

February 26, 2015

My name is Alison Martinez-Carrasco. I live in Windsor Locks, Connecticut and I am in support of Senate Bill 398. I arrived to the United States at the age of four. During my first five years of residing in Connecticut I went through the Hartford school public system. Afterwards, I migrated to Windsor Locks for the rest of my primary and secondary education. I am fortunate to have been able to move and place myself in a better school system. This is an opportunity that minorities do not usually get. We are usually placed in an urban area where the education we receive is not the best. At a young age I realized that in that perspective I was privileged and had to make the best out of this opportunity. I felt nothing could stop me from being the first person in my family to go to college and have a career. But I was wrong. As I got older I learned what it meant to be an undocumented student. While researching how I could be admitted into college I learned that Connecticut did not welcome my pursuit to a higher education because like many undocumented students I was shut out of scholarships and financial aid. Despite these circumstances I found the courage to apply to several schools, and when I got accepted to the University of Connecticut it reinforced that Connecticut is where I belong. While in my freshman year at UConn I paid out-of-state tuition because the CT Dream Act had not passed yet, and when it did it I felt it raised hope that I would actually be able to finish school. But as years progressed it got harder to pay tuition. I expected to earn my degree in the spring of 2015. But my road to graduation has been slower than my classmates because of the financial barriers I face as an undocumented student. I realized that the CT Dream Act was not enough. I felt alone and demotivated.

Every semester I struggle to pay tuition. I have paid an estimated 23,000 dollars into my college tuition these past four years as a part-time student without any financial aid. Despite working two jobs I constantly worry about not being able to pay for school anymore. I major in Urban and Community studies. It is only offered at UConn and at one other school in Connecticut. Despite my passion for this major, I have considered switching into another one so that I get could a degree from a community college where tuition is cheaper. But I cannot give up on all

that I am capable of doing with a degree from UConn. What keeps me from giving up is the time that I volunteer to make Connecticut a better place. Through my volunteer work, I see the change that I could bring to our state, and a degree in Urban and Community studies will help me make even more change. I do not give up hope that one day my human right to an education will be supported and that is why I call on the members of the higher education committee to pass and vote favorably on Senate Bill 398. It's time for the state of Connecticut to live up to their promise of educating students from diverse backgrounds by providing undocumented students like myself access to financial aid. Access to financial aid needs to be as inclusive to undocumented students as possible. Connecticut deserves and needs legislation that is bolder and better.

Sincerely,

Alison Martinez-Carrasco