restoration of HUSKY A eligibility will reduce disparities in health insurance coverage rates particularly related to the lack of insurance rates that exist for Connecticut’s Black and Latino communities.

I urge you to take decisive action and restore HUSKY A eligibility rates to 201% of Federal Poverty Levels, and go further in closing CT’s insurance gap by expanding our Medicaid program to include our immigrant population.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Ann Pratt
Director of Organizing
CCAG

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