



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 10, 2022**

SB 284, An Act Increasing The Age From Eight To Eighteen Years For An Income-Eligible Person To Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless Of Immigration Status

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 284, An Act Increasing The Age From Eight To Eighteen Years For An Income-Eligible Person To Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless Of Immigration Status**. CHA supports this bill.

Since early 2020, hospitals and health systems have been at the center of Connecticut's response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, acting as a vital partner with the state and our communities. Hospitals expanded critical care capacity, procured essential equipment and supplies, and stood up countless community COVID-19 testing locations. Hospitals have been an essential component of the statewide vaccine distribution plan including efforts to reach and serve historically under-resourced communities disproportionately affected by the virus. Through it all, hospitals and health systems have continued to provide high-quality care for everyone, regardless of ability to pay. This tireless commitment to the COVID-19 response confirms the value of strong hospitals in Connecticut's public health infrastructure and the well-being of our communities and reinforces the need for a strong partnership between the state and hospitals.

SB 284 raises the age limit on coverage for certain individuals who lack access to health insurance coverage as a result of their immigration status, from eight years of age and younger to under nineteen years of age. We believe that raising the age limit as proposed to include older children and young adults will substantially improve access to early and essential healthcare services.

Many immigrants are at high risk of being uninsured because their immigration status affords them limited access to coverage options. Although some individuals are able to access employer-sponsored insurance for themselves and their children, such insurance is limited as a result of the high cost of coverage or health plans' unwillingness to process applications. In addition, federal law precludes or limits coverage in many cases under Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and Access Health CT's health insurance exchange.

As a result of this lack of coverage, many immigrants and their dependents have a great deal of difficulty accessing care. As is the case with other uninsured individuals, they may delay care or forego care entirely until their condition requires emergency department visits or hospitalizations. These services, which are avoidable if care is provided earlier, may ultimately be covered by Medicaid at significant taxpayer expense.

Uninsured immigrants do have access to a limited range of discounted healthcare services through Federally Qualified Health Centers, but they encounter sizable barriers if they need specialty care. Lack of coverage for children and young adults as a result of immigration status affects long-term health and development. SB 284 will positively influence the long-term health of these children and young adults.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.