

**Testimony of Ingrid Alvarez, on behalf of the Hispanic Federation Nonprofit
Member Agencies in Connecticut
Before Joint Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement on
Proposed S.B. No. 398-An Act assisting students accepted into the Deferred
Action For Childhood Arrivals Program with the cost of college.**

February 26, 2015

Co-chairs Bartolomeo and Willis, Ranking Members, and members of the Committee, I thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Hispanic Federation and its cadre of Latino Nonprofit member agencies across Connecticut on the importance of this hearing today on Proposed Bill No. 398. Hispanic Federation (HF) supports the Proposed Bill No. 368.

For over a decade, Hispanic Federation has worked to advocate for the passage of humane and fair immigration reform in our nation's capital. Regrettably, Congress has continually failed to fix our broken immigration system and pass common sense reform. The lack of leadership in Washington has pushed states to fill the void and answer this fundamental question: How do we view and treat immigrants in our society? Several states like Arizona and Alabama have chosen to pass laws that punish and marginalize undocumented immigrants at any and all cost. In these states, the goal has been to advance racial segregation, family disintegration, and remove as many immigrants from local communities as possible.

In 2011, Connecticut took an important step and granted in-state tuition rates to undocumented students, increasing access to higher education. Our great state must continue on the path towards education equity. Proposed Bill No. 398 offers a wonderful opportunity for the Connecticut General Assembly to affirm our road forward and make a significant difference in the lives of thousands of young people. If passed, this bill would allow students who were accepted into the federal government's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program to receive certain types of financial assistance for attending an institution of higher education.

Hispanic Federation would also like to praise the Governor's proposed college aid fund for undocumented students. While the proposed amount only meets a small portion of needy students, this is a major step forward in educational access for all Connecticut youth. Ultimately, we believe the state should work to go beyond these significant first steps and grant equal access to state financial aid for all undocumented students who already qualify for in-state tuition.

Proposed Bill No. 368, the Governor's fund and needed broader measures will help lift barriers to college for thousands of undocumented students. Most of the students who would be positively affected by the legislation were brought to Connecticut at a very young age by their parents. They are the classmates and friends of our children and they are the faces of hope in our communities. They have grown up with other American youth - in our schools, houses of worship and playgrounds - dreaming about the American dream of opportunity and fairness.

Although these young dreamers have worked hard to prepare themselves to go to college and succeed, many are simply prevented from doing so because they cannot afford the cost of a higher education. Without financial aid, college is unaffordable for many high school graduates. In-state tuition is nearly \$120,000 at the University of Connecticut and \$82,000 at a Connecticut State University.

Study after study has affirmed that per capita income and college attainment rates are closely correlated. Tuition dollars from new college students will increase state revenue. In fact, a college degree raises the average lifetime tax amount by more than \$55,000. It is clear that by investing in our youth, Connecticut can continue to grow its economy while reaping the benefits of increased economic productivity and increased tax revenues.

Having overcome great obstacles to achieve educational success, Connecticut's undocumented students are the driven overachievers who have exhibited higher than average levels of community and civic activity, including community education, mentoring of peers and younger students. They are part of Connecticut's future.

Let's give them the opportunity that other generations of immigrants have been granted: to work hard, achieve and fully contribute to our society. In doing so, we will be answering affirmatively how we view immigrants as integral to Connecticut's future success.

Hispanic Federation

The mission of Hispanic Federation is to empower and advance the Hispanic community. Hispanic Federation provides grants and services to a broad network of Latino non-profit agencies serving the most vulnerable members of the Hispanic community and advocates nationally with respect to the vital issues of education, health, immigration, economic empowerment, civic engagement and the environment.

Appendix

To the Testimony of Ingrid Alvarez, Connecticut State Director
Hispanic Federation

Hispanic Federation Connecticut Member Agencies:

Hispanic Health Council

Contact: Jose Ortiz, President & CEO
joseo@hispanichealth.com (860) 527-0856

Hispanic Health Council is an organization based in Hartford, CT whose mission is to improve the health and social well being of Latinos and other diverse communities via community based research, evidence based direct services, training and policy advocacy.

Latino Community Services, Inc.

Contact: Fernando Morales, Executive Director
fmorales@lcs-ct.org (860) 296-6400

Our mission: To reduce the further spread of HIV/AIDS among the Latino Community and other populations at risk and improve the quality of life and health outcomes of individuals affected by HIV/AIDS.

Spanish Community of Wallingford

Contact: Maria Fernanda Harlow, Executive Director
mharlow@scow.org (203) 294-2256

Spanish Community Center of Wallingford (SCOW) is a social service organization committed to responding to the needs of the Latino Community by assisting them to succeed in U.S. society, and to enable Latinos to maintain and share their rich varied cultures with the broader community through social service guidance, educational opportunities and cultural sharing.

Spanish American Merchants Association

Contact: Julio Mendoza, Executive Director
julio_mendoza@samact.org (860) 278-5825

SAMA is a non-profit organization incorporated in the State of Connecticut to serve as a vehicle for the economic growth of business. SAMA was created to assist business people, in particular, Latinos, to acquire a better understating of economic principles.

San Juan Center

Contact: Fernando Betancourt, Executive Director
f_bentacourt96@yahoo.com (860) 522-2205

San Juan Center is an individual and family Social Services organization in Hartford, CT providing counseling services to families, housing to low-income elderly and youth development activities.

Center For Latino Progress

Contact Yanil Teron, Executive Director
yanil_teron@ctprf.org (860) 247-3227

Center's mission is to advance the social and economic conditions of the community at large, with emphasis on Hispanics, through education, training, supportive services, leadership development and advocacy.

Hispanic Center of Greater Danbury, Inc.

Contact: Andrea Contreras, Executive Director
andrea@danburycentro.com (203) 798-2855

Mission is to serve, educate and advocate for Latino and other ethnic communities by facilitating community planning, mobility programs and creating community opportunities that foster social and cultural interaction. eliminating language barriers, creating citizenship and civic participation opportunities, providing health and well-being.

South Norwalk Community Center

Contact: Kelly Robertson, Executive Director
krobertson@sonocc.org (203) 899-2485

South Norwalk Community Center (SONOCC) meets the educational counseling, vocational, employment, emotional, cultural and recreational needs of economically dis-advantaged people and minority groups so that they become self sufficient. The center carries its mission by offering a number of services inclusive of but not limited to, licensed summer camp program, Youth tutoring; health, nutrition and counseling services; senior center programs, job development services, and adult education.

ARTE, Inc.

Contact: David Greco, Executive Director
dsgreco@sbcglobal.net (203) 469-4536

Arte, Inc., is dedicated to promoting Latino art, culture and talent. Arte establishes partnerships with community agencies and groups to improve the quality of life of residents. Arte assists Latino artists; organize programs, events, shows and exhibits. Arte develops and runs effective youth programming to engage children and mold better citizens.

Junta for Progressive Action

Contact: Sandra Treviño, Executive Director
Sandra.trevino@juntainc.org (203) 787-0191

Mission is to provide services, programs and advocacy that improve the social, political and economic conditions of the Latino community in greater New Haven while nurturing and promoting its cultural traditions as it builds bridges with other communities.

Spanish Speaking Center of New Britain

Contact: Mary Sanders, Executive Director
marymaryssc@yahoo.com (860) 224-2651

Faith-based community organization serving low and moderate-income families in the New Britain area. Social Services, Adult Education and Career Development, High School Youth programming, Community Food Pantry, Voter Registration and Civic Engagement, Community & Legislative Advocacy.