

Testimony on Senate Bill #6390
“An Act Concerning Access to Postsecondary Education”
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
March 15, 2011

Ms. Dahlia Sajuti and the Rev. Joshua Mason Pawelek

Senator Bye, Representative Willis and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

It is an honor to come before you today to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 6390, “An Act Concerning Access to Postsecondary Education.” My name is Dahlia Sajuti. I attend the Muhammad Islamic Center of Greater Hartford and I am a proud member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Coalition for Equity and Justice. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the 27 member congregations of the Interfaith Coalition, on behalf of our president, the Reverend Joshua Mason Pawelek, who was unable to be here with me today, and in solidarity with many organizations around the state that care deeply about the rights of both documented and undocumented immigrants.

While we support any effort to make higher education more affordable and more accessible to as many students as possible, we wholeheartedly support SB 6390 because it will put higher education in Connecticut within the reach of young people who lack legal immigration status. We are speaking specifically about children who were brought to the United States at a very young age when their parents entered the country without proper documentation. These are children who have been raised in Connecticut, who have attended public schools in Connecticut, who frequently have excelled in all the ways their friends with legal status have excelled. These are young people who aspire to achieve the American dream as much as anyone else. They love the United States. They love Connecticut. They want to succeed in Connecticut and give back to Connecticut. Providing them with the opportunity to pay in-state tuition rates for higher education is a very simple thing your committee and the General Assembly can do to help these young people who face considerable barriers in life due to no fault of their own.

We don’t offer this testimony lightly. We understand the complexities of immigration law. We understand the nature of the federal debate over immigration. Nevertheless, we feel strongly that a country that prides itself on being a “nation of immigrants” ought to do everything in its power to welcome and befriend new immigrants and their children, to offer them whenever possibly, the same blessings of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness we offer to all citizens. Such welcome and such blessings are the hallmark of a just and loving society--not a society that tears people down and crushes them, but a society that builds people up and enables them to succeed. Passage of SB 6390 is one step on the path to a truly just and loving society. Please support SB 6390. Thank you.