



Southern Connecticut
State University

501 Crescent Street
New Haven, CT 06515-1355

School of Health & Human Services
Departments of Communication Disorders • Marriage & Family Therapy
Nursing • Public Health • Recreation & Leisure Studies • Social Work



Testimony in support of H.B. 6390
AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION.

Edward Glaeser, a professor of economics at Harvard University, suggests that education is the “single best strategy for making a city prosperous” (Glaser, 2011). Education expands the minds and enhances the abilities of our young people to make productive contributions to our communities as they move into adulthood.

The Connecticut public colleges and universities have an application process to identify and admit those students who have demonstrated academic achievement during their high school education. Only those students with a track record of academic success are accepted.

Two students, classmates conceivably throughout their 12 years of schooling in Connecticut, distinguished academically, having passed the rigorous admissions process for a Connecticut public university; are treated differently once they accept their invitation to a post secondary education at a state institution. One student must pay anywhere between two to three times their classmate’s tuition rate because one student was brought into the country as a baby without documentation, the other classmate was born here. Since undocumented students are ineligible for financial aid, students must come up with the out-of-state tuition fees themselves. This cost is prohibitive for most students.

So we have, at the present time, Connecticut students who accepted to our public colleges and universities on the basis of academic merit who are then required to pay out-of-state tuition rates simply because of a decision made by their parents when they were young. They have lived in Connecticut for most of their lives, have demonstrated the ability and desire to continue their education, but they lack the means.

H.B. 6390, “An Act concerning access to higher education,” would provide the means for them to continue their education. This bill would bridge the divide between the two groups of Connecticut students by allowing undocumented students to pay the same in-state tuition fees as their peers. This bill would provide the same access to undocumented students that our documented students have.

I am an active leader, and past-Parish Council President, of St. James Catholic Church in Stratford, and our church is a member of the Connecticut Sponsoring Committee. The Connecticut Sponsoring Committee is a new organization in Southern Connecticut that brings 30



A Campus of the Connecticut State University System
An Equal Opportunity University



Southern Connecticut
State University

501 Crescent Street
New Haven, CT 06515 - 1355

School of Health & Human Services
Departments of Communication Disorders • Marriage & Family Therapy
Nursing • Public Health • Recreation & Leisure Studies • Social Work



religious congregations together – Black, White and Latino; urban and suburban; Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish to fight for the interests of those in our pews, to fight to protect the common good, to bring our values to bear in the public arena.

I am also a social worker and faculty member at Southern Connecticut State University. I have witnessed the power of education to transform the ways students think about and participate in the day-to-day activities in their communities. The Code of Ethics of my profession charges me to challenge injustice and other forms of discrimination (National Association of Social Workers, 2008). H.B. 6390 would correct the current inequity by providing equal access for ALL of our Connecticut students who demonstrate academic merit. I strongly urge you to support H.B. 6390.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Keenan

Elizabeth King Keenan, Ph.D., LCSW
BSW Coordinator & Associate Professor
Southern Connecticut State University
Department of Social Work
101 Farnham Avenue
New Haven, CT 06515
(203) 392-5108
KEENANE1@southernct.edu

References

Glaser, E. (2011). *Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier*. New York: Penguin Books.

National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2008). *Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. <http://socialworkers.org/pubs/code/code.asp>.



A Campus of the Connecticut State University System
An Equal Opportunity University