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

Senator Bye, Representative Willis and other distinguished committee members, thank you for this opportunity to address H.B. 6390.

Thousands of Connecticut residents graduate from high schools each year, and many apply to Connecticut's public colleges and universities to continue their education. But some of our high school graduates are treated differently than the rest, despite the fact that they have demonstrated the ability and desire to continue their education. These are undocumented youth, many of whom have lived in Connecticut most of their lives, have distinguished themselves in our public schools as highly motivated and industrious individuals, and seek to continue their education so that they can serve as productive members of our communities. These students are forced to pay anywhere between two and three times their classmates' tuition rate. Since they are ineligible for financial aid, they must come up with the out-of-state tuition fees themselves. Unfortunately, for most of these students, the cost is prohibitive, and they are effectively denied access to our public colleges and universities.

H.B. 6390, "An Act Concerning Access to Higher Education," would provide the means for undocumented youth to continue their education. This bill would bridge the gap 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 currently have.

I have lived in Trumbull for over twenty years with my husband, and we raised our three children there. I am a member of Congregation Beth El in Fairfield and a leader in The Connecticut Sponsoring Committee. I am also a member of the Connecticut bar and a practicing attorney in Bridgeport. I submit this testimony to let you know that I feel education of all our youth is essential to laying the foundation for a healthy and prosperous society. My values also compel me to challenge injustice and discrimination. H.B. 6390 would correct an inequity in our higher education system by providing equal access for all of our Connecticut students who demonstrate academic merit. I strongly urge you to support this bill.

Barbara Schellenberg