

Testimony in Support of H.B. 6555 AN ACT CONCERNING LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT AND APPROVAL OF COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS.

Appropriations Committee

Doris Maldonado

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Good day/Buen dia Co Chairs Osten and Walker and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Doris Maldonado and I am a registered Latina voter in West Hartford. I am here to testify regarding HB 6555 regarding the distribution of COVID-19 relief.

As the Statewide Bilingual Health Information Specialist for PATH P2P Family Voices CT and National Family Voices Cultural Responsiveness Team, I offer more than professional expertise as well as despair for the marginalized within marginalized communities. Health inequity has fueled my participation as a graduate from CT Partners in Policymaking, UCEDD LEND program and UMKC Project ECHO; as the North Central Leader Charting the Lifecourse Linguistics Ambassador, NAMI SMARTS advocacy trainer, Ending the Silence Facilitator, NAMI BASICS Bilingual trainer, CAFAF bilingual trainer and KTP member. I've dedicated over 25 years to amplifying the voices as a community advocate for the marginalized and was recognized as one of the 2020 top 50 Latino Leaders in CT as a Community Leader and 2020 Hispanic Women's Leadership Award. I've had the honor of being featured on Identidad Latina, NBC Univision, El Show de Analeh and CT Latino News regarding the health disparities among the marginalized Latino, disabled and youth in foster care. I've served as: Keep the Promise Coalition Co-Chair, USH Co-Chair Accessibility & Inclusion Ministry, Children in Placement GAL & Board, GHIAA, Mental Health CT Policy Committee, Ct Children's Family Advisory Council & Behavioral Team, DD Council Lifecourse Linguistics Ambassador & Board, Bureau of Education State Advisory Council Legislative Committee, Yale PRCH Latino Colectivo, CT Family First Prevention Community Team & QRTP, CT 2020 Census Complete Count Committee, CT Emergency Support Function (ESF) #15 (Public Information and External Affairs) Diverse Communities & Disabilities Task Force, National Family Voices Cultural Responsiveness Team-Telehealth, Annie Courtney Foundation Board and Police Accountability Taskforce: Disabilities and Youth Subcommittees.

I am a Latina with Disabilities, adoptive mother of 17 year old twins with special needs and a thriving toddler. Between my children and I, we have over 15 physical and mental health disabilities making us immunocompromised.

Our family lost 4 matriarchs last year including my mother. My eldest son, a junior in HS, survived 16 days with a false negative COVID diagnosis right after the world shut down only to have my mother pass the following month and two aunt's every other month after. I've had electrical shock treatments twice to my heart and subsequent PTSD concluding in securing a will and DNR.

Health access **IS AN ESSENTIAL human and civil right**. Access to the vaccine is considered essential but only for targeted and protected classes as we faced survival of the fittest when persons with Disabilities were left isn't waiting for testing and medical attention nearly a year ago. Our communities remain disparaged by health, housing, food, education and employment insecurities. Without health, the rest have become a pipe dream further ostracizing our marginalized.

My son and I suffer with very tangible fears of contamination and trauma daily. The opportunity of procuring a vaccine had masked the overwhelming fear of death only to have hope ripped away by continued blatant systematic privilege. People with Disabilities are perpetually the have-nots in your democracy as we crawl towards tomorrow and the next beyond the 364 days when WE WERE forgotten & remanded to isolation without voice or choice.

As a guardian ad litem, certified health worker, infant and youth mental health worker, teacher, faith-based Accessibility and inclusion leader, I've advocated for **our people** throughout the lifespan and their civil rights in pursuit of happiness. Their holy grail is health.

I cannot, we cannot empower, support, educate and rationalize the vaccine distribution when it blatantly disregards at least 1 in 5 of us while stacking the disabled marginalized among the already marginalized. Health, like the COVID 19 vaccine, has been ordered and shipped awaiting consumption at a satellite near you but delivery for many has been stalled and WALLED.

Please help me prevent burying our children or leaving them behind Orphaned as I was. Thank you for sharing your privilege. Gracias.