

Testimony in Support of HB 6390

As a Connecticut voter and college student, I would like to express my support for the in-state tuition bill for undocumented students. The bill would provide students who have spent most of their lives in Connecticut's public education system with an opportunity to attend the state's colleges and universities at the same tuition rate that their peers and classmates do. Students who wish to further their education should not be deterred by prohibitive costs—yet undocumented are currently charged tuition rates that, at community colleges, are roughly three times the amount of in-state tuition. Although the cost of college may still be burdensome without access to financial aid or loans, passage of this bill would make higher education more of a possibility and less of an unfounded dream, thereby also encouraging students to remain enrolled in and graduate from high school.

Other states, including Texas, New York and Nebraska, have enacted similar legislation. They have acknowledged the importance of having a strong, educated workforce as well as providing equal opportunities to those who have grown up in and attended school in the state. Notably, they have not seen an influx of undocumented immigrants. Moreover, Massachusetts, for one, has even seen an increase in revenue from attracting students who would not have enrolled in the state higher education system if it were not for the law. These states have set an example that Connecticut should follow.

Talented, hard-working students deserve access to affordable education; they should not be held responsible for the decisions made by their parents, which were likely outside of their control. In past months, I have met several incredibly passionate students who were at the top of their high school class, were and are involved in extracurricular organizations, and want to help others through public service and similar career paths in the future. However, the barriers they face—including financial ones—prevent them from maximizing their efforts and reaching their full potential. The prospect of a more affordable education, though, would allow them and other undocumented students across the state to better contribute and give back to the place they call home. Enactment of this bill stands to improve both the lives of these students and the Connecticut community at large.