

-YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

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Testimony of Daniel Hamidi
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330 College Street, #B31
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In favor: S.B. No. 398
An Act Assisting Students Accepted into the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
Program with the Cost of College

I am a student at Yale University writing to urge you to pass S.B. No. 398. While the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) made great strides by passing the DREAM Act in 2011, higher education still remains inaccessible to many socioeconomically disadvantaged undocumented students. Giving students accepted into the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program access to financial aid at public universities is both a moral imperative and a strategic investment in the state's economy.

DACA students are Americans who immigrated to the United States as children. Just like other Americans, they grew up celebrating Fourth of July, cherishing in America's democratic values, and calling the United States home. Frequently extremely socioeconomically disadvantaged, DACA students work hard to make better futures for themselves. Many work long weekend and evening hours to feed their families and help their parents meet rent. Even with these responsibilities, they study hard in Connecticut primary and secondary public schools with hopes of being accepted to universities. Education is their way out of poverty, their opportunity to give back to the country that gives them so much, their American Dream. It is thus CGA's moral imperative to provide DACA students financial aid at Connecticut public universities; not doing so would continue to prevent many Americans from achieving their dreams.

Expanding access to education has directly been shown to increase economic prosperity. Education gives Americans the opportunity to acquire crucial skills for employment in today's rapidly advancing world. CGA needs to be taking measures to ensure that its workforce is educated enough to meet these changing demands. Not doing so risks a lagging economy, high unemployment, and decreased future tax revenue. As the state with the highest achievement gap, Connecticut needs to ensure that its minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups have opportunities to acquire advanced, high-paying jobs. Expanding access to higher education by providing DACA students financial aid is a step towards achieving this goal.

I am not the only student who thinks higher education in Connecticut needs to be expanded to DACA students. Over 650 other college students in Connecticut have signed a letter in support of this bill. I thus urge you to follow California, Minnesota, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington's lead and pass S.B. No. 398 immediately.