

Statement: Paul Filson - March 15, 2011



CONNECTICUT
STATE COUNCIL

SERVICE EMPLOYEES
INTERNATIONAL UNION
CTW, CLC

My name is Paul Filson. I am Director of the Service Employees International Union Connecticut State Council. SEIU is the largest union in the United States, with 2.2 million members and the largest union in Connecticut with over 55,000 members. Our membership base is made up of health care workers, janitors, and public sector employees. SEIU represents more immigrants than any other union.

Governor's Bill No. 6390- AN ACT CONCERNING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION –aims to correct an injustice that exists in Connecticut. Children of immigrants who come to the United States attend schools, often consider themselves to be American, find out for the first time that they are “undocumented” when they are accepted to attend one of Connecticut’s schools of higher learning. Their undocumented status was not their choice nor was it under their control.

The blame for our country’s misguided and broken immigration policies lies not with immigrants arriving in our country by the millions, but with shortsighted band-aid approaches adopted over many years by elected officials. Immigrants come to Connecticut looking for work from countries where there is no work. In Mexico, and elsewhere around the world, unemployment has soared and decent jobs in rural areas have been destroyed by Free Trade treaties designed to protect multi-national corporations not workers.

SEIU represents all workers, regardless of their legal status in this country. Immigrants, who are members of our union pay taxes, do skilled and unskilled work and receive living wages, health care benefits and pensions. Our members are hardworking and productive participants in our society. Many of our members do some of society’s most important work – taking care of our children in day care centers and our parents and grandparents in nursing homes. Immigrants to the United States endure incredible hardships to come and work. They send massive amounts of money back to their poor countries of origin.

SEIU supports **HB 6390** that provides a common sense approach towards allowing the undocumented children of undocumented immigrants the right to attend college for the in state tuition. These kids, when accepted to college, have earned this benefit. Their parents have paid taxes, contributed to their communities and these kids have done well enough in school to move forward. Denying them in state tuition as well as Federal aid effectively denies many of them the right to attend college. Education is the best way to grow our economy and to grow the pool of productive workers for Connecticut.

SEIU also supports workplace protections and basic legal rights – like the right to join a union, for all workers – including undocumented immigrants.

I deplore all racist attempts to place blame for unemployment in our cities on undocumented immigrants. It is despicable to use a broad brush to paint a target on Latinos and Arabs and Asian and West Indian workers and blame them for budget problems the state is facing. It is outrageous that the children of tax-paying immigrants are denied in state tuition or that xenophobic groups call for deportation of whole groups of people trying to survive in an unfair global economy.

The United States and Connecticut need to be the land of opportunity, fairness and inclusion – please pass the **Governor’s Bill 6390**

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