

**Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Public Hearing March 15, 2011**

**Testimony of Rev. Michael E. Carroll, Deacon
St. John's Parish, Waterbury, Connecticut
In Support of HB 6390
An Act concerning Access to Post Secondary Education**

Respected Chairpersons and Distinguished Members of the Committee My name is Michael Carroll and I am here to today to relay the vigorous support of my parish in Waterbury for HB 6390.

Seven years ago our parish initiated a tutorial program for inner city youngsters to support literacy, math skills and combat the dropout rate which has historically impacted the lives of urban youngsters to an alarming extent. The program is staffed entirely by volunteers and serves any child who walks in the door on Saturday mornings. For the past seven years we have averaged 18 youngsters. During that time not one child has dropped out of school and there has been only one teen pregnancy among the children we serve.

I am here today to advocate for one of our participants who has resided in Waterbury for the past 15 years. She crossed the border at Tijuana in the arms of her parents as a three year old. Her school grades, Proficiency tests and Sats were should have qualified her for admission to any college to which she applied. She was admitted to none. Presently, she attends Naugatuck Valley Community Technical College. She would like to be a nurse, and is now working three part time jobs to afford the books and tuition. She is not eligible for any loans. Any hospital in Waterbury would be delighted to have a bilingual nurse on staff. As a retired senior clinical therapist in the Adolescent Behavioral Health Unit of Waterbury Hospital I have witnessed, first hand, the value of Spanish speaking medical personnel making important clinical contributions both in my own unit and in the Emergency Department.

The bill under consideration will provide relief to a number of our students who have challenged themselves during their high school years. As a subgroup, they have demonstrated that our urban high schools provide excellent preparation to youngsters intent on getting a good education.

Some of our higher achieving kids are the target of peer taunts at school for their commitment to excellence. They have been called "straight edge" or "goody-goodies" Such peer criticism has not deterred them. But high tuition bills will likely accomplish what peer taunts could not. They cannot attend schools that they cannot afford.

The people of our parish have contacted our senators and representatives in Washington to support efforts to reintroduce the Dream Act on the Federal level. In the meantime we look to you for a positive response on the state level. Excellence serves us all. Thank you.