



**Testimony in Support of House Bill 6187: An Act Concerning the Restructuring of
Certain Taxes and Tax Equity and
Senate Bill 821: An Act Concerning the Reformation of Certain Taxes and Tax Equity**
Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut
March 15, 2021

On behalf of Universal Health Care Foundation of CT, I am here today to urge this Committee to take bold action on revenue this session. We are proud members of the Recovery for All campaign, and we believe that now is the time to do the right thing for our state and pass HB 6187 & SB 821.

The past year has put in stark relief the enormous gaps in equity, access, quality and affordability in our state's health care system. The pandemic has further exposed the longstanding need for our government to play a positive role in making sure that no person is left behind because of employment, race or ethnicity, income, geography or immigration status.

More than ever, it is crystal clear that good health and equity in access to quality, affordable health care are essential to our state's well-being and recovery. If people are sick or even worse, dying before their time, they can not contribute to our economy. That is why investing in health and health care is crucial to our economic recovery and to a thriving future. Here are just a few examples of why we need to invest:

- Huge gaps in life expectancy by people of color compared to white residents, experienced by people living in neighborhoods just a few miles apart, are driven by racism, poverty, education and lack of access to health care.ⁱ
- An estimated 29% of COVID cases and 22% of deaths, through August 31, 2020 in Connecticut, can be linked to lack of health coverage.ⁱⁱ
- A survey conducted by Access Health CT shows that black, Latinx and non-citizen residents and those with low and moderate incomes were most likely to be uninsured.ⁱⁱⁱ
- HUSKY A and D year over year enrollment grew by 11.5% - just under 85,000 people - as of the end of December 2020, reflecting the increase in unemployment caused by the pandemic.^{iv}
- Small businesses are the drivers of our economy, yet the small business insurance market is shrinking rapidly because they lack access quality options for their employees with year-to-year predictable, affordable increases.

HB 6187 and SB 821 represent crucial steps forward in building revenue to invest in the health and care of our families, communities, small employers, nonprofit organizations and hardworking people. These bills provide our state with powerful tools to meet the moment we are in.

A true Recovery for All is the prescription we need now – and our state residents are looking to you, our elected leaders, to do your part to deliver on the promise so many of you ran on last fall in the midst of the pandemic - to protect and improve the quality of life for all of us, not just some of us.

In the area of health and health care, revenue is needed to:

- Address crucial social determinants of health by making improvements in housing, education and many other areas.
- Improve our public health infrastructure, including expanding the use of community health workers to better solve health problems that originate because of poverty, poor housing, poor nutrition.
- Provide affordable coverage by extending HUSKY coverage to all residents to 201% FPL, regardless of immigration status.
- Enhance subsidies for those buying coverage through Access Health CT.
- Use the buying power of the state to create new quality options for small businesses, nonprofits and labor unions, allowing them to escape the cycle of unpredictable rate increases and eroding benefits.

You will hear about the revenue generation features of these two bills in detail today. They provide our state with a diverse range of options that will move us out of an austerity frame and into a frame that looks to a better future with equitable opportunity extended to the people you were elected to serve – not just the few who have resources for lobbyists, public relations firms and campaign contributions.

You have the opportunity, with the passage of these two bills, to provide our state with a ladder that rests upon a revenue foundation based upon equity and fairness. Your bold action will help our state climb out of this pandemic with sound opportunity for a better future. We are asking you to vote for a recovery for us all. Thank you for your consideration.

Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut's mission is to serve as a catalyst that engages residents and communities in shaping a democratic health system that provides universal access to quality, affordable, equitable health care and promotes health in Connecticut. We believe that health care is a fundamental right and that our work is part of a broader movement for social and economic justice.

ⁱ [Health Disparities and Social Determinants of Health in Connecticut](#), Access Health CT, February 2021

ⁱⁱ [The Catastrophic Cost of Uninsurance: COVID-19 Cases and Deaths Closely Tied to America's Health Coverage Gaps](#), Families USA, March 2021

iii [Understanding underlying drivers, barriers and needs of the uninsured in Connecticut](#), Access Health CT, October 2019. (see pages 15-17)

iv [HUSKY Health Application and Enrollment Activity](#), Medical Assistance Oversight Council, March 12, 2021