



**Testimony for Public Hearing
Appropriations Committee
Higher Education Sub-Committee
February 24, 2015**

Connecticut Students for a DREAM (C4D)

Governor's Bill No.6844 - AN ACT CONCERNING IN-STATE TUITION ELIGIBILITY
Governor's Bill No.6845 - AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION

Good Afternoon Chairwomen Bye and Willis, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee and Higher Education Sub-Committee. This testimony is on behalf of CT Students for a DREAM, in support of state financial aid for undocumented students as well as lowering the in-state tuition eligibility requirements. As a statewide organization which represents students and families from all over the state, we ask the Appropriations Committee and the Higher Education Sub-Committee to support the Governor's initiatives and pass the bills.

Many talented undocumented Connecticut high school students hope to pursue higher education. Unfortunately, many are unable to achieve this dream because of financial barriers. The 2011 legislation that granted in-state tuition rates to some undocumented students was an important first step toward increasing access to higher education and education equality, but it is not enough and more needs to be done. CT Students for a DREAM is committed to increasing access to higher education for all Connecticut students.

Undocumented students are ineligible for all federal and state need-based financial aid and, therefore higher education remains out of reach for many of our brightest students. Furthermore, undocumented students are required to reside in-state for four times as long as their classmates in order to access the same tuition rates. No other state requires four

years of in-state high school as a condition of receiving in-state tuition, and many immigrant students and their families remain unable to afford the high cost of tuition. The bill would be an investment in Connecticut's economy and in the future of Connecticut because it will produce professionals that will have a positive impact in the state. A realistic path to college for these students will result in improved high school graduation rates and increased college matriculation.

There was a recent study by from the University of Pennsylvania and the Pell Institute study of Opportunity in Higher Ed that found that there is a big gap in college graduation rates for rich and poor. In 2013, 77% of students from families in the top income quartile earned at least a bachelors degree by the time they turned 24, up from 40% in 1970. But only 9% of people from the lowest income bracket did the same in 2013, up from 6% in 1970. Connecticut's achievement gap is currently the worst among the 50 states. Our legislature has adopted a goal of closing this achievement gap and of fostering progress among low-income and limited English-proficient students.

Tuition dollars from new students attending college will increase state revenue; a college degree translates to an average lifetime increase in taxes paid of more than \$55,000. Without this bill, Connecticut will not recover the investment of more than \$16,000 per student per year that it has already made in the secondary education of these students.

Enabling access to higher education for undocumented students, who are often low-income and people of color, will help Connecticut meet its statutory mandate and increase racial and socioeconomic diversity in the state's colleges and universities. The Governor's bill will help in furthering the State's education equity goals and agenda.

Thank you