

### **Human Services Committee**

Public Testimony of the Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF)  
*S.B. 284: An Act Increasing the Age from Eight to Eighteen Years for an Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status*  
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The Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) is a statewide nonprofit that advocates for and empowers women and girls in Connecticut, especially those who are underserved or marginalized. For forty-eight years, CWEALF has been a leading advocate for policy solutions to enhance women's economic security, combat discrimination, and increase gender equity in our state.

CWEALF urges the Committee to support *S.B. 284: An Act Increasing the Age from Eight to Eighteen Years for an Income-Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status*.

Access to healthcare is a fundamental human right and no one should be denied health care due to inability to pay or immigration status. Last year, Connecticut's state legislature took one step towards achieving equity in healthcare access with the passage of legislation to provide HUSKY health insurance coverage to children up to the age of eight regardless of immigration status. Although a step in the right direction, the gaps that have been created by this law add overwhelming burdens for many families in the state.

CWEALF's Legal Education program serves over 1,000 clients per year, the majority of which are low-income women of color with one dependent. Some of the clients we serve are undocumented and come to us with questions about housing, workplace issues, their immigration status, and more. Since many of them are parents, some of our clients who are undocumented will be faced with the challenges of having their children grow out of the program and become uninsured again once they hit the age of nine. Others will have to deal with the reality of having only some of their children insured through the HUSKY program, and others uninsured due to their age.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the issues our clients are faced with on a daily basis. As the pandemic starts to recede and we are focusing our efforts on recovery, we must center inclusivity and equity in how we move forward. The current law is inequitable and can cause more harm for families down the road. Our work should not end with expanding access up to the age of 18; in the long term, we need to ensure that all immigrants, including adults, are given access to HUSKY health insurance and the healthcare that they need and deserve as members of our communities.

We urge the Committee to vote favorably in support of S.B. 284 to continue the conversation towards health insurance for all. No parent should be forced to choose between accessing the care their children need and paying their rent or putting food on the table. It is critical that we address the inequities of healthcare accessibility and its negative effects on all of its residents. Senate Bill No. 284 is an essential step towards recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and its lingering consequences, as well as the creation of a healthier and more equitable Connecticut.