



UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE  
FOUNDATION OF CONNECTICUT

June 30, 2020

Governor Ned Lamont  
State Capitol  
210 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Senator Martin Looney, Senate President Pro Tempore  
Senator Bob Duff, Senate Majority Leader  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3300  
300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Representative Joe Aresimowicz, Speaker of the House  
Representative Matthew Ritter, House Majority Leader  
Legislative Office Building, Room 4100  
300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Senator Len Fasano, Senate Minority Leader  
Senator Kevin Witkos, Senate Minority Leader Pro Tempore  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3400  
300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Representative Themis Klarides, House Minority Leader  
Representative Vincent Candelora, House Minority Deputy Leader  
Legislative Office Building, Room 4200  
300 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Governor Lamont and Leaders of the Connecticut General Assembly:

At Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut, our health justice mission is embedded in a wider commitment to social and economic justice.

Mission: To serve as a catalyst that engages residents and communities in shaping a democratic health system that provides universal access to quality, affordable, and 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.

In the era of COVID-19, our mission is more central than ever.

Systemic racism and income inequality have left too many residents unprotected from both the health and economic devastation of COVID-19. The burden of this crisis has fallen disproportionately on people of color, immigrant families, those living with disability and chronic illness, residents housed in prisons, nursing homes and other institutions, and on lower and middle income people in our state. And a health care system oriented too much toward income generation and not enough toward community health and public health has left patients, providers and frontline workers far too vulnerable.

#### Health and Health Care

When it comes to health and health care, the state, led by Governor Lamont, has led a strong, coordinated response to the crisis. The results can be seen in the declining numbers of people in the hospital, and the increasing availability of testing.

But a patchwork of executive orders and voluntary, time-limited COVID-19 specific policies by hospitals, insurance companies, prescription drug corporations and other health industry stakeholders cannot paper over the fact that we need deep, lasting, systemic change in how we deliver and pay for health care, how we set our priorities and how we measure our progress toward universal health care and optimal health for all.

In the short run, the upcoming special session offers the opportunity to pass legislation to address immediate concerns caused by COVID-19, as well as to pass several bills that had already made it through the committee process. These bills, while written prior to the pandemic, are also very relevant to the current crisis, but also address longer term concerns regarding health care access and affordability.

To-date, we have heard that health care issues may not even be considered during the upcoming Connecticut General Assembly special session. Attached is our proposed legislative agenda. I urge you to consider these recommendations as plans are finalized for the special session. I look forward to speaking with you about these recommendations in more detail.

Sincerely,



Frances G. Padilla  
President



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**Legislative Agenda for Connecticut General Assembly Special Session**

COVID-19 Specific

- *Protect residents from unaffordable health care costs*
  - No cost COVID-19 treatment and testing for all residents for the duration of the emergency
    - No surprise bills, regardless of network
    - No out-of-pocket costs regardless of network
    - Extension of premium grace period
- *Maintain provider safety net during the COVID-19 crisis*
  - Telehealth paid at same rate and covered fully, with no out-of-pocket costs
  - Emergency state funding of safety net providers (see also SB 274)
- *Social Determinants of Health/Racism*
  - Uniform, public race & ethnicity data collection, analysis and reporting
  - Community health workers, doulas, and recovery coaches are treated as essential health workers and their services are reimbursed by Medicaid and commercial payers
- *Targeted public health solutions for populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19*
  - Black/African American, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islanders and other People of Color
  - Frontline workers
  - Older adults
  - People with disabilities and chronic illness
  - People with mental illness and people with substance abuse challenges
  - Residents of nursing homes, mental health facilities, group homes, and other congregate settings
  - Incarcerated individuals
- *Ensure safe elections with maximum voter participation and an accurate and comprehensive census count*

## Bills Passed out of Committee During the 2020 Legislative Session

- *Protect residents from unaffordable health care costs*
  - Ensure affordable access to prescription drugs
    - Affordable access to diabetes medications and supplies, and emergency insulin coverage (SB 1, HB 5175)
    - Monthly prescription drug out-of-pocket caps (HB 5366)
    - Critical Drug Shortage Review Board (HB 5366)
    - Ban mid-year formulary changes (HB 5366, HB 5361)
  - Benchmark health care cost growth to rein in high prices, while improving health equity, quality and primary care access (HB 5028, SB 328)
  - Pro-rate deductibles when people switch insurance in the middle of the plan year (SB 337)
  - Ensure robust hospital financial assistance policies and protect residents from aggressive collection practices (SB 340)
  
- *Defend and expand options for affordable, quality coverage and care*
  - Expand public programs to cover more people
    - Coverage for all regardless of immigration status (Study – HB 5251)
    - Study and offer new options for individuals and small businesses (SB 346)