

My name is Howard Schulman, MD. I have been an adult primary care physician, general internist, in RI for the past 30 years, and I am testifying against this bill, H 6244 which would prohibit me from asking my patients about their immigration status.

In general just like it is bad to have a law that prohibits a physician from talking to a patient about abortion, it is bad to have a bill that prohibits a physician from talking about immigration status.

If a healthcare provider did talk to a patient about immigration status with the **intention to harm the patient**, I'm sure there are already ways that the healthcare provider could be punished, at least here in RI. There may also be HIPAA protections that prevent immigration status revealed in a medical setting from being disclosed without consent of the patient.

On the other hand, for example, I have a patient who for years would pay me in cash. Like with all my patients, I strongly encouraged him many times to call the Department of Health to get Obamacare since it is so easy to get and is pro-rated for income, but he kept on refusing to do this. I implored him to get the insurance, not for my fee, but if he ever got admitted to the hospital, the charges would be much, much higher and the hospital collection services would probably take every cent that he had.

But it was one day, again talking about insurance that he mentioned that despite being in the United States for almost 30 years that he was not able to become a US citizen due to the **broken immigration system**. He strongly desired to become a US citizen and did not want to go back to his native country.

He had previously contacted an immigration lawyer, but somehow, because he was a single male immigrant without a wife or children or other family that live here that he could not get through the immigration system in order to become a citizen and then get Obamacare.

With his permission, I even contacted Senator Whitehouse's office to see if he could help, but no. The patient had a manual labor job with others working for him, earned good money, and owned a house in Rhode Island. He had no criminal past record, probably paid his taxes, and had done nothing wrong, to the best of my knowledge.

In this patient's case, immigration status was a social determinant of health, if you will, and only when we talked about this did I better understand his situation, and talking about healthcare insurance made more sense to me and was less embarrassing to him.

Honestly, from my perspective, **immigration status is important for the healthcare provider to know about**, given how broken the immigration system is and how much immigration status can affect how healthcare is provided.