

House Health & Insurance  
 02/16/2022 01:30 PM  
 HB22-1094 Medicaid Assistance For Survivors Of Torture  
 Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Anonymous Anonymous            For            Self</p>	<p>February 15th,2022            Dear sir/ Madam</p> <p>Re: INTRODUCING MY EXPERIENCE AS REFUGEE SEEKER</p> <p>I decided to flee to America due to the torture I experienced from the current Military regime in my country. I was tortured by military and police, I fled to Colorado, USA to seek refuge from the Dictatorship of the Africa authority, I have been in Colorado for the past one year. Anyway I would love to support the bill because not having health insurance is a nightmare for us as Refugee. My experience is; since you're not allowed to work while your immigration status hasn't yet been approved, you face a lot of suffering when you fall sick, because the medical bill is too high. If I had access to health insurance when I had just arrived in the USA, it would have been easy for me to get psychological help to heal from the bad experiences I had faced in Uganda and I wouldn't want to see people experiencing this kind of suffering as I experienced when I had just arrived. Please help us the unfortunate victims of torture.            Thank you            Yours sincerely            Refugee Seeker</p>
<p>Jordan Garcia            For            American Friends Service            Committee, Colorado</p>	<p>Testimony for HB22-1094            Thank you for reading my testimony. My name is Evelyn Hutt, MD. I am a retired Associate Professor of Internal Medicine, University of Colorado. I write today on behalf of myself, the patients I have cared for, and the American Friends Service Committee.            I urge you to vote in favor of HB22-1094, because people who have suffered torture experience great trauma, which takes a lifetime to address and repair.            Over the course of my career, I cared for torture survivors from many countries, including China, Sudan, North Korea, Turkey and several countries in Central and South America. Torture, as defined by U.S. law is an act intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering, committed by a person acting under the color of law upon another person who he has under his custody or physical control. It has pervasive and lasting detrimental effects on the whole person, including physical, psychological, relational, and spiritual impacts, which often permeate generations and social and familial networks.            Many survivors of torture in Colorado do not qualify for medical coverage, including Medicaid. They are present in our community as</p>

	<p>lawful asylum seekers, but their immigration status prevents their accessing Medicaid. This makes it enormously difficult for them to get the physical, behavioral, and mental health services they need. It is essential for torture survivors in our community to have access to the care they need to heal, rebuild, and move forward with their lives. Morally, it is right for the State of Colorado to provide this care. And it makes good medical and economic sense. Problems treated early in an outpatient setting prevent the cost and trauma of Emergency Department visits and hospitalizations.</p> <p>HB22-1094 will play a vital role in allowing these individuals to regain their health, their sense of self and power, and to recover from the effects of torture. If passed, the bill will provide Medicaid to torture survivors in Colorado who actively receive case management services through a recognized torture treatment provider but do not qualify for other forms of health insurance through an employer, marketplace, Refugee Medical Assistance, or traditional Medicaid.</p> <p>On behalf of my colleagues and patients, I urge you to pass HB22-1094.</p> <p>Sincerely, Evelyn Hutt, MD and Jordan Garcia, AFSC</p>
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Dear Ms. Chair Lontine, members of the committee,

My name is Andrea Oviedo representing the International Rescue Committee in Denver (IRC). I am a Clinical Case Manager for Survivors of Torture (SOT), and I am presenting this testimony to support HB22-1094 because access to health services is one of the primary needs for our clients. I have witnessed the high level of stress that comes with the severe health effects resulting from their experience coupled with the difficulty of accessing appropriate and timely health care. This stress affects their capacity to cope with the unique challenges associated with their status as asylum seekers and worsens their general state of health.

A survivor's needs go beyond their torture experience. They had to leave their homes, losing their social support and everything they had built, bearing PTSD, physical injuries, sickness, extreme difficulties with trust, and fear of continued persecution.

In the midst of significant barriers such as limited or no fluency in English and unfamiliarity with systems and customs in this country, they do not have other options to search for and access healthcare providers to treat pain and other ongoing symptoms. Due to their immigrant situation, these individuals are focused on basic survival needs like food, shelter, and physical security for themselves and their families. This frequently means that survivors access medical services only when their illness is so advanced that it affects their capacity to operate normally or when these issues threaten their lives, putting further strains on our healthcare system when they do gain status and become Medicaid-eligible and begin to access care for their compounded health needs. I have seen our clients initiate a dental treatment that they will not be able to finish, go to the emergency room and incur a bill that they are unable to pay, or accumulate prescriptions of medicines that they cannot afford because they lack access to health insurance. This results in our clients not receiving follow-up care to health issues that can be controlled, and that result in more serious health problems than necessary.

The precarious situation of asylum seekers is the result of the limited personal resources to ask for help on the one hand and external barriers on the other. As a Clinical Case Manager, my options for helping individuals access healthcare are limited to connecting clients with temporary health services and guiding them through the process to fulfill requirements in order to enroll in discount healthcare programs—which are often time-limited, provided on a sliding scale, overbooked, or otherwise unable to meet the needs of SoTs in our community. This process is time consuming and takes away the capacity of my team to focus on other needs survivors have. Our clients, and SoTs across Colorado, would benefit tremendously from this bill. Accessing affordable health care in combination with the multidimensional services of our SoT program would increase their capacity to cope with the challenges described above. Likewise, mental health as part of health services plays a supremely important role for SoTs to recover from their traumatic experiences and continue with their lives despite all they have lost. Better mental health comes with better decisions, less avoidance strategies like alcohol and drugs, more involvement in family and community support, and general quality of life.

Preventive health care, management of chronic conditions, and mental health services would allow our clients to focus on their recovery and legal processes and eventually become more productive members of society.

I hope you will vote in favor of HB22-1094.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today,

Andrea Oviedo  
Survivors of Torture Clinical Case Manager  
International Rescue Committee in Denver