

# -YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

February 26, 2015

Testimony of Laura Leon  
Member, Yale College Democrats

206 Elm Street, F32  
New Haven, CT 06520

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 Laura Leon and I am a Yale College student and a Yale College Democrat legislative captain. I urge the committee to support Senate Bill No. 398.

Impeccable timing played a role in the unwinding of my dreams. My mother came to the United States when she was 6 months pregnant. 3 months were the difference from American and Mexican citizenship. I am forever grateful for the opportunity this nation has given me. Growing up I never doubted that I was American. Schools taught me values of liberty, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness. These values became a part of daily life. But I knew families who had undocumented children. These children were not different from me. They shared the same values as I and worked hard in school.

However, undocumented children, similar to the children of the families I knew, do not have the same access to affordable education as I. Yet I find many similarities between undocumented students and I such as our values, growing up with undocumented parents, living in low-income neighborhoods, and suffering from financial insecurity. I do not think it is fair that those who have endured the same or as I have be impeded from receiving a higher education because of the financial costs and inaccessibility to financial aid.

Families who come to the United States are looking for a better future where their children can have financial security. Connecticut must make affordable higher education accessible to undocumented students so that they can live out the American Dream. Doing so with only emphasize the nation of opportunity that the United States is and the progressive values of Connecticut. Connecticut can serve as a model to other states by demonstrating that it seeks to see all students succeed and become great members of society.

Undocumented students in Connecticut identify themselves as Americans and want to receive a higher education. Not only do they want to improve the future of their families but also become members of society by creating jobs, helping the homeless, fighting for social justice, finding cures for diseases, applying the law, and much more. Affordable education is the key to their dreams.

A state of progressive values that seeks to improve socioeconomically needs more educated individuals. Connecticut has them. We must make affordable education available to these individuals so that they can help shape Connecticut.