

February 25, 2015

Dear Members of the Connecticut General Assembly:

Reference: SB 398

As an individual and resident of Connecticut, I write to ask for your support in granting undocumented students access to financial aid at Connecticut universities and colleges on the same terms and conditions as other Connecticut students.

The 2011 legislation that granted in-state tuition rates to some undocumented students was an important first step toward. However, Connecticut remains a clear outlier in requiring that undocumented students complete four years of Connecticut high school in order to access in-state rates. No other state requires four years of in-state high school as a condition of receiving in-state tuition.

Extending financial aid and in-state tuition to undocumented students is an investment in the future of Connecticut. A realistic path to college for these students will result in improved high school graduation rates and increased college matriculation. Further, expanding access to higher education will increase state revenue; in the short-term through tuition from new students, and in the long-term as the higher incomes of these college graduates translate to increased taxes each year.

Opening financial aid to undocumented students is one way to meaningfully address the pressing need for educational equality in Connecticut, which unfortunately is the state with the worst achievement gap in the country. Our legislature has adopted a goal of closing this achievement gap and of fostering progress among low-income and limited English-proficient 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.

Each year, hundreds of talented undocumented students graduate from Connecticut high schools with hopes of college attendance. We must do what we can right now to help them achieve their dreams.

Sincerely,

Gary Mummert
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