

-YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

February 26, 2015

Testimony of Jackson Beck
Legislative Coordinator, Yale College Democrats

74 High Street, E22
New Haven, CT 06511

In favor: S.B. No. 398

An Act Assisting Students Accepted into the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program with the Cost of College

My name is Jackson Beck, and I strongly urge the committee to support Senate Bill 398 on behalf of the Yale College Democrats.

The General Assembly's passage of the DREAM Act in 2011 was an important step in the right direction. It demonstrated a commitment to making college accessible for undocumented students and, by extension, strengthening the state's economy, but it simply doesn't do enough to honor that commitment. Passing this bill is a logical step forward that would actually make attending college an attainable goal for undocumented students.

We need to remember that these are students who consider the United States their home. We need to recognize that they frequently live in poverty and must work to support their families while also pursuing their own goals. We need to understand that in light of the many socioeconomic disadvantages they face, offering them in-state tuition alone isn't truly offering them the opportunity to pursue higher education in Connecticut.

As a college student, I find myself constantly worrying about my finances, despite receiving financial aid and having a job on campus. It's hard for me to imagine overcoming the adversity that so many undocumented students face in pursuing an education without the resources I have by virtue of the fact that I was born in the United States.

Of course, I'm not the only one who feels this way. Earlier this month, we collected over 650 signed letters from college students who agree that Connecticut should do more to make college affordable for undocumented students. Over 650 college students don't understand why other young people who work hard are being deprived of the opportunity to achieve their goals. They're all waiting for their representatives to act because they know Connecticut can do better.

I sincerely hope the committee will honor Connecticut's commitment to education and a strong economy by enthusiastically supporting this legislation.