

Wednesday, Mar 29, 2023

Re: MNCare Immigrant Inclusion Act SF49, Article 1, Sec 6.

Dear Chair Wiklund and Members of the MN Senate Health and Human Services Committee,

Unidos Minnesota is an immigrant-led, state-wide organization building power for Minnesota working families to advance social, racial, and economic justice. We are an organization born out of the immigration justice movement. Immigration, education, healthcare, and climate justice are at the core of our work.

While we support inclusion of young people without status in MinnesotaCare, we are deeply disappointed SF49 does not include MinnesotaCare expansion for adults without status. Currently, the District of Columbia, Illinois, New York, Oregon, and California provide health coverage to individuals regardless of immigration status. The MinnesotaCare Immigrant Inclusion Act will ensure Minnesota has a healthcare system that does not leave anyone behind. Across the state, healthcare providers support this policy because they have seen firsthand how health issues become much worse and more complicated when care is delayed.

Throughout the most critical period of the pandemic, Latino essential workers kept Minnesota going at a [high](#) cost to their community. Research shows Latinos are 1.3 times more likely to get the COVID-19 virus, three times more likely to be hospitalized, and twice as likely to die from the virus, compared to white, non-Hispanic Minnesotans. Additionally, for some Latinos, access to new or existing social protections— food security programs, stimulus checks, health insurance, mental health services, and unemployment benefits & paid sick leave— has been incredibly limited, or non-existent for undocumented and mixed status families, where the lack of financial and social support creates deeper health, economic, and social inequities. Hence, it is time for essential workers to access healthcare.

Adult essential workers without status are not only the family's breadwinners, more often than not, they are also the family's main caretakers as they provide the most important relationship context for the nurturing and protection of children and the elderly. Furthermore, before the pandemic, a growing body of mortality research agreed that immigrant adults experienced rapid health deterioration, -compared to the native-born population, due to the compounded effects of systemic discrimination, the lack of access to care, and the risks associated with labor-intensive occupations such as meatpacking, construction, and agricultural work.

This legislative session, shaped by a DFL trifecta, presents a historic opportunity to honor the dignity of essential workers. Undocumented workers without status not only strengthen our economy with their labor, help build the wealth of global food and meatpacking conglomerates, and pay over 31M in tax revenue to the state (just in 2018), - their physical bodies kept our economy going and our Minnesota families safe and sheltered at home. The COVID-19 pandemic made it clear that worker safety, economic health, and physical health are deeply connected.

This legislative session is an historic opportunity to address systemic contradictions that cost immigrant workers lives. Therefore, forgetting about these essential workers, after a once in a generation health emergency in which their physical ability kept Minnesota moving forward before vaccines were available, is morally unacceptable. Undocumented workers cannot be deemed *essential* while being excluded from basic healthcare access.

Please support expanding MinnesotaCare for all immigrants regardless of immigration status.

Should you have any questions, please contact me or our Policy Director, Sara Lopez. Sara can be reached by email at [sara@unidos-mn.org](mailto:sara@unidos-mn.org) or by phone at (507) 581-4211.

Respectfully submitted,

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